



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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CALAIS REFUGEES UNDER ATTACK

None of us know exactly what the terror feels like as our Syrian village is overrun by Daesh ("Islamic State").

Or exactly how disgusting the Mercedes-driving, people-smuggling parasites are that took all our money and pushed us out into the Aegean in a half-submerged dinghy.

And then, after months on the road, walking across scrubland, preyed on by Libyan gangsters, half-drowned, looking for a little help and solidarity — where do many migrants end up? Somewhere like the muddy, cold, wet fields on the outskirts of Calais.

More page 5



OPEN THE BORDER!

Inside:

Stalinism and Afghanistan

Workers' Liberty



Stalinism and
Afghanistan: socialists
and the 1979-89 war

The conscientious communist



Jeff Rickertt, author of *The conscientious communist*, talks to *Solidarity*.

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Ritzy strikes again



Ritzy cinema workers to strike again on 31 October.

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Join Labour!

New stitch up in
Brighton Labour
Party

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Sectarian dangers in Mosul

By Simon Nelson

The progress of Iraqi forces in their effort to re-take Mosul has gathered pace. Many Daesh fighters have been pulled out of the city to consolidate their power back in the rest of the terrain they control.

Daesh have used suicide attacks, carried out a diversionary operation in Kirkuk, and tried to halt Iraqi forces with clouds of toxic smoke from a burning sulphur plant; but it still seems unlikely that their fighters will be able to resist the combined forces of Kurdish peshmerga and the Iraqi army, backed by US and UK airstrikes.

Several Christian villages have now been taken on the east of the city by the Kurdish peshmerga. Under an agreement between the Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG], the Baghdad Government and the US, the peshmerga are sup-

posed not to enter the city itself. Most of the territory so far re-occupied by Kurdish forces was under Kurdish control before the Daesh conquests, but every side in the anti-Daesh coalition believes the others have motives beyond the defeat of Daesh. The Kurds will try to take increased control of land and resources.

The Shia militias allied with Iraqi government forces are also banned from entering the city. Those militias are hostile to the Sunni majority population in Mosul which, they believe, caved in to Daesh without a fight. Those Shia militias took the lead in the defeat of Daesh in Fallujah, despite the government's attempts to claim that victory for the Iraqi army.

Abadi insists that the Shia militias should not enter Mosul itself, but the influence which they and Iran hold over his government and other institutions including the army remains a threat to a politi-



Tent camp being prepared in Khazer, Iraq, for refugees fleeing Mosul

cally stable Iraq. Abadi has attempted to make limited political reforms, but many of those have been blocked. He remains under pressure from the Shia militias and their clerical leaders like Muqtada al-Sadr, who whip up anger against the government's weakness against Daesh and against the growing power of the Kurds in Northern Iraq.

Many Sunni Arabs have a growing hatred for Daesh. But Iraq's experience of Shia-sectarian rule

under both Maliki and Abadi mean that there are real chances of a sectarian stand-off as Daesh sympathisers and Sunni sectarians defend themselves from the army while the government will continue to ignore the concerns of Iraq's Sunni Arabs, the minority in Iraq but the great majority in Mosul. j1

Civilians may be caught in a sectarian bloodbath, and the military defeat of Daesh will not destroy many of the underlying tensions that led to their emergence.

Reports have already emerged that in Tinah, in northern Iraq, a unit of the Iraqi army entered an area prepared for refugees and stole tents and water tanks. Aid and refugee supplies are vulnerable to corrupt officials, sectarian politicians and criminals.

Democratic oversight over aid distribution and infrastructure contracts is key. The International Federation of Iraqi Refugees, and the local labour movement, must have rights to scrutiny.

So far only 6,000 people have fled the city. This is a tiny proportion of the 700,000 it is estimated will leave as the fighting enters Mosul itself. Leaflets dropped on behalf of the Iraqi government have called on people to stay put, to give up fighting for Daesh, and to help the troops as they enter.

Daesh has responded by executing up to 300 men and boys, supposedly for planning to rebel against Daesh.

Iranian workers' campaign

By Michael Elms

On Thursday 20 October the Shahrokh Zamani Action Campaign (SZAC) was launched at a meeting at the headquarters of the National Union of Teachers in central London.

SZAC is a campaign to build solidarity between the labour movement in the UK and Europe and the workers' movement in Iran.

It takes its name from the Iranian painter who was jailed for 11 years for forming a trade union, and who died in jail in September 2015 despite a global labour movement campaign for his release.

Similar campaigns have been launched at the call of Iranian trade union activists in other countries: in June of this year, posters bearing Zamani's image and urging solidarity with Iranian workers were plastered up in the Afghan capital Kabul.

The launch meeting was addressed by Peter Tatchell, a leading RMT activist, a member of the National Executive of the NUS, and a striking Picturehouse worker. A labour movement activist in Iran addressed the meeting by video.

The Iranian comrade described Shahrokh's political work: "The legacy of Shahrokh is still alive. ...

In his last days Shahrokh was emphasising the importance and significance of publishing a bulletin as an organising tool, as an organising organ for our committee. Over the past year we've been systematically involved in publishing and distributing bulletins in the labour areas, in areas around factories ... along with distributing and handing out leaflets ... in defence of other political activists "

SZAC is being launched now because in the wake of the nuclear deal with Iran, there has been an increase in workers' struggles. These struggles often meet with terrible repression, as the government still does not formally tolerate independent trade unions or strikes. In May of this year, for example, workers at the Agh Dareh gold mine were punished for striking by being flogged.

But this has not deterred other groups of workers, from school teachers to sugar factory workers, from organising and protesting in the months since.

Trade union and Labour Party branches should pass the model motion in support of SZAC and invite speakers from SZAC to explain the labour situation in Iran.

• www.shahrokhzamani.com

The end of Renzi?

By Hugh Edwards

As Italy's premier Matteo Renzi and a clutch of his cronies were admitted by Obama to his final White House "do", the substance behind the faux-carnival jollity was obvious — concern for the survival of Renzi's government, and fears about how its fall could hit European and global financial and economic stability.

In the constitutional referendum promoted by Renzi and to be held on 4 December, the polls show yes and no neck-and-neck. Yet Renzi declared when he launched the referendum that he would resign if defeated.

In September the American Ambassador unequivocally declared his government's full support. On 18 October Obama gave an even more emphatic endorsement from the White House steps, and underlined that Renzi should not leave office if he lost the vote.

Renzi's shameful record of loyalty to US demands — most recently, more troops for the Baltic states and the Russian border — has however done him no good with the working-class members and supporters of his Democratic Party, the bulk of whom will vote "no", or with the xenophobic and racist right like the Northern League, who are virulently anti-Europe.

The referendum would make the Senate — at present equal in powers to the lower house of parliament — no longer able to bring down a government, and no longer directly elected. It is part of a plan to reinforce executive government power. As one of JP Morgan's chiefs, recently appointed to rescue Italy's oldest bank from another corruption scandal, declared: "the political systems of southern Eu-



rope... are unsuitable for strengthening the social integration we need; too influenced by socialist ideas, social protection of the rights of workers and their licence to protest. Executive power is too weak constitutionally."

The country is sliding further into decline and retreat, offering a vista of increasing demoralisation and collapse. That reality should be the leitmotif of a no campaign, led by the trade unions and the working poor. Instead, the unions have split. The right-wing CISL and UIL support the government. CGIL has given belated and timid support for a no vote.

The main "no" campaign is effectively hegemonised by the liberal professariat, a caste whose exclusive concern is, as they describe it, with "the technical and juridical merits of the case in question". It

thus leaves the masses at the mercy of Renzi's populist claim that his measures will deliver the country from its historically corrupt and parasitic career-political class.

Another campaign, The Joint campaign for a Social No to the Constitutional Referendum, belatedly formed in late September, has brought together the remains of the various revolutionary currents, the Workers' Communist Party, Communist Refoundation, Left Networks.

A demonstration in Rome on 22 October brought 5000 or so onto the streets, and we must hope that the campaign will quickly seek to hammer out a radically sharpened and socially and politically distinct voice in weeks ahead which may witness a very rapid rise in the political temperature in Italy.

Stop the Purge National Conference

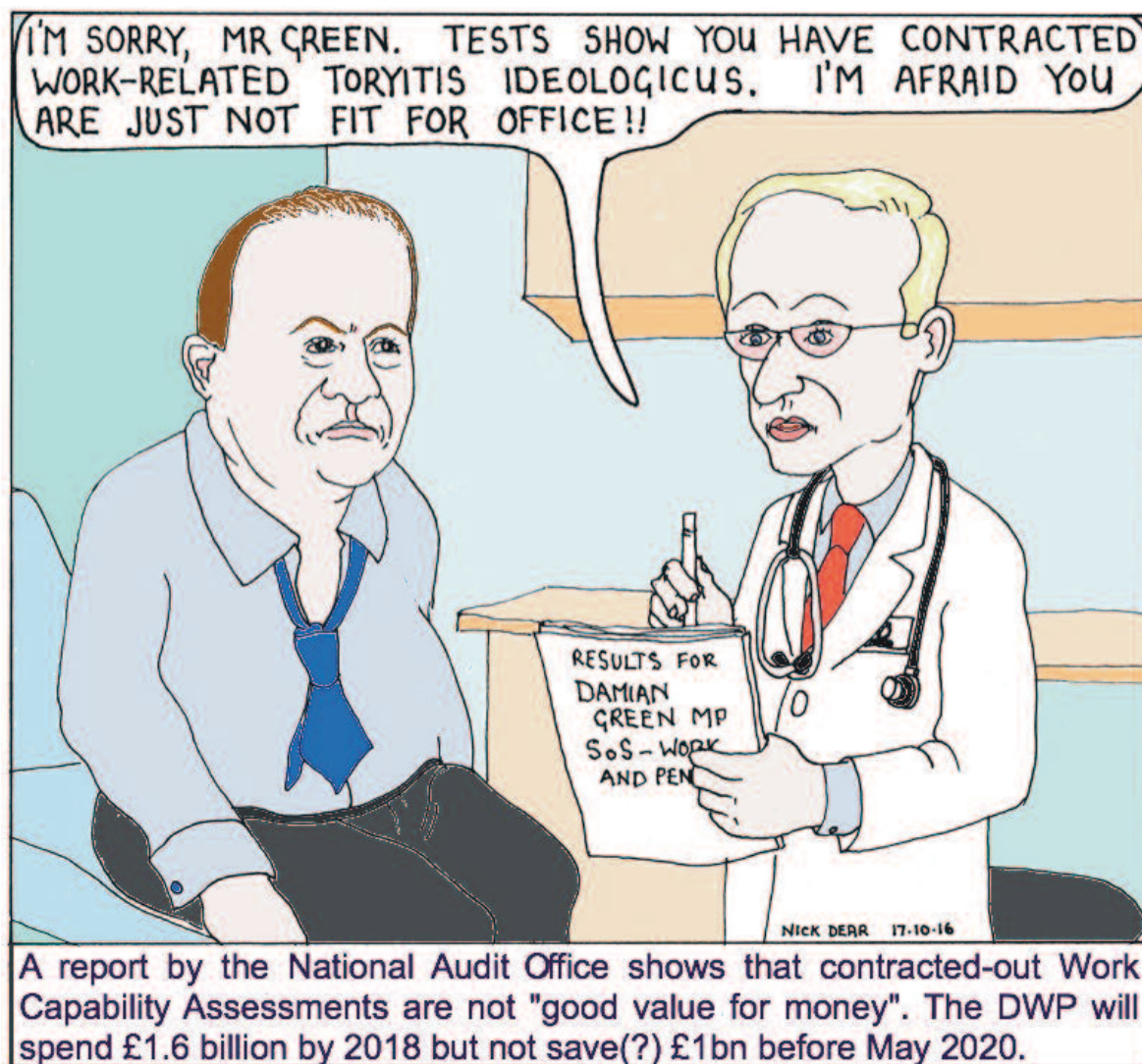
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As the Labour machine's attacks on democracy and members' rights continue, activists meet to discuss how to fight back.

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The true face of capitalism

By Joan Trevor

Philip Green is the multibillionaire chairman of the fashion retail Arcadia Group, owner of chains such as Topshop, Burton and Dorothy Perkins. With his wife Cristina he has a fortune of £4.3 billion.

He has attracted hostile press before and now he is being reviled as the unacceptable face of capitalism for his part in the downfall of British Home Stores (BHS). On 20 October MPs supported a motion recommending Green be stripped of the knighthood he was awarded in 2006 for "services to the retail industry".

Green bought BHS for £200 million in 2000 and sold it recently for £1. Now it has gone bust leaving 11,000 employees without a job. Green's family had received £400 million in dividends from the company. And they paid no tax on that — the money was paid to Cristina, who lives in the tax haven of Monaco.

MPs argued that while he was the owner Green deliberately ran down the BHS pension fund, which now has a £571 million deficit.

Green could yet partially redeem himself in the eyes of the establishment if he agrees to pay a large sum into the BHS pension fund to restore its fortunes.

Labour supported the censure of Green, but after the House of Commons vote Labour's Shadow Business Secretary Clive Lewis MP



Philip Green: got rich by milking pension funds and using sweated labour

wrote in the *Guardian*:

"Yesterday's vote was purely symbolic, an act of tokenism... This is the most extraordinary about the whole affair — legally, Green has done nothing wrong.

"...The Tories will have us believe that the BHS scandal arose from the moral failing of one man. But it is the system that is bent. The destruction of the pension scheme is not unique to BHS."

Lewis's criticism of the way capitalism works, how it decides who is "acceptable", was too limited. He confined himself to criticism of the way Green did business and wrote: "Good business is the lifeblood of the economy".

Good business? What is good business? Business that does not break the laws of the land and pays its taxes? But the laws of the land favour the rich, grind the poor, and

make effective trade unionism almost impossible.

Lewis wrote: "Green is the product of decades of deregulation and market deference, which have encouraged the use of companies to extract wealth rather than create it".

Who creates new wealth? Socialists argue that workers new create wealth; the real distinction to be made is not between "good" and "bad" capitalists but between workers and those who employ them, those who own the businesses, consume the profits and, yes, if they can get away with it, asset strip as Green has done at BHS.

All the time that Green was a "good" businessman, he was getting rich from the labour of others, often sweated labour. That is the lifeblood of the garment industry. In 2010 the UK Uncut campaign picketed Topshop stores demanding "Philip Green — pay your tax!" And they were right to do that. But we should go further.

The anti-sweatshop campaign No Sweat had revealed as early as 2005 how Topshop were using sweated labour in the East End of London. Responding to that negative publicity, Philip Green said he would no longer use the factories involved. But he carried on using factories in Bangladesh where sweated labour is the norm. And so does the whole — legal — retail garment industry.

No to Philip Green? Yes, and no to all capitalists!

Solidarity with LGBT Cameroonians!

QNEWS

By Elizabeth Butterworth

In 78 countries around the world, homosexuality or homosexual activity of some kind is a crime. 38 of these are in Africa. And Cameroon has the highest number of arrests for homosexuality in the world.

On 13 October 2016, there were mass arrests in a gay club in the capital, Yaounde. All of the arrestees have since been released.

Some readers may have come across the incredibly moving film 'Call Me Kuchu', which documents the LGBT rights movement in Uganda. While the film was being made, the prominent LGBT activist and human rights campaigner David Kato was murdered by homophobes.

There are people like David Kato all over the world, fighting for justice and rights for LGBT people.

Eric Ohena Lembembe was a giant in the African LGBT rights movement who was tortured and brutally murdered on 15 July 2013; a journalist and director of a charity and human rights organisation. Just weeks before his death he had said, "Anti-gay thugs are targeting those who support equal rights on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity... a climate of hatred and bigotry... which extends to high levels in government, reassures homophobes that they can get away with these crimes."

No photos were taken at the crime scene, and police lines of questioning were aimed at finding out the sexual orientations of Eric Lembembe and his colleagues. Three members of the CAMFAIDS, the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS (where Lembembe worked) were detained for several days despite not being suspects or wit-

nesses.

Another person whose memory we need to preserve and honour is Roger Jean-Claude Mbende. He was arrested, tried and jailed in 2011 for homosexuality, having sent a text to another man saying "I am very much in love with you". While Mbende was in prison, he developed health problems for which he had some treatment and provisional release on medical grounds. He died in January 2014 due to lack of medical treatment for hernia. It has been reported that his family stopped paying for his medical treatment as he was a "curse" and "we should let him die".

In August 2013, anti-homosexuality vigilante mobs were roaming the streets of Yaounde and in the same year, offices of at least three LGBT-related NGOs were raided, attacked or firebombed. There are so many attacks on individuals by the state, the police and homophobes and transphobes that there is not space to mention them all.

Cameroon is a dictatorship, ruled by President Paul Biya since 1982, who maintains power with fake elections every few years. The state endorses homophobia and transphobia, and abuse is rife in the prison system. Cameroon is marred by corruption and human rights abuses, and the struggle for democracy is ultimately integral to the struggle for LGBT+ rights.

The LGBT movement in Britain has made huge strides in the last few years, and while homophobia and transphobia are still pervasive, attitudes are shifting. It is vital that we build on this work and show our solidarity with our siblings in Cameroon and the world over.

Organisations such as the Out and Proud: African LGBTI group and the Peter Tatchell Foundation are doing important work in creating links between LGBT people in Africa and Britain

Pardon not good enough?

By Simon Nelson

A private members Bill which would have pardoned up to 15,000 living gay men who have a criminal record due to the defunct Sexual Offences Act was recently talked out of Parliament by Tory Minister Sam Gyimah.

By speaking for 25 minutes he ensured the Bill ran out of time and was not voted on. He argued the government had already agreed to let gay men apply for their convictions to be disregarded and had introduced a posthumous "pardoning process."

Gyimah argued the Bill would have allowed pardoning for actions that remain crimes, e.g. would pardon those who had sex with someone under the current age of consent of 16.

But thousands of men still find their previous convictions scrutinised when applying for work and volunteer roles that involve children. This Bill would have stopped that and the discrimination and shaming of thousands of gay men.

But there is a problem with pardoning, as activist George Montague, who is campaigning for an apology, has said:

"To accept a pardon means you accept that you were guilty. I was not guilty of anything. I was only guilty of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. [There] never should have been an offence of gross indecency.

"It didn't apply to heterosexuals. Heterosexuals could do what they liked, in the doorways, in passageways, the back of their car.

"It only applied to gay men. That's not right, surely?"

The *Sun* sinks again

PRESS

By Pdraig Muir

The sentencing on 21 October, of star News UK reporter Mahzer Mahmood, otherwise known as “the fake sheikh”, to 15 months’ jail, has led to renewed demands for more official regulation of the press.

Mahmood made his considerable professional reputation through a series of especially audacious sting operations aimed at high profile figures in entertainment and sport. His nickname stems from the most common and famous of the disguises used to fool these figures into dodgy financial deals which he would secretly film.

In his last major operation he was disguised as an oil-rich film mogul. He invited singer and X Factor judge Tulisa Contostavlos to a meeting to discuss the possibility of a starring role in a movie. He produced apparently clear evidence that Contostavlos had agreed to provide him with cocaine, and the *Sun* ran a headline story accusing the singer of being a drug dealer. Cue much personal distress and a career on the rocks.

Contostavlos fought back and, in July, the prosecution case against her was thrown out of court on the basis that Mahmood had tampered with evidence. Specifically, he had tried to get the driver who had taken his victim home to alter his statement.

According to Contostavlos she had been drawn into a discussion on a possible drugs deal as part of an improvised audition for the movie part. She was vindicated and the fake sheikh found himself in the dock. He was convicted and sentenced to 15 months in prison.

As throughout the Leveson inquiry, News UK has sought to distance itself from the

wrongdoing of their employee. That tactic didn’t work fantastically well then and News UK has no reason to assume it will now.

There are also questions about how Mahmood managed to see an original copy of his driver’s statement, so the issue of police collusion with tabloid journalists clearly hasn’t been put to bed.

The political issues aren’t straightforward here. On the one hand it can never be anything other than gratifying to see the *Sun* and the Murdoch empire exposed and shamed for the grubby and sanctimonious journalism they represent.

On the other hand illegal and underhand methods, including sting operations, have been used throughout the history of journalism to expose real corruption and even change the law in progressive directions. The *Daily Telegraph’s* exposure of the MPs expenses scandal played a key role in undermining the credibility of a generation of politicians on the make. A legal framework that made exposures harder would not be in the best interests of those of us keen to challenge the rich and powerful.

MURDOCH

In the specific case of the *Sun* and Murdoch, however, we can indulge ourselves a bit.

This is absolutely not a campaigning progressive anti-corruption outfit. Their exposures have mostly been of football stars and second rate celebrities. On the few occasions they have targeted politicians, it has been a matter of score-settling or a demonstration of their power.

They have carefully nurtured a reputation of fear with mainstream politicians, leading Tony Blair and his inner circle to conclude that the only way for Labour to win, and then remain in, power was to defer and pay hom-



Headlines Mahzer Mahmood contributed to

age to the Murdoch organisation. The price for those who don’t comply is the threat that any sexual, financial or personal transgression will be splashed all over their pages — and, if they can’t find one, they will find a way of inventing it.

We should be wary of any legal changes that criminalise stings per se, though that is not what Mahzer Mahmood was convicted of and not something demanded by the pro-regulatory pressure group Hacked Off.

On the other hand we should welcome anything that hammers another nail into the vile anti-working class institution that is News UK and its most toxic manifestation, the *Sun*.

Desperate journalism



Lewisham Momentum supporters

By Sacha Ismail

On 21 October *Times* senior political correspondent Lucy Fisher and chief political correspondent Michael Savage published an article about the AWL entitled “Hard-left Corbynites dismissed as softies”, glued together with out of context quotations, snippets from Facebook, gossip, inversion of reality and anonymous sources.

The article refers to the Workers’ Liberty pamphlet *Transform the labour movement – aim for a workers’ government*, which it quotes fleetingly. Some of what it says is true (for instance, we do indeed call for Labour MPs to take only a skilled worker’s wage “in... solidarity with workers”), but overall it is yet another shoddy pseudo-journalistic piece about our relationship to Momentum.

It is gratifying that two of the *Times’s* most senior journalists have devoted 700-odd words to reporting the publication of an AWL pamphlet (which we certainly think is significant). However it looks like one more attempt to “shit stir” in Momentum and the Labour Party.

Laughably, the article also cites comments I’ve made on Facebook, as part of discussions with other Momentum activists.

The basic thrust seems to be to present the AWL as a disruptive force trying to start a civil war in Momentum. Anyone who has read our material or worked with us will know this is a serious distortion of reality. We are, for sure, sharply critical of the Momentum leadership, and want to significantly deepen and develop the organisation’s program and change its overall direction — but as a committed and constructive part of it. (Does this mean none of us have ever been rude on Facebook? Clearly not.)

The article repeats the claim, never justified but widely made in the right-wing press, that the AWL is “proscribed by Labour”. This may be what Blairite briefers are saying behind the scenes, but it is not true. The reason some of us have been expelled is not because we are banned but because the right-wing fringe of the Labour Party controls the Compliance Unit’s machinery of expulsion.

Bizarrely, the *Times* implies — and quotes an anonymous “Momentum source” that implies — that we regard Jackie Walker’s removal as Vice Chair of Momentum’s steering committee as part of a “Stalinist witch-hunt against Trotskyists, or... an attempt to spark one”.

The words quoted actually refer to the post-Stalinist *Morning Star* newspaper attacking us for supporting the removal of Walker.

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Calais: Open the border!



None of us will know exactly what the terror feels like as our Syrian village is overrun by Daesh ("Islamic State"). Or exactly how disgusting the Mercedes-driving, people-smuggling parasites are that took all our money and pushed us out into the Aegean in a half-submerged dinghy.

And then, after months on the road, walking across scrubland, preyed on by Libyan gangsters, half-drowned, looking for a little help and solidarity – where do many migrants end up? Somewhere like the muddy, cold, wet fields on the outskirts of Calais. Thousands packed together, young and old, under plastic sheets waiting to risk their lives on the final leg of our journey. For those in Calais the final journey, it is hoped, was across a narrow stretch of sea to the UK.

And isn't this one of Britain's greatest shames? – the fact that a rich country like the UK can't make a safe, warm home for a few thousand poor people?

Partly by historical chance and partly because of the past battles our labour movement has fought, most of our readers live in a relatively peaceful society, with access to free health care and education for ourselves and our children.

Of course that statement could be qualified in a hundred ways: the NHS is under threat, some of us are not able to find work, benefits are pitifully inadequate, some of us pay absurd rents, some are even homeless, some have huge debts from tuition fees.

Nevertheless most of us have been fortunate never to have lived under the Eritrean police state, or anything remotely like it. We have never had to carry our children over muddy fields while Hungarian border police spit at us.

Solidarity says: open our border, bring these migrants across the sea and let them in. Let them all in. The alternative is taking responsibility for allowing places like the Calais Jungle to exist. The alternative is small-minded, selfish and shabby – turning our backs as others suffer.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, the last parts of the Jungle are being destroyed by the French

state. The site is being bulldozed and the migrants dispersed. The French and British authorities are dealing with the migrant crisis by trying to hide its miserable human content. They found the Jungle to be too inconvenient, too much of a media and PR disaster, and have tried to scatter the problem, not solve the issue in a humane and decent way.

In April the Tories voted down a proposal to settle 3000 children in the UK. The Labour

peer, Alf Dubs, who fled the Nazis, aged six, and came to the UK as part of the Kindertransport, had moved the amendment to the government's Immigration Bill.

The fact that a right-wing German politician, Angela Merkel, for a short time at least, appeared as a warm and generous host in contrast to the Tories – Germany initially let in a million migrants – is a measure of how nasty and mean the UK authorities have

been.

Embarrassed by poor publicity, the Tories backed off a little, accepting a vaguer version of the Dubs proposal. Even now they are haggling about the detail, backsliding, engaging in a mean-spirited attempt to tar young migrants as cheating about their ages.

Virtually ignored were the new proposals in the Immigration Bill that further penalise poor and vulnerable migrants. The fact that an immigration charity can celebrate as a victory that "people in immigration detention will automatically have their case looked at by a court after they've been in detention for four months" is a measure of how bad things are now.

The government itself admits that migrants in the UK are entering "a hostile environment". Hate and fear have been stirred up by the Tories and the right-wing press.

Post-Brexit there has been a surge in racist attacks. The London Met police now deal with 78 reports of hate crime per day. Across the UK the increase in this type of offence is 14% (*Daily Mirror*), and areas with strong Leave votes have seen even bigger spikes in attacks.

The Labour right – including Rachel Reeves, Stephen Kinnock, Chuka Umunna and Emma Reynolds – have added to the dangerous mood by saying free movement across Europe must end.

The left must defend free movement across Europe and refugee and migrant rights, too. We must take up Jeremy Corbyn's call for free movement across Europe and to oppose caps on immigration. Corbyn says, "We will not sow division or fan the flames of fear. We will act to end the exploitation of migrant labour to undercut workers' pay and conditions." He is absolutely right.

Migrant and UK workers – unite and fight!

Heathrow: oppose third runway

On 25 October the Tory government announced that it would back the building of a third runway at Heathrow.

Tory MP Zac Goldsmith signalled that he would resign and fight a by-election as an independent candidate, and other Tories objected. In a bid to reduce the disruption in the Tory party, prime minister Theresa May has said that the decisive parliamentary vote will not be taken until the winter of 2017-8. Construction is due to start in 2020 or 2021.

The CBI and the TUC backed the Heathrow expansion plan. The Lib-Dems and the Greens opposed it.

Labour approved Heathrow expansion while in office, in 2009. Then the Tories opposed it, and cancelled the expansion plan when they took office in 2010.

Now the Labour Party is still officially pro-third-runway, but Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and shadow Chancellor John McDonnell have a long record of opposing it.

Sadiq Khan, Labour mayor of London, denounced the new Tory plan as the "wrong decision", and said "an expanded Gatwick" would be better.

The Labour Party's official statement to the press on 25 October was evasive, saying it "it needed assurances on capacity, climate change, noise and air quality and the wider

national benefits before offering its support".

John McDonnell said:

"I've campaigned against this runway for over 30 years and in that time Heathrow have never managed to win the argument for expansion which still remains the case today

"Nothing has changed. Building a third runway would be devastating for local residents who face losing their homes, schools, community centre and village life. It also remains a disaster for air pollution, noise levels and our effort to tackle climate change".

There will be many more arguments, maybe legal challenges, and debates in the labour movement.

Solidarity argues for opposing all new airport expansion.

The advantages to working-class people of airport expansion (more cheap travel, new jobs) could be much better got by expanding and cheapening rail and coach travel.

As of 2008, almost a quarter of flights from Heathrow were to destinations less than 500km away, and already well-served by train. A 2013 report had similar findings: 20 to 25% of flights to short-haul destinations. The government's own estimates are that rail travel per passenger brings 10% of the pollution of air travel.

There are longstanding concerns about noise and about air quality close to airports. However the biggest factor is the impact of aviation emissions on climate change.

In response to a parliamentary question on 2 May 2007, aviation minister Gillian Merron said that aviation represented 6.3% of UK emissions. However she added that if the effects of "radiative forcing" i.e. burning greenhouses gases at a higher altitude, are added, the figure for flights departing the UK would be approximately 13% of total UK emissions.

According to the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, international emissions from aviation went up by nearly 50% between 1990 and 2000. It estimates that, including the effects of radiative forcing, aviation is on track to account for between 50% and 100% of the UK total carbon budget by 2050.

The real driver for airport expansion is that it will benefit corporations in and around London. Future Heathrow says that 70% of new businesses locating in the UK do so within one hour of Heathrow.

Heathrow expansion is about meeting the "needs" of business people to fly directly to business nodes across the globe or to locations within the UK.

A socialist who grew with the mo



Ernie Lane was an active fighter for revolutionary socialist politics — as he understood them, in different ways over the years — in Brisbane, Australia, from the late 1880s through to 1954, a model of persistence and tenacity though not always of acuity. Jeff Rickertt, author of a recently-published biography of Ernie, *The Conscientious Communist*, talked with *Solidarity* about Ernie and about the book.

Solidarity: Why choose Ernie Lane to write about?

Jeff Rickertt: I was interested in pre-Bolshevik socialism in Australia, and even the better books written about that don't have much in them about Queensland.

Another reason for writing about Ernie was his political longevity. He spanned the whole period of pre-Bolshevik socialism, from the Single-Taxers (following Henry George) and utopian colony-building through to "state socialism" in the early Australian Labor Party and the revolutionary syndicalism of the IWW and the One Big Union movement.

The way he learned and changed gives a picture of all the different currents.

In terms of density of description, the book focuses most on World War One. That was when Ernie was most prominent, in the anti-conscription movement, in the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), and in the Australian Labor Party. He also had relations with the Wobblies (the IWW), and became a conduit for their propaganda into the state.

Ernie is interesting as an individual who had the capacity to think and change and reflect on new situations, to take up new ideas and figure out how they could be applied.

He had the capacity to operate in a non-sectarian way. He maintained links with the Wobblies and with the Bolshevik Russian émigrés in Brisbane at the same time that he served on the Executive of the Queensland Labor Party (though he hardly ever had a win there). That capacity to work with different forces across the far left and through to the social-democratic mainstream is something we can learn from today. Some other groups of his time, like the Australian Socialist Party, did not have the capacity.

On a personal level, all socialists can be inspired by Ernie Lane's political longevity. Ernie had bouts of doubt, and even depression, but he always found a way to bounce back on the basis of a new surge of activity by the working class. His story tells us that in all circumstances socialists and Marxists have to be critical, and not just rely on ideas handed down to them.

When Ernie first became a socialist, in the late 1880s, there was a dearth of Marxist literature here. Ernie was able to learn from people like Francis Adams and Alfred Yewen who had been involved with William Morris's Socialist League in London, and then

brought Marxism to Sydney and Brisbane, but beyond that the education of the early socialist movement was rudimentary.

By the beginning of the 20th century, they began to get more literature, especially from the Kerr publishing company in the USA linked with the American Socialist Party. They also had people like Tom Mann coming from England.

The criticisms of "state socialism" were soon tested in practice. The defeat of the great strikes in the 1890s showed that the state was consolidating as a bourgeois apparatus, with bodies of armed men and so on. One response was to withdraw from the struggle altogether and set up separate colonies along socialist lines. Ernie's brother William led this current, which resulted in some of the most courageous worker activists of that generation sailing off to found a "New Australia" in the wilderness of Paraguay. The other response, paradoxically, was to concentrate even more on capturing the state apparatus here in Australia. This was the route Ernie took.

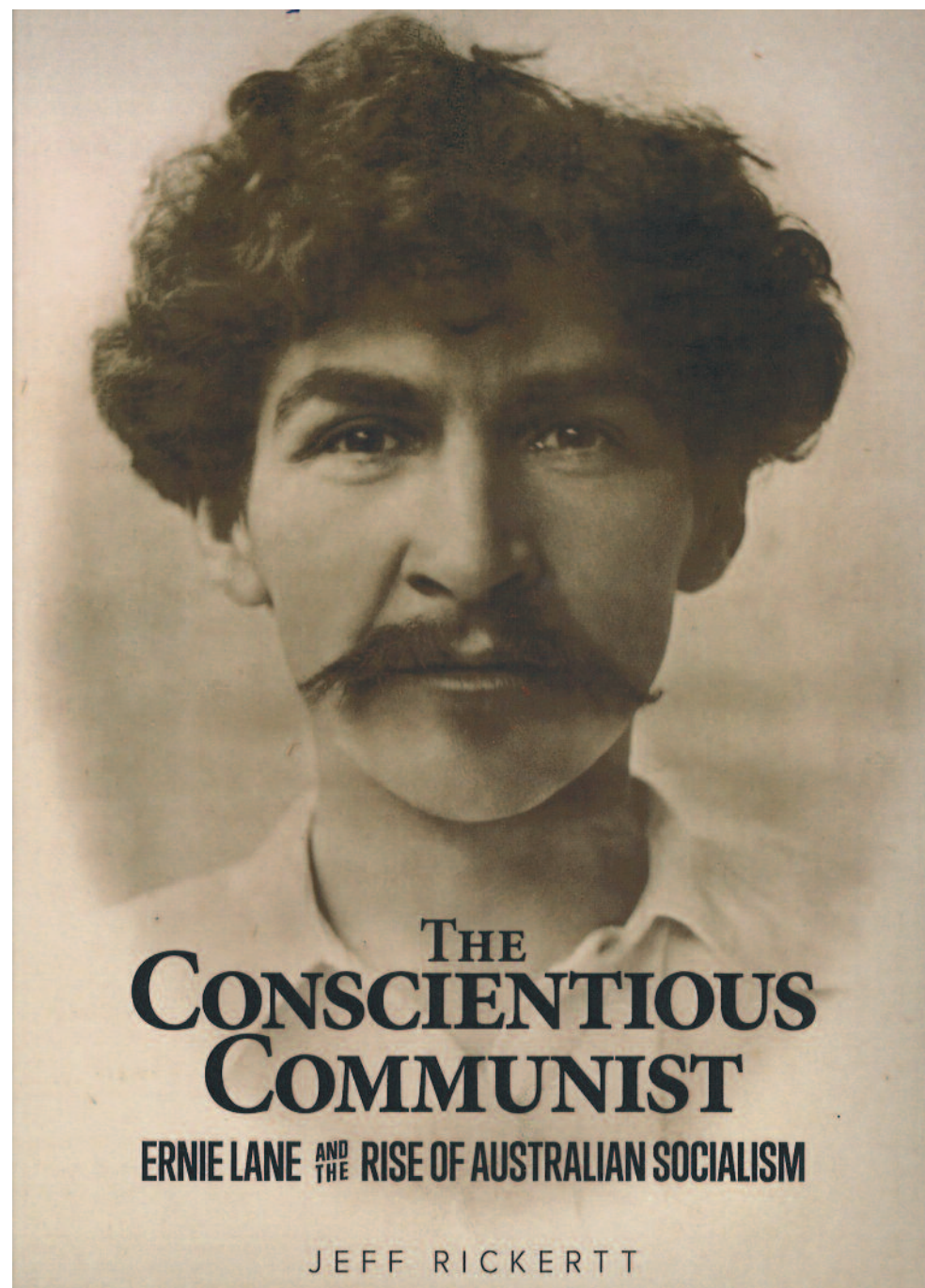
Then Labor began to win power, and in the process went out of its way to assure the owners of capital that they were safe. The original socialisation program was abandoned. Also, workers in industries that were nationalised found they were not immune from being bossed around and screwed. The classic case is the state-run railways in New South Wales, where management attempts to introduce Taylorist speed-up techniques sparked a general strike in 1917.

Workers began drawing conclusions, and that gave the oxygen for the IWW to become a force in Australia — much more as an ideological influence than as a workplace-organising effort, though it did lead a number of small strikes in North Queensland.

Ernie's trajectory was confusing and contradictory at times. He was sometimes a cipher for the confusion around him. He clung to the Labor Party but simultaneously became a revolutionary industrial unionist.

In some ways his views in that period struck me as close to De Leon's, arguing that workers cannot ignore parliamentary politics and yet real change must come from the industrial movement. Ernie had the idea that at some point the industrial movement would be able to take control of industry, and at that point the Labor Party too would come under the control of the industrial movement. The Labor Party itself would never introduce socialism, but the workers' movement needed to be active in politics.

The single hardest thing for me to explain, when writing the book, was why, after spending a decade fighting for socialist ideas in Australia, Ernie decided in 1903 to move to the settlement in Paraguay. There were family loyalties [Ernie's brother John, who had replaced William as a leader of the colony, wanted him to go], but those were also times of despair for Ernie. He felt that socialists in Australia were not making any headway, his own socialist group in Queensland, the Social Democratic Vanguard, was struggling to have any influence, and I think the despair affected his thinking. He was also tired of the grind of dead-end jobs where he



was often victimised because of his public profile as a radical.

The term "state socialism" has had many meanings. When Bronterre O'Brien's strand of the Chartist movement were called "state socialists", that meant that they were for political activity as distinct from building utopian colonies or cooperative institutions inside existing society. Later, when the Second International denounced "state socialism", they meant bourgeois reformism "from above", or the reduction of socialist goals to mere public ownership of industry...

In Australia, "state socialism" took a meaning different from in other countries. It meant building a parliamentary party of the labour movement that could come to power and begin a program of nationalisation which would reach the point when all the main productive industries came under state control.

In Australia in the late 19th century, the bourgeois state was not yet consolidated. There'd been parliaments in the different colonies, but the infrastructure of the state was still in its infancy. That coloured the way

that the early worker activists in Australia regarded the state: they genuinely thought it possible to capture that apparatus, and through it take control of industry.

The enemy was seen as monopoly capital, typically represented in the labour press as Mr Fat, and "state socialism" was seen as the possibility of building something different in Australia from in Britain. The employers were shit-scared of labour turning to parliamentary politics. In Queensland they even systematically removed workers from the electoral rolls.

As you've explained, early Australian socialism had a nationalist tint, seeing the enemy as foreign capital and the answer as making Australia a unique country. Humphrey McQueen's classic *A New Britannia* builds on that fact to argue that the early Australian labour movement was thoroughly corrupted by nationalism and racism. What light does your research shed on that argument?

I think the later Stalinist ideas of "socialism in one country" based on bureaucratic control of industry in the name of the working

ovement

class were, in the Australian context, a reformulation of the “state socialism” and nationalism of the early years of the movement.

But Humphrey’s analysis is based on the view that essentially the early Australian labour movement was a petty-bourgeois movement. The activists and the leaders were small landholders, artisans, urban professionals. Out of that petty-bourgeois socialist milieu you had the idea that Australia could become a country of unique social equality, maybe a country of small landholders.

Humphrey is right about the background of many founders of the Australian labour movement. But there were many worker-socialists too, like Ernie and his comrades in the Social Democratic Vanguard in Brisbane.

Ernie came from a petty-bourgeois family background, but his experience from the time he arrived in Brisbane at the age of 15 was as a member of the working class — farm labourer, grocer’s assistant, warehouse assistant. When he first got involved in forming a socialist group in Brisbane, he got sacked and had to go bush to find a job to support his family.

The worker-socialists did buy into the nationalist project of Australia as a unique new country, but ultimately they were more open to workers’ unity across barriers of nation and ethnicity. For example, we see Ernie winning substantial minority support for a racially-inclusive membership policy at the 1912 state conference of the AWU. We see Wobblies in North Queensland leading strikes against racist employment policies pushed by AWU officials.

As a young man, Ernie was influenced by his big brother William, a strident racist. I think William learned his racism from his experience in the USA in the Knights of Labor in the 1880s. But even in the early years Ernie was close to people like Francis Adams who were challenging William’s racism. He was influenced also by his exposure to workers’ struggles in Argentina, after he left Paraguay.

In the anti-conscription movement of 1916-7, Ernie’s anti-racism seemed to go up in smoke. He was on the literature committee of the movement, and everything it put out against conscription was tinged by racist and nationalist ideas. We find racist ideas in Ernie’s own writings at the time, too.

Evidently his anti-racism was shaky, and it’s true that in the *Daily Standard* [a labour movement newspaper in Brisbane where he

was a columnist from 1915 to 1931] he never mentioned Aboriginal Australians. But, under the influence of the IWW and later of the early Communist International, his anti-racism strengthened.

Ernie was a strong supporter of the Russian Revolution, and quit the Labor Party in 1925 because it excluded Communists. Yet he did not join the Communist Party in the 1920s, when it was a genuine revolutionary socialist party, though frail and with many faults; he endorsed it and worked with it (though he never joined) only from the late 1930s, when the CPA had become thoroughly Stalinist. Why was that?

Ernie thought that socialism was also about comradeship in the movement of today, whether in industrial unionism or in a political party. He had an instinctive aversion to sectarianism, coupled with an abiding confidence in the “toiling masses”. The early CPA’s quite crude formulation of vanguardism left him cold.

Ernie’s disgust at some CPA tactics, and a lingering loyalty to the Labor Party, held him back. When he left the Labor Party in 1925, he found it emotionally quite difficult.

After resigning from the Labor Party, and losing his positions in the AWU, Ernie essentially dropped out of active politics, though for a few years he managed to keep his column in the *Daily Standard*. Then, when he published his autobiography *Dawn to Dusk* in 1939, his own children were active in the CPA or close to it, and he began to work with the CPA too.

It is odd that in *Dawn to Dusk*, Ernie uses the old Stalinist definition of the Labor Party as “fascist”, though the CPA itself had abandoned that definition many years before. Did you find any record of Ernie’s activities and attitudes during the Spanish Civil War?

I found no mention of the Spanish Civil War in the records, although Ernie’s son-in-law Clarrie Beckingham was one of the main Brisbane organisers of CPA-backed campaigns to support Republican Spain in the Civil War. I suspect Ernie did attend meetings after 1925, but it is hard to find records of that.

Dawn to Dusk is a bitter book. Ernie was still very bitter about the Labor leaders who had betrayed the movement. So the “social fascist” label, though outdated, suited Ernie’s strong emotional reaction against the traitors and careerists, many of whom he had known well.

You also have to remember that the Communist Party in Australia was not quite the

Stalinist monolith it was in countries more in Moscow’s eye. In Queensland, even in the 1930s, CPAers tended to run their own show, and CPA statements could often be at odds with each other, with different versions from different leading people. Amidst this confusion, the language of social fascism lived on.

It is difficult to get into Ernie’s mind on issues like the Moscow Trials and the cult of Stalin, because the archives do not contain much that he wrote in that period, other than his work for the *Daily Standard* and *Courier-Mail*, mostly reports of local trade-union matters. There are some letters to Ted Brady [an old comrade of Ernie’s] from that period, which give you a general idea that Ernie believed that with the growth of the CPA in the 1930s, communism was on the up.

Ernie had been involved in, or tried to form, lots of socialist groups which, as he saw it, could exert pressure on the labour movement to keep it true to the socialist path. They had all come and gone, risen and collapsed. So we shouldn’t underestimate how impressive the growth of the CPA in the 1930s would have seemed to him. The CPA was growing, it had led important struggles, in the unions it was a force to be reckoned with. The Party’s success seemed to vindicate his own life of socialist activism. And he would have been flattered by the attention he got from the CPA as a “socialist pioneer”.

I don’t think Ernie would have had contact with Trotskyists, or left critical perspectives on the USSR, even though the Trotskyist Nick Origlass was in Brisbane in the mid-30s as a construction worker on the Walter Taylor Bridge.

Your book mentions that the writings of Shelley and William Morris helped win Ernie to socialism. What other writing do you think most influenced him?

He was a huge reader. One of his columns in the *Daily Standard* paraphrases the Communist Manifesto. In his early years he read a lot of anarchist literature. His granddaughter Iris still has some of his books — Shelley, other poets, socialist novels, Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid*. In *Dawn to Dusk* Ernie reprinted the 1913 booklist of the AWA [the union he was then active in: the top four texts on the list were *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, by Oscar Wilde; *My Country Right or Wrong*, by Gustave Hervé; *Studies in Socialism*, by Jean Jaurès; and *Fabian Essays on Socialism*].

But after he returned from Paraguay I think the single biggest written influence on him was Kerr’s *International Socialist Review*.

• Abridged. Full text at www.workersliberty.org/node/27189

Ernie Lane, 1868-1954



1887: influenced by Shelley, William Morris, and his older brother William, Ernie becomes a socialist. He is a teenager recently arrived in Brisbane from England.

1888-9: active with Australian Socialist League in

Sydney.

1889-90: works as a labourer in California.

1890-6: returns to Australia, active in support of big strikes of those years.

1896-7: becomes founding secretary of Queensland Socialist League, which aims to be an educational outrider for Labor Party (founded 1891). It collapses when Lane leaves Brisbane in 1897-8 to find work in rural Queensland.

1900: becomes founding secretary of Social Democratic Vanguard, a group with aims similar to QSL but larger.

Early 1903: goes to Paraguay with his family to join utopian communist colony set up by his brother William. The colony collapses in late 1904; Ernie gets a job in a meat works near Buenos Aires, where he takes part in a mass strike.

1907: returns to Brisbane; becomes SDV secretary again in 1909; becomes active in a general union, the AWA, which will later merge into the AWU (Australian Workers’ Union, long Australia’s biggest general union) and in the AWA Literature Committee, which circulates socialist pamphlets, especially from the USA.

1912: takes part in Brisbane general strike (in solidarity with tram workers sacked for wearing union badges).

1915: becomes columnist for *Daily Standard*, paper established by unions following 1912 strike.

1916-7: leading activist in anti-conscription campaign.

1918: one of the first in Australia boldly to endorse the Bolshevik revolution; but Ernie does not join the Communist Party of Australia when it is founded in 1920. He remains active in the Australian Labor Party, in the AWU, in the One Big Union movement, and through his *Daily Standard* column.

1925: leaves the Labor Party in protest at its exclusion of Communists, and around the same time loses his positions in the AWU.

1931: sacked from the *Daily Standard*; becomes an industrial reporter for the mainstream local capitalist paper, the *Courier-Mail*.

1937: dropped from *Courier-Mail*.

1939: publishes an autobiography, *Dawn to Dusk*. The now-Stalinist Communist Party of Australia promotes the book, and from 1939 to his death in 1954 Ernie has an occasional collaboration with the CPA.

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The Anthropocene or Capitalocene?

By Neil Laker

In 2008, the International Commission on Stratigraphy created a Working Group on the Anthropocene (WGA) to examine the addition of a new epoch to the geological time scale.

In August 2016, all but one of the WGA's 35 members agreed that the Anthropocene is "stratigraphically real", and 30 agreed that the new epoch should be formally added to the time scale. Majority opinion also indicated in favour of the view that globally synchronous changes to the Earth System most clearly intensified in the "Great Acceleration" of the mid-20th century.¹

While recognition of recent transformations to the global environment is welcome, this article takes a critical look at the Anthropocene concept, in particular on its ambiguity in relation to capitalism. I argue that this is not merely a debate over a word, but about how we think about ecological crisis, including how it is implicated with the crisis of capitalism and the drive for greater exploitation of labour.

The term Anthropocene suggests a geological departure from the Holocene due to anthropogenic (i.e. human) activity. Linguistically the latter period translates to something like wholly recent, referring to fossil sediment; whereas the former may be translated as a geological era characterised by the remains of recent human origin. Theorisation of a new epoch, suggests Crutzen, was compelled by the recognition that "human activities had grown so much that they could compete and interfere with natural processes".² Resultantly, the Earth "is rapidly moving into a less biologically diverse, less forested, much warmer, and probably wetter and stormier state".³

Other transformations which give grounds to think that Holocene conditions now no longer exist include the increases in atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane; the resultant reversal of hitherto slowly declining global average temperatures after 1800; the rise of sea levels between 1905 and 1945; radiation from Plutonium 239; and the onset of the Earth's sixth mass species extinction.⁴ Such unprecedented rapid change is in stark contrast to the minimal range of variation in conditions over the last 500,000 years.⁵ Indeed it is feared that "mankind will remain a major geological force for many millennia, maybe millions of years, to come".⁶

From the standpoint of environmental science, everything mentioned above is sound. However there is a series of problems with the way that the Anthropocene thesis is framed, its implications, and the role it performs. (This is not to say that there are no critical scholars behind the theory; Marxist ecologists such as Ian Angus and John Bellamy Foster have written extensively in its defence).⁷

One recurring problem is expressed in the notion that "the earth has left its natural geological epoch" or that "natural processes" have been interrupted by human activity.⁸ In other words, even though humans are recognised as a geophysical force, distinctions between "human constructions" and "natural constructions" persist.⁹ Humans are constituted as external to, and separate from nature — an opposition which lends itself to an intellectual bias in favour of "nature", against "society", without any acknowledgement of their interdependence, and that humans are a mere part of nature, as Marx noted in 1844.

This problem may also be seen in the man-



Industrial farming in Spain

ner in which problems are framed by the science: "Are humans overwhelming the great forces of nature?" ask Steffen et al. (2007). Jason Moore has observed that this method lends itself to a writing of history based on arithmetic — "human activity plus significant biospheric change equals the Anthropocene".¹⁰ But a purely empirical approach is insufficient — it encourages an approach to reality as "bundles of quantitative aggregates", without interrogation of the historical relations from where the sums derive their power and meaning.

For a Marxist understanding of global ecology, relations of class, gender and race under capitalism must be central, alongside and informed by the work of natural science. Yet the reality of Anthropocene thought is not concerned with such questions: much of it is written by geologists and natural scientists with little inclination toward a critical conception of oppression.¹¹

Thus Andreas Malm has suggested that the Anthropocene represents an attempt to conceptually traverse the gap between the natural and the social — already blended in reality — through the construction of a bridge from one side only, leading the traffic, as it were, in a direction opposite to the actual process. In climate change, social relations determine natural conditions; in Anthropocene thinking, natural scientists extend their worldviews to society.¹²

Anthropocene science therefore tends to eternalise capitalist social relations through its refusal to inquire into them. It resembles the portrayal of capital in bourgeois political economy as a "necessary feature of the human labour process as such, irrespective of the historical forms it has assumed; it is consequently something permanent, determined by the nature of human labour itself" (Marx, *Capital* vol I).¹³

The key issue is captured in its name: our entire species is cast against nature. "It is an accusation, a responsabilisation, and a call to action levied upon humankind" (Matthew Lepori)¹⁴, with little space for the class conflicts amongst humans in the process of environmental degradation, and nothing of the simultaneous appropriation of nature and exploitation of labour constantly required to make capital accumulation possible.

The Marxist apologists for this have to revert to an argument over narrative simplicity, or in favour of not picking fights with natural scientists. But the logic of the Anthropocene thesis suggests we are collectively responsible for the deposit of nuclear radiation in ge-

ological strata; that the impoverished worker of the advanced capitalist states is equally culpable for carbon emissions with her private jet-owning boss; and likewise that one of the 2.6 billion people in the proto-fossil fuel economy who still relied on biomass for cooking as of 2012 is just as culpable for the Earth's predicament as the petrocapiatist.¹⁵

The reality, however, is of a species divided. The advanced capitalist countries comprise 16.6% of the world population, but were responsible for 77.1% of the CO₂ emitted since 1850; they were responsible for 86 of the 107 parts per million by which the CO₂ concentration rose from 1850 to 2006. In the early 21st century, the poorest 45% of humanity generated 7% of current CO₂ emissions, while the richest 7% produced 50%.¹⁶

DATING

The problem is again epitomised through how much of the research recognises that something radical and unique was taking place from the early 19th century onwards — but there is a conspicuous reluctance to name these transformations as capitalist.

Rather they prefer to blame "industrialisation" from 1800, and the "great acceleration" after 1950.¹⁷ This latter period of dramatic environmental transformations in the postwar era has consensus in the WGA as the starting point for the Anthropocene.¹⁸ Malm has criticised the association of industrialisation and humans as a whole, given the latter "did not figure as an actor on the historical stage". Rather the industrial revolution and the spike in environmental degradation it produced were defined by private ownership of industry and the formation of a dispossessed, waged labouring class.¹⁹

A better focus is offered by Jason Moore's objection to the focus on the industrial and nuclear revolutions, emphasising instead the global reorganisation of nature in "the rise of capitalist civilisation after 1450, with its audacious strategies of global conquest, endless commodification, and relentless rationalization". This reveals the "relations of power, capital, and nature that rendered fossil capitalism so deadly in the first place".²⁰ This must be qualified by recognition of the spikes in pollutant activity with the exponential growth of fossil fuel machines and transport, while maintaining focus on the regime of exploitation and appropriation which make this possible (and guarantee further, deepening ecological crises).

To his credit, Ian Angus — a prominent pro-Anthropocene Marxist — acknowledges

that the absence of critical theory from Anthropocene theory "has been particularly damaging for Earth system science, which now has a clear view of the physical, chemical, and biological threats to our world, but offers little insight into the underlying causes of the postwar explosion of environmentally destructive activity".²¹

Yet later in the same article, he hits back at those critics "carping from the sidelines about the scientists' lack of social analysis", suggesting that "ecosocialists need to approach the Anthropocene project as an opportunity to unite an ecological Marxist analysis with the latest scientific research, in a new synthesis — a socio-ecological account of the origins, nature, and direction of the current crisis in the Earth system."

Yet the starting point for doing so cannot be to concede that the oppressed are responsible for the planetary crisis. We must take on board environmental science's findings, but we must do so critically. This means rejection of those theories when they are associated with the obfuscation of capital's overwhelming role in producing the crisis.

The term Anthropocene, says Angus, must be accepted as it follows the pattern and Greek form set by geological institutions.²² The point however, is that the notion of "recent human origin" is not one that should be accepted by those who understand those remains as capitalist, rather than simply human — whatever the tradition amongst geologists. As Malm has noted:

"More than ever, class divisions will become matters of life and death: who gets to drive out of the city when the hurricane approaches; who can pay for seawalls or homes solid enough to withstand the coming flood."

"The capitalist class is evidently not very worried... a more scientifically accurate designation, then, would be 'the Capitalocene'. This is the geology not of mankind, but of capital accumulation."²³

Notes

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The SNP and antisemitic tropes

By Dale Street

"Unfortunately, a comment on this thread has been deleted and the user banned for repeated antisemitic comments. Bigotry or any form of racial or religious discrimination, be it Islamophobia or antisemitism, simply will not be tolerated on this page."

That was the commitment given by the SNP Friends of Palestine (FoP) on its public Facebook page in December 2015. It is a commitment that the campaign has spectacularly failed to implement.

Over the past ten months its Facebook page has carried a plethora of textbook examples of how traditional antisemitic tropes are incorporated into what passes for criticism of Israel and Zionism.

One of the most common of those tropes is that of wealthy, powerful Jews who, behind the scenes, control politicians and the policies of elected governments.

According to one contributor to the page, it is "the American Jewish Lobby" which bears the historical blame for the current "ghastly situation": "I was there while there was still a country called Palestine, although the poor Russian Jews chucked out of their own country were already infiltrating (Tel Aviv and Nablus at the foot of the Sea of Galilee) by courtesy of the American Jewish Lobby. Those are the people we have to thank for this ghastly situation." (17 May 2016).

Another saw Rothschild money in play in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, when the British Foreign Secretary backed the creation of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine: "Jewish and Arabs had lived side-by-side for decades until Arthur Balfour was probably provided financial security by the Rothschild scum to enforce this on their behalf." (22 February 2016)

"Zionists" have continued to exercise a decisive political influence down to the present, and do so at a global level: "Just confirms who is actually running world politics, make up rules only to suit themselves. We all know that Zionists have hijacked the Jewish religion for their own gains. Next law to come in will [make it] antisemitic to say anything against the Zionists." (28 April 2016)

Like Balfour, contemporary British politicians continue to be bought off by "Zionists" (SNP politicians are doubtless an exception.) This explains their supposed reluctance to criticise Israel, and their loyalty to Israel rather than Britain: "Politicians are bought by Zionists and do more for Israel than they do for the UK. Labour Friends of Israel and Conservative Friends of Israel need to be banned. (UK politicians silent about Palestinian deaths.)" (17 April 2016)

"We all know that the US and UK governments and their allies have been bribed by those Zionist supporters because they are part of the status quo. They have blood on their hands! The Israel state itself is a big lie!" (5 March 2016)

"And of course the pro-Israel politicians will just go along with whatever any pro-Israel lobby group tells them. About time to kick Jewish/Israeli lobbyists out of British politics." (25 February 2016).

The expression "Jewish/Israeli lobbyists" is defended on the basis that one lobby is merely the new version of an older one. This is certainly true – in the sense that the contemporary trope of the powerful Israeli lobby is used as the direct successor of the older trope of the powerful Jewish lobby: "It used to be called the Jewish lobby, now called the Israeli lobby. Same lobbyists and same peo-



Nothing to see here?

ple. So, yes, the two are the same. Politicians that are friends of Israel do what they can for Israel no matter what is against them. Sometimes it seems they do more for Israel than the UK, yet they are British politicians." (25 February 2016)

Accusations of antisemitism trigger particular indignation on the page, are denounced as further evidence of the behind-the-scenes power wielded by Jews. The expression itself (first used by Wilhelm Marr in the 1870s, during the German-nationalist period of his political evolution) is dismissed as a Zionist invention which should now be dispensed with: "The term 'antisemitism', coined in the 1880s by the Zionist movement to raise the perception of persecution among Europe's Jews and so encourage them to make 'Aliyah', should now be consigned to its true position, merely a facet of racial and religious bigotry, and, as such, abhorred." (18 February 2016)

Such accusations are used to cover up Israeli crimes by browbeating and intimidating opponents of Israel: "The birth name of the new Israeli Ambassador to the UK, Mark Regev, was Freedland, the same as the apologist commentator of the Guardian. Different continents perhaps but... Jonathan Freedland's contrived argument is just that — a contorted apology for an apartheid state" (3 May 2016).

NEW MCCARTHYISM?

In April 2016 the page administrators themselves posted a link to an article by SNP FoP member Craig Murray entitled "The New McCarthyism – The 'Anti-Semitism' Hysteria Gripping the UK". According to the article:

"The attack on new NUS President Malia Bouattia is a truly horrible piece of witch-hunting. But it is useful in one thing. It makes the witch-hunt's primary method, the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism, absolutely explicit.

"That is the entire intellectual basis of the current witch-hunt, which operates solely on conflating the anti-Zionism of Tony Greenstein with antisemitism. ... I have yet to encounter any (antisemitism) in Scotland."

Antisemitism can even be justified, provided that its proponents hate Jews for the

'right' reasons:

"If antisemitism is hating Jews for being born Jewish, then, of course, that kind of hatred must be opposed because it is utterly vile. However, if you oppose the support of many Jews for Israel, that is an entirely different matter.

"Everyone should read *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by Professor Ilan Pappé of Exeter University, himself an Israeli Jew. It is clear from his research that violent ethnic cleansing and racism were absolutely integral and necessary for the creation of a Jewish state. So, if you are a supporter of Israel, you condone racism and violent ethnic cleansing." (23 April 16)

For some contributors to the SNP FoP Facebook page anyone who supports Israel's right to exist is automatically deemed to be a racist: "I'm afraid to say that the British Political and Media establishment (including leading members of the Labour Party and the Guardian) condone racism.

"If you 'support Israel's right to exist', if you support the 'right of the Jewish People to self-determination' you must also support the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 human beings in 1948. It is as simple as that." (18 April 2016)

Equating support for Israel's right to exist with racism is a "logical" consequence of the way in which Israel is portrayed and defined as uniquely evil in contributions to the SNP FoP Facebook page.

That portrayal and that definition go well beyond the parameters of 'robust criticism': "Our only home has been made into a trap, prison and concentration camp, complete with seven decades of rampant barbaric extermination and torture upon the innocent natives by the blood-stained hands of Israel." (27 April 2016)

A comment posted on the occasion of a visit to Israel by a delegation of Scottish Tories ("Scottish Zionists, shameless and abhorrent") made clear that such hostility is directed not just at Israel's state policies but at its population as well: "All the people I despise will be in one place then." (6 August 2016)

The antisemitic dissolution of the distinction between the perpetrators and the victims of the Holocaust is also a regular feature of contributions to the SNP FoP Facebook page: "The Zionists are building up for more

slaughter to be unleashed upon the Palestinian race. Disgusting immoral acts carried out by evil savages. Their desire to obliterate Palestinians cannot be denied, no matter how many times they say the opposite. The world needs to waken up to the new Nazis." (6 September 2016)

"They learned their tactics from the Nazis, but have forgotten that the ultimate result was defeat." (1 September 2016)

"Their paranoia about young children and torturing them and imprisoning them for longer than the evil Zionist bastard who incinerated a young boy's parents and baby brother says it all about these modern-day Nazis." (4 August 2016)

"I've just been to Berlin and quite rightly seen so many images and read lots of text about the history of what happened to the innocent Jewish people. Sadly, when I was in Palestine. I witnessed many things from history repeating itself." (19 April 2016)

A comprehensive programme of boycott, disinvestments and sanctions against Israel is promoted by posts on the Facebook page as the appropriate political response:

"Jews all over the world need to know that their murderous project in Israel is unacceptable. They have the best chance of reigning in Natty's death squads. For the rest of us, we have BDS." (28 April 2016)

"Don't listen to Israhell, keep on boycotting, disinvesting, condemning Israhell!" (4 March 2016)

"Buy nothing from these apartheid murdering scum!" (25 February 2016)

"Bargepoles at the ready, and take your reading glasses to the shops." (25 February 2016)

The SNP FoP is not a fringe organisation. Launched in mid-2015, it has the support of 29 of the SNP's 54 MPs. Two MPs and two MSPs are members of its National Executive Committee.

The campaign can argue that not all the offending posts come from actual members of the SNP FoP. This is true. In fact, some of the worst posts appear to come from solidarity activists outside of the SNP.

The SNP FoP might escape criticism for hosting some of these posts on its Facebook page if it used the less repellent ones as an opportunity to open up an argument about what is wrong with their politics. But the campaign does not do that. As a result, the SNP FoP Facebook page ends up as an echo chamber for a collection of antisemitic tropes masquerading as "legitimate criticism" of Israel:

Rich and powerful Jews; behind-the-scenes control of politicians and governments by the Jewish/Israeli lobby; equations of Israel with Nazi Germany; a denial of Israel's right to exist, and a blanket dismissal of the bona fides of allegations of antisemitism.

According to SNP MP Stewart McDonald, a founder member of the SNP FoP: "These worst excesses (of 'naked antisemitism emerging in its vilest form') have not been seen in the SNP Friends of Palestine but we must be constantly vigilant. Most antisemitism is not overt, relying on ancient tropes which are easily recycled into the modern age of memes and viral media."

McDonald is someone who does not counterpose Palestinian national rights to Israeli national rights. In fact, he is currently being denounced by some of his erstwhile allies for supporting the creation of SNP Friends of a Two-States Solution.

But there certainly seems to have been a shortfall in the "constant vigilance" which he rightly advocates.

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

Sunday 30 October

I, Daniel Blake film showing and Q&A
12.30pm, Tyneside Cinema, 10 Pilgrim Street, NE1 6QG
bit.ly/2eNvzcm

Monday 31 October

Bursary or Bust sleep-out for the NHS
Department of Health, Whitehall, London
bit.ly/2dFtUcN

Thursday 2 November

Sheffield Momentum AGM
7pm, Central United Reform Church, Sheffield, S1 2JB
bit.ly/2dLn6WH

Saturday 5 November

National Libraries, Galleries and Museums demonstration
12 noon, British Library, London
bit.ly/2cjMI0O

Saturday 5 November

Cleaners' protest at John Lewis
2pm, John Lewis, Oxford Street, London, W1A 1EX
bit.ly/2dIqpzw

Friday 11 November

'Every cook can govern' film showing
7.30pm, Brixton Library, London, SW2 1JQ
bit.ly/2eNu7q1

Thursday 17 November

NUT demonstration: Invest — don't cut
5pm, outside Downing Street, Whitehall, London
bit.ly/2dFtPk

Got an event you want listing?
solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

New stitch-up in Brighton

LABOUR

Mark Sandell, elected chair of Brighton and Hove Labour Party, spoke to *Solidarity*.

After Jeremy Corbyn's second leadership victory and the gerrymandering by the National Executive Committee at Labour Party conference, the stage was set.

As the elected chair of Brighton and Hove, I received a letter expelling me from the Labour Party; and the Disputes Committee decided that Brighton and Hove should be broken up into three Constituency Labour Parties.

The process is to be overseen by a steering committee made up of the old executive and some of those elected at the 9 July AGM after which the district Labour Party was suspended — all of the losers and a few of the winners.

No outcome from the investigation for the sake of which Brighton and Hove was suspended has been mentioned! Why bother? The job's done.

Labour Party members in Brighton and Hove still have no idea when the CLPs will meet. The right will want them to be small meetings of delegates, undercutting the promise of mobilising the new mass membership. Oversight of the council too will go to another

backroom committee rather than an all members' meeting.

The background is that Brighton and Hove had a unique set-up, the by-product of an intervention of the national party to suppress a left wing CLP. The Brighton and Hove Labour party had branch meetings and an all-members district party bringing together members from all three Brighton and Hove constituencies.

After Corbyn's first victory, the party was still controlled by an executive dominated by the right. The agenda of meetings was designed to block debate or criticism of the Labour controlled council and Hove MP Peter Kyle. Arguments over the right to take motions led to heated debates, and the executive would invite the local council leadership to talk for hours before any motions could be discussed.

On 9 July we stood a "Confidence in Corbyn" slate for the executive. It was the first time we had seen the new members turning out to a meeting in such numbers, and the average age dropped by over a decade. With over 600 attending, all candidates agreed to the Chair's proposal to run three consecutive sessions in the 250 capacity hall.

Unlike some previous Brighton and Hove Labour Party meetings, and despite the obvious alarm on the faces of the Labour councillors and the local Labour MP, everyone

was very calm.

The "Confidence in Corbyn" slate won all the officer posts by over 62%. The candidate I defeated as Chair sought me out in a pub where I was drinking with friends to shake my hand and congratulate me.

But the day after the AGM local council leader Warren Morgan was circulating lies via social media and then the press that someone spat at a security guard and that the MP had been abused. On 14 July the Labour Party wrote to local members to tell them that the AGM was annulled, and our party could not meet for any reason, even to nominate a candidate for leader.

A laughable investigation was carried out by the Regional Labour Party. At my interview I asked the AGM would be upheld if nothing was found to have been wrong. I was given three answers: yes, probably not, and no.

The role of the left in Brighton and Hove now should be to find ways to get members who want to support anti-austerity politics actively involved in campaigns and meetings.

Some new members will be demoralised by their votes being stolen and their meeting being lied about.

The left needs to get back to campaigning on the politics that drew those people to Labour.

Get ready for Momentum conference!

By Sacha Ismail

Momentum's (first) national conference isn't until February, and in fact the date has not been set. Nonetheless Momentum activists need to get prepared now.

This is an opportunity to democratise Momentum and push it towards more active campaigning and towards class-struggle socialist politics.

The first challenge is to ensure a democratic conference with control over Momentum policy and decision-making. Some oppose the conference taking motions and oppose a conference being held regularly with delegates from local groups — the only way meaningful democratic control can be established in a large organisation. The most widely touted alternative is every Momentum member being able to vote online. This would give a semblance of participation without real democracy, and lend itself to manipulation by dominant individuals and groups in and around the Momentum office or with good media profiles.

Local groups and regional networks are currently discussing proposals for the organisation of the conference and for longer-term structures to be established by the conference. Workers' Liberty supporters are promoting the proposals written by national Steering Committee member Jill Mountford

and National Committee member Ed Whitby.

They involve: the 5 November NC meeting deciding the shape of the conference; a delegate-based conference which votes on motions from groups and elects about half the NC, with most of the other half elected by the regions; a Steering Committee elected by the NC; and similar structures in the longer term. Read the full proposals at bit.ly/2eqHWk6

The conference can also provide an opportunity to deal with specific problems like Momentum Youth and Students being denied control over their social media and Momentum members in Northern Ireland being told they are not allowed to organise a group.

The conference is also an opportunity to steer Momentum's politics in a more socialist direction — both in terms of its basic statement of aims and individual policies and proposals. The statements agreed at the first Momentum NC in February did, after some argument, use the word socialist, but they are not recognisably socialist in the sense of aiming for a new society without exploitation based on collective ownership of industry, services and finance.

Immediately crucial is the issue of migrants' rights. There are those in the organisation who want to endorse further attacks on freedom of movement — we need to push the

other way.

The conference will be an opportunity to assess the campaigning on the NHS which is currently being launched, work out Momentum's campaigning priorities for the period ahead, and discuss the barriers to getting groups and activists involved in such activity.

There should be a serious discussion about activity in the Labour Party, exchanging best practice and discussing problems faced, and working out clear Momentum goals, including on the so far much-avoided question of whether and how we should try to deselect right-wing MPs.

Uniting all this is changing the Momentum from an organisation with great life locally, but at a national level very much controlled from the top down — limiting its radicalism and militancy. A democratic organisation with a culture of debate and discussion, will allow the socialist aspirations of Momentum members to come to the fore.

Join the discussion in Momentum, push for democracy and socialist policies, and seek to become a delegate to the conference to help make all this happen.

- For Jill Mountford and Ed Whitby's documents, plus Jon Lansman's, see bit.ly/2eqHWk6
- To invite Jill to come and speak at your Momentum group, email jillmountford@rocketmail.com

Teaching assistants fight back

By Gemma Short

Teaching assistants in Derby and Durham have been fighting attacks on their terms and conditions.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, teaching assistants in Derby will have their pay slashed by 25% to bring them onto term-time only pay. Durham teaching assistants face a similar cut in pay, and the council is planning on sacking all the teaching assistants and reemploying them on the new contract to force through the changes, Durham council's "solution" would mean some workers only losing 10% of their pay — but working more hours for the privilege!

Teaching assistants in Derby struck on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 October when the council threatened to call the police on the pickets — because they were giving out balloons to students and parents! Their next planned strike has been



suspended to allow for negotiations with Derby council.

On Wednesday 19 October Durham teaching assistants, members of Unison, voted by 93% for strikes. A ballot of ATL members returned 84% in favour of strikes.

On Monday 24 October Durham teaching assistants started a week long silent vigil outside County Hall in Durham for half-term. They are taking shifts during the week to

have a constant presence at the County Hall which will end with a demonstration from 8am on Friday 28 October.

Durham campaign organiser Tina Patterson said: "We want to remind councillors that we are real people facing real financial hardship if the council goes ahead with these life-changing pay cuts."

Terror alert shows staff cuts risk

By the *Tubeworker* bulletin

A controlled explosion was carried out on a suspect package at North Greenwich Tube station on 20 October, highlighting the ongoing possibility of a further terrorist atrocity on London Underground.

Nobody was injured this time, and the diligence and professionalism of the workers involved must be recognised.

On 7/7, frontline London Underground staff were amongst the first to respond, rushing to incident scenes, arranging and facilitating emergency service response, and evacuating passengers to safety at stations across London.

However, at North Greenwich, *Tubeworker* understands that the

station was understaffed, and the control room was shut. This is a direct result of London Underground cutting hundreds of front line staff who were once responsible for the safety of hundreds of thousands of passengers.

Workers at North Greenwich responded excellently, but this situation could have turned out very differently. Tube bosses' job cuts and de-staffing of control rooms has made the Tube less safe.

RMT and TSSA are preparing ballots of their members on Tube stations for strikes against the cuts.

All Tube unions have called di-



rectly on the government to reinstate central government funding to TfL, which the Tories plan to end entirely by 2020.

• For more, see *Tubeworker's* blog, workersliberty.org/twblog

Southern guards strike, and drivers ballot

By Ollie Moore

Guards on Southern Rail who are members of the RMT union will strike again on 4-5 November.

Drivers' union Aslef will also ballot its members on Southern from 4 November, with the ballot closing two weeks later.

Southern guards' most recent strikes, from 18-20 October, were solid and saw lively picket lines at stations across the Southern network.

The company is forcing guards to sign up to new contracts as "On Board Supervisors", and has attempted both bribery and threats. RMT has said it will continue to fight against the imposition of "Dri-

ver Only Operation" and the deskilling of the guard role regardless of whether the new role comes into effect.

The November strike was initially due to begin on 3 November, but this was cancelled after an appeal to the RMT from the Royal British Legion, who said the strike would disrupt their planned day of poppy selling at stations and on trains.

Although the RMT is understandably keen to avoid a damaging public relations war with the British Legion, an undeniably popular institution, the cancellation is not without risks. It sets a precedent for any other organisation to make its own special case to a striking union on the basis that the

strike will disrupt some planned activity.

It is also politically controversial, as the Royal British Legion, and the entire institution of official "Remembrance" are hardly politically neutral, but rather based on a promotion of the British state's own narrative about its military history. Activists within the RMT, whose AGMs have passed vociferously anti-imperialist and anti-militarist policies on all manner of international questions, will undoubtedly be keen to debate the merits of giving way to the RBL.

An RMT demonstration in support of the Southern guards at Parliament will take place on 1 November.



Ritzy strikes again

By Charlotte Zalens

Workers at the Ritzy Picturehouse cinema in Brixton will strike again on Monday 31 October in their fight for a Living Wage, sick pay, maternity pay and other improvements to terms and conditions.

Since the last strikes on 15-16 October ACAS has approached

both the workers and the employer offering conciliation but Picturehouse has refused.

Workers will strike from 4pm-3am on 31 October and will stage pickets and a Halloween themed living dead protest in Windrush Square in Brixton.

• Support the strike fund at: bit.ly/picturehousestrikefund

No HMRC redundancies

By a PCS member

Following the decision by HMRC management to cull vast swathes of their estate and move operations to a number of central hub locations, a round of voluntary exit packages was announced.

This was done in the hope the department wouldn't make compulsory redundancies. They didn't get as many people volunteering their jobs away as they'd wanted, leaving around 40 members of staff who are unable to relocate from sites faced with closure in the first round. These staff are now party to a 90-day consultation period which may lead to them losing their jobs. Following this, the following rounds of closures will impact more and more staff, likely leading

to further compulsory redundancies.

Civil service union PCS once had a principle that a national ballot would be triggered if the civil service announced any compulsory redundancies. This year, with the threat of these cuts hanging over our head, comrades outside of the ruling Left Unity faction, including the Independent Left, supported a motion to codify that principle.

The leadership, led by members of the Socialist Party, argued against this, and the motion was defeated. Since conference we've seen very little movement on behalf of the national union or the HMRC group. The principle is correct. An injury to one is an injury to all.

While it's true that the union is in a worse state organisationally than it has been for a while, if we don't fight we will lose.

35 days and more on strike

By Simon Nelson

The strike of three women cleaners at the Wakefield City Academies Trust school in Kinsley, West Yorkshire has continued past 35 days with the employer refusing to backdown and attempting to employ scabs to cover the work.

Unison maintain that C&D Cleaning have cut pay, holiday and sickness, refusing to recognise the TUPE arrangements from the previous employer, Wakefield Council. With rallies that have included support from John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn, the fight of three low paid women is one that should be taken up by the entire labour movement.

A demonstration in Barnsley to



C&D's offices and further actions planned around Halloween will continue to build a profile for the women and help raise more money for their support fund.

• You can follow the campaign on Twitter by following @KinsleyCandD



Solidarity

For a workers' government

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Fees must fall... wages must rise

By Dales Forbes in South Africa

South Africa has seen some of its largest protests in two decades in the last month as tens of thousands of students, many activists affiliated with the "Fees Must Fall" movement, faced off with police and university authorities to demand a cheaper university system.

Battles have been raging at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where officials used tear gas to subdue protestors, at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban and at the University of Cape Town.

"Fees Must Fall" began in 2015, after the government proposed increasing tuition fees. The students won their demands and the state froze fee increases. But, this year,

the Higher Education Minister, Blade Nzimande, the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, told administrators they could hike their tuition fees by up to 8 percent.

Nzimande and ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe now claim that free and equal education was never the policy of the ANC government. This is simply untrue. The Freedom Charter, which has been the programme of the ANC since 1956, calls for free and equal education, as does the Constitution of the country (Clause 29 of the Bill of Rights). It is reinforced by resolutions of the ANC's Polokwane conference in 2008.

The funding of higher education has been at the centre of debate and discussion since 2015, but it is part of a wider crisis in society. South Africa has deep economic problems — high prices and zero to one percent growth projected for the next three years. There are high levels of unemployment (roughly 50% for the youth) and deep social inequality (the most unequal society in the world). The ruling party, the African National Congress, is eating itself apart.

UNDERFUNDED

Higher education in South Africa is chronically underfunded but the problem is also about the role of higher education in society and its relationship to the social system.

A new consciousness of solidarity among significant numbers of youth speaks to an intersectionality of class exploitation, racism, other forms of oppression and patriarchy in concrete ways. This political consciousness has expanded



to include issues about privatisation and the outsourcing of work, the perverse pursuit of rankings and competitiveness by institutions, inequalities between universities and a desire to move the curriculum away from the dominant neo-liberal discourse.

Students have proposed a new funding model where the government contributes 50% of costs, the private sector 30% and student fees make up the remaining 20%. This, it has been pointed out, would bring the government's contribution up to what it had been 16 years ago.

It has also been pointed out that an estimated R50 billion a year to provide free tertiary education could be covered if the known

amount of wasteful state spending and money lost to corruption could be halted. But, since it has become known that Shoprite (a major retailer) chief Whitey Basson was paid more than R100 million in the last financial year, there have been calls for a revised and progressive tax regime.

END

The student protest movement signals the beginning of the end for the ANC regime.

Strangely reminiscent of the 1976 student uprisings that followed the 1973 Durban strikes, the 2015-16 students' protest movement follows three years after the Marikana massacre and the state's smashing of the Lonmin

mineworkers' strike with the murder of 34 miners.

While the students' victory of no fee increases for 2016 will not overcome their major problem of eradicating the high costs of accessing tertiary education, it still represents a major victory and achievement for students and the entire working class movement.

By directing their demands towards national government and building a non-sectarian national movement, the students have demonstrated tremendous political clarity and tenacity.

The rest of the working class has taken notice and has drawn this lesson.



Broken promises from the ANC?

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