



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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BANKERS' GREED BRINGS US DOWN

"For questions about the survival of big European banks to be swirling almost ten years after the financial crisis started is utterly damning", writes the big business magazine *The Economist*.

Questions are indeed swirling. On 26 October the Bank of England asked British banks to say how much they are owed by Germany's huge Deutsche Bank and Italy's oldest bank, MPS, in case those credits go bad.

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Justice for Orgreave!



Justice for Orgreave pushed further back as Government refuses inquiry.

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Is socialism against human nature?



Our book *Can Socialism Make Sense?* tackles this frequently asked question.

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Polish women's movement grows



Ana Oppenheim explains the growth of the Polish women's movement.

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Join Labour!

Momentum: fight
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The rise of Trumpism and how to fight it

By Dorian Bon
(International Socialist Organization-US)

Even after the latest controversy over Hillary Clinton's e-mails, it appears that the Republican nominee [for President] has been too thoroughly exposed as a sexual predator, tax cheat and all-around sleazebag to catch up with Clinton.

Nevertheless, tens of millions of people will cast their ballots for this man. And some may do more than just vote. Between Trump's comments inciting his base to "get everybody to go out and watch" polling stations and his bluster about only accepting the results "if I win," hard-right elements drawn to his campaign might organise to harass voters on election day.

Why is Donald Trump's bigotry and aggressive chauvinism finding such a large audience?

Trump is tapping into a number of inflammatory and time-honoured right-wing traditions, from the persecution of immigrants and criminalisation of African Americans and Muslims, to the subjugation of women and obsessions with US power and superiority. And while he himself is a billionaire real estate tycoon, his campaign is about channeling discontent with the social crisis of the Clinton-Bush-Obama era in a violent and bigoted direction.

Though the bulk of the leadership of the Republican Party seems to regard him — for good reason — as a total disaster, Trump's success has everything to do with the political trajectory of the Republican Party over the past several decades. GOP leaders have benefited from

pandering to all the same themes that Trump has in this election.

Trump lashes out against the established political and social elite for having sacrificed the well-being of the nation in order to advance their own power. He promises to "make America great again" by de-throning its corrupt rulers and declaring war on the immigrants, refugees and other scapegoats who have supposedly thrived in the meanwhile.

Trump is able to gain a hearing with a core of supporters among the middle class and sections of the working class because his rhetoric about an economy in decline and a political system unresponsive to people's needs fits with their experiences. Combine that with decades and centuries-old racist and nationalist prejudices, and you have the ingredients of a toxic, right-wing stew.

In Europe, most countries are facing economic hardship that is measurably worse than in the US — and the forces of anti-establishment nationalism are on the rise.

In Britain, contempt for the ruling elite and anger toward immigrants were the prime factors in the referendum vote for the UK to leave the European Union.

Since "Brexit," the Conservative Party has tried to refashion itself to capitalise on these sentiments. May and the Tories are hoping to counter the UK Independence Party, which has achieved a number of electoral successes with its nationalist and anti-immigrant agenda.

In France, the far-right National Front has become the dominant party on the right, in opposition to a Socialist Party government that has betrayed its working-class base



by embracing neoliberalism and implementing drastic repression.

In Germany, the immigrant-hating party Alternative for Germany has elected representatives in 10 of Germany's 16 state parliaments, and is now the dominant opposition group in two states, Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

And in Austria, the Freedom Party, which has explicit links to fascism, broke a decades-old political duopoly of the country's mainstream parties to come within 31,000 votes of winning the presidency earlier this year.

In Eastern Europe, where several fervently right-wing nationalist governments are already in power, more extreme, fascist organisations have emerged alongside them.

One of the most striking recent victories for right-wing populism took place outside of Europe. In the Philippines, former Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte won this spring's presidential election by harnessing popular anger at the clientelism of the elite, Western imperialism, grinding poverty, and

costly crime and drug epidemics. Duterte has moved to consolidate state and military power, and launched a murderous police and vigilante campaign against drug users — or anyone perceived to be a drug user.

A common thread links [these cases] in important ways to the success of the Trump campaign in America — the attempt to channel popular anger at social decline toward both the political establishment and various, dangerous "others," while promising reinvigorated national pride and control.

Trump is not a fascist, and his campaign is not the embryo of a Nazi party, though elements of the far right may be drawn to it. But the factors that account for his success are the same ones that underlie the growth of explicitly far right organisations in Europe.

CHALLENGE

The first lesson is that the right wing can't be shrugged off as insignificant, and protesting against it shouldn't be dismissed as giving the right the attention it craves.

The vile ideas of figures like Trump, just like the more developed reactionary filth of openly fascist parties, have to be named and confronted. The right's scapegoats aren't responsible for the deteriorating conditions working people face today — the system is.

Thus, one of the most important steps in confronting Trumpism came earlier this year when hundreds of Chicagoans mobilised to protest a Trump campaign event, leading to its cancellation. After

that, no one could fool themselves that Trump's rallies were something other than a carnival of reactionary filth.

Equally important, the right wing's politics of despair and scapegoating have to be countered with a positive alternative — one that stands for justice and democracy, in contrast to the prejudices of the right.

Unfortunately, for many people, the instinctive reaction to the rise of a figure like Trump isn't to build social movements, but to hope that a more liberal figure from the political establishment will stop the right-wing menace. But this only further entrenches the very conditions that give rise to the audience for Trumpism.

Can we expect the Democratic Party to challenge a corrupt and unresponsive political system that serves the interests of the 1 Percent? Absolutely not — the Democrats have been in power for most of the last generation and are totally wedded to a pro-corporate agenda.

Can we expect the Democrats to counter the neoliberal offensive that has led to the decline in working-class living standards? Combat racism and discrimination? Stand up for the rights of women and LGBT people without apology? No, no and no.

Putting faith in the Democrats as a short cut for defeating bigotry and nationalism will only contribute to the problem. If the global rise of the right has taught us anything, it's that the right must be confronted by protest — and that the left must fight without concession for solidarity instead of bigotry.

• Abridged from socialistworker.org

Solidarity with the Calais migrants!

By Rosalind Robson

Since the destruction of the Calais "Jungle" the number of migrants sleeping rough on the streets of Paris has risen — around 2,500 people (up from 1,500).

The closure of the Calais camp has added to an already desperate situation in Paris — an estimated 80 migrants arrive in Paris.

After François Hollande, vowed to evacuate the migrants' makeshift Paris settlements the French cops started what they were calling an "administrative operation" to clear the streets — rounding up people and bulldozing of dozens of tents.

As we go to press the operation continues with the authorities claiming people will be given shelter. But the humanitarian organisation La Chapelle Debout claims people are being sent to unsuitable and insanitary accommodation to await their fate.

Meanwhile more than 1,000 children remain in shipping containers in the demolished Calais camp while the UK and French governments feud over who is responsible for their fate.

French riot cops clean-up the streets of Paris so the human misery, for which their government is in big part responsible, cannot be seen.

The British government behave as if they want some children to perish in the cold, maybe as a "deterrent", to try to stop other children from trying to get to the UK.

In the face of such callousness we have to give practical support — money for volunteers, whatever is needed. And political support is also crucial.

If clear arguments for the free movement of people and against the system which builds borders and wages war can become a material force in the world, that will end this human misery.

Mosul: thousands flee the city

By Simon Nelson

As we go to press Iraqi government troops are on the point of entering Mosul in their drive to expel Daesh (Islamic State) from the city.

With Kurdish Peshmerga and Shia militias operating in the surrounding areas, Mosul is surrounded, leaving Daesh with limited capacity to repel the attack. 50,000 Iraqi soldiers, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, Sunni Arab tribesmen and Shia militiamen are now involved in the offensive. Almost 18,000 people have already fled Mosul and the UN believes a further 700,000 will follow.

Daesh has increased its violence against the population. Civilians have been taken into the city to be used as human shields. Houses, businesses and household objects including children's toys have been made into improvised explosive devices. Landmines have been

placed around much of the surrounding area.

The largest Shia militia, the Hashid Shaabi group, has entered the nearby town of Tal Afar, where there is a substantial Shia presence. This will cut off the supply routes to Mosul. The militias pledge that they will not enter Mosul itself; both Shia militias and Kurdish Peshmerga are distrusted by Mosul's majority Sunni population, who fear revenge attacks for the rule of Daesh.

Reports of arbitrary detention of civilians who have escaped Mosul and its surrounding areas are increasing tensions. Men have been separated from family groups and taken to Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) screening centres. According to Human Rights Watch, those centres are also being used to question children for weeks at a time with no legal representation. This is justified by the report that Daesh has recruited child soldiers.

Men who have been detained detail some of the questions asked: "Why didn't you fight back?" they ask," he said. "Why did you sell things to [ISIS]?" But you can't do anything."

"Another man next to him said he was asked why he served ISIS fighters tea. The reason, he said, was simply because he did not want to die." (World Post blog).

Others have said they believed that Daesh's original takeover was a Sunni liberation from the sectarian Baghdad Government, but such illusions were destroyed quickly when the true nature of Daesh became clear.

The newly displaced are prevented from leaving camps without having family or friends in the area. This is done on the basis of security.

But many Sunni Arabs in Mosul will have no relatives in the area, and are unlikely to be allowed to move on.



Tories drop Education Bill

By Pat Murphy, National Union of Teachers Executive (personal capacity)

On 27 October the government announced that it would drop plans for a new Education Bill any time before summer 2017.

In his last budget statement as Chancellor, George Osborne had announced that all schools in England would be forced to convert to academy status by 2022.

The following day, 17 March, the then education secretary Nicky Morgan published a White Paper which outlined the variety of ways in which this goal would be achieved.

The scale and breadth of opposition to this proposal, not least in Tory-run local authorities, meant that by the time the now-dropped Education Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech in May the requirement for all schools to either convert or have plans to convert by 2020 was dropped.

This was a big climbdown by the recently-elected Tory government. The rapid organisation of public opposition, particularly by local NUT and anti-academy campaigners, played a crucial role in achieving it. The left argued at the time, however, that it was important not to exaggerate this success and, above all, to understand the powers that remained in the revised Bill and how they could be used to force the great majority of schools to become academies.

At their Easter Conference the NUT had called a ballot of its members for an ongoing campaign of national strike action to win a national contract for teachers in all schools whether academies or local authority maintained. Banned by the anti-union laws from taking action against the principle of academy schools this fight for a national contract had the potential to undermine one of the major threats posed by the forced academy agenda.

Rightly, the NUT proceeded with its ballot and strike action despite the government's tactical retreat.

However, that the government u-turn did affect the strike ballot and the subsequent national action on 6 July. It will have seemed to many teachers that we had won and there was no need for any action.

NUT data shows that the attendance at local reps briefings fell sharply after the retreat was announced. This problem was unfortunately made worse by the fact that the front page of the NUT website for several days after the u-turn and during the ballot carried the headline "Victory!" In reality the NUT switched the focus of the July strike to the issue of underfunding.

The withdrawal of the entire Bill is, in fact, a much bigger success. The original retreat simply removed the worst and crudest proposal, i.e. that an arbitrary date would be set by which time every school regardless of its success or failure, regardless of the strength of its relationship with its local authority would be forced to convert to academy status.

That left two significant new powers which could still force schools to convert en masse.

Firstly, if it was judged by the DfE, or their regional schools commissioners, that there were so many academy schools in a particular local authority area that the local authority no longer had the capacity to support its remaining schools, then all schools in that area would be forced to convert.

Secondly if the number of schools judged weak by Ofsted (in special measures, serious weaknesses or requiring improvement) reached a "tipping point" in a local authority area, then it could be decided that the authority was failing to support its schools and all its schools would all be forced to convert.

In the aftermath of the Queen's Speech climb-down Tory spokespersons made it clear that they still planned to use these other measures to abolish local authority schools and replace them with academies. So the threat was very much still there.

Now it is clear that there is no intention to introduce these new powers. Mainstream reporting suggests a number of potential reasons.

The obsession with academies was the agenda of Cameron, Nicky Morgan and, above all, Michael Gove, and this, say some, is Theresa May "drawing a line" under the policy agenda of her predecessors.

There are also far more pressing problems in the school system, even from the Tory perspective and

limited time and capacity for dealing with them.

A radical new national funding system which will see significant losers has already been delayed by a year. The assessment system is in chaos. And then there is the strange business of grammar schools.

One of May's first new and distinct policy announcements was a commitment to promote an educational model which has minimal public support, serious opposition in her own party and a proven record of failure and social division. Why add forced academies to that daunting list of battles?

Those of us committed to defending and improving locally-run, comprehensive education should enjoy this latest move but also use it to force a retreat in the real world of school policy. There are still circumstances in which individual schools can be forced to convert to academy status and be taken over by one of the many academy chains and multi-academy trusts (MATs) that have grown up in recent years.

Critical Ofsted judgements and exam results which are persistently below what the government calls its "floor targets" can force a school out of its local authority. The fight to stop the spread of academies is far from over.

Teachers, parents and school workers faced with academy proposals will be very familiar with the claims from school leaderships or pro-academy governors that "we have no choice, academy status is inevitable, it's better to jump and choose an acceptable sponsor than be pushed and have a bad one imposed on us". These arguments are entirely undermined by the withdrawal of the Education Bill and should be strongly rejected wherever they emerge.

This retreat also signals a broader lack of enthusiasm for the idea that academy status represents a magic solution to the school standards problem. We should take it as an opportunity to revive local fights against new academy proposals and draw a line under this failed programme.

Above all, we need to get a clear commitment from Labour that they will bring all schools back into a democratic locally-run comprehensive education service and end the academy experiment.

Orgreave: cops still getting away with it, 32 years on

Worried that it could return an indictment of the police as over the Hillsborough disaster, the Tory government has refused an inquiry into the "Battle of Orgreave", when cops attacked striking miners outside a coking plant near Sheffield.

Bernard Jackson was one of the miners arrested on 18 June 1984, charged with riot and put on trial. He described the day.

Around 8am... out rode fourteen mounted police straight into the pickets. As they did, police in the line beat on their riot shields with truncheons, creating a wall of noise which was meant to intimidate and frighten.

Within minutes the shields parted again and the cavalry started on its second charge, already at a fast canter as they burst through the gap in the wall of plastic.

By about 9.30am the tactics changed again and this time, when the shields parted, it was police support units with riot gear, drawn truncheons and short shields which emerged. They were only concerned with injuring.

It made no difference if pickets stood still, raised their hands or ran away; truncheons were used on arms and legs, trucks and shoulder, and particularly on heads and faces. Men lay around unconscious or semi-conscious with vicious wounds on their bodies and heads.

Around 10.30am there was a lull... [Then came a new PSU attack] ... in-

Timeline

29 May to 18 June 1984: Thousands of pickets and police fight battles outside Orgreave coking plant, near Sheffield. Coke runs from Orgreave were suspended on 18 June.

30 May: 82 arrests at Orgreave including Arthur Scargill, 62 injured.

31 May: 3,200 police in riot gear at Orgreave confront unarmed strikers.

15 June: Joe Green, miner, is crushed to death on picket duty at Ferry Bridge.

18 June: The battle of Orgreave. Police run amok. 93 arrests and many injuries.

stead of simply felling people, they now felled them and dragged them back through the lines...

As I was dragged through the corridor the coppers nearest lashed out with their truncheons: "Bastard miner", "Fucking Yorkie miner". Fists, boots or truncheons, it didn't matter so long as they could have a go at you...

Eventually we were put into a pig bus [mobile prison] and taken to Rotherham. So successful had been their haul that all the cells in Rotherham were full and the twenty or thirty of us from Sheffield were placed in an outside compound.

Its walls were solid, topped with a row of short bars all the way round, just below the roof. There was no visibility at all. I was surrounded by bleeding and injured men, some of them old, some of them young and many of them frightened....

I felt anger towards the media who had consistently chosen selectively, right from the start of the strike, what they pictured and what they reported.

I felt anger at the state which was obviously pulling the strings.

I felt anger at the men who should have been supporting us, the Kinnocks and the Willises, pompously condemning picket line violence when they had never been near on or near a picket line.

• The fight for an inquiry continues: otjc.org.uk.



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The struggle against layoffs

LETTER FROM PARIS

By Marianne Davin

Hello *Solidarity* readers! Me again from Paris.

Since I last wrote (September), the Labour Law mobilisation has died down and no more protests or strike actions have occurred. I thought I would write about the dire situation with layoffs in France.

PSA Peugeot Citroën have just announced 2133 job cuts, in addition to the 17,000 job cuts of the past four years. They are still turning a very nice profit, though: 1.2 billion dollars in the first half of 2016.

SFR (a telecommunications company) have just eliminated 5,000 jobs. This adds to hundreds of job losses at HSBC, Hitachi, Phillips, Tilly Sabco, Servier, la Société générale...and I could go on! The wave of layoffs is not coming out of the blue. Companies have been talking about it for a while but now that the mobilisation against the Labor Law has died down, they think they can do whatever they want, that no one will protest.

But struggles have emerged against the factory closures and layoffs. One example is at Amiens against the closing of a Goodyear factory. In 2007 the company announced a reorganisation to increase site competitiveness, which workers argued would increase exploitation and decrease safety. Goodyear threatened workers they would need to sign off on the reorganisation to feel the benefit of 52 million euros of investment; otherwise



2013 protest against closure of Goodyear factory

Goodyear would close down the Amiens factory. In the final referendum to validate the agreement between the unions and Goodyear, the CGT, the union with the majority, called for a boycott of the vote. With only 54% of workers voting, the CGT's opposition was shown. In 2013 Goodyear announced the closure of the factory at the end of 2014. 1,173 direct jobs and 500 indirect jobs would be lost.

POLICE

On 7 March 2013 a protest of over a thousand people in Amiens, of Goodyear workers and other workers also fighting layoffs, was violently attacked by police.

The Minister of Industrial Relations capitulated to Goodyear bosses, and condemned workers for fighting for their jobs.

In January 2014 the factory was occupied by workers; two managers were held for 30 hours without any violence. Bosses lodged a complaint against the workers who carried out this action, but all charges were subsequently dropped and an agreement was

made to get work started at the factory again. However, after months of negotiations, the deal fell through and at the end of 2014 the factory closed. The story doesn't end there.

The government could not let the eight workers who "violently sequestered" the two managers go without punishment. They needed to make sure trade unions knew that fighting for their jobs and their factories would not be allowed. In January 2015 these workers were sentenced to 24 months of probation and nine months of prison. This was the first time in the Fifth Republic that a member of a trade union had been put in jail.

The CGT called for two days of solidarity for the eight condemned in Amiens on 19-20 October 2016, during their appeal to their sentence. These two days were a way of showing the eight workers and workers around France threatened with layoff that we were all there to support them, and to remind the government we would not let them throw trade unionists in jail for defending their way of life.

On the 19th 5-10,000 people marched

through the sleepy town of Amiens shouting slogans of solidarity. Throughout the next two — rainy — days trade unionists and militants from political parties came to speak about the struggles they were engaged in all around France. On the 20th it was announced that the prosecutor had decreased their sentence to 24 months' probation. The eight workers are still fighting to have their punishment completely dropped. The saga continues on 11 January 2017 when the judge will rule on the workers' appeal.

But what has become of the other Goodyear workers? Of about 1150 people laid off, around 800 are still unemployed. 70 people have found full-time jobs. 80 people created businesses. 30 have found contracts of only six months. 30 are in temporary jobs. 140 retired. 12 suicides. Dozens of families and couples have been broken.

In the face of increasing layoffs workers need to be strong and fight against all attempts to close factories, lay people off, or plans to stop replacing workers when they retire. Nationalisation may be a bad answer.

This is exactly what happened with former President Mitterrand's wave of nationalisations in 1981-1982. Several banks, Dassault, Matra, and large industrial groups were nationalised and gigantic sums of money invested in them. As soon as they were profitable companies were sold for pennies to the same capitalists!

Our task as revolutionaries is to bring together all the scattered workers around the world fighting layoffs, and to put forth the simple demand that not one layoff will be accepted.

For revolutionaries there is no good solution within the capitalist system, but bringing together workers to collectively fight companies and the governments is essential.

And in the end this collective struggle will build up the power of the working class for the expropriation of the means of production!

SW drops "stop the bombing"

THE LEFT

By Will Sefton

In *Socialist Worker* (18 October) Charlie Kimber says Mosul will be "the next city to be razed by imperialism".

He does not, however, make a direct call on the US or UK to end their bombing in support of Iraqi government forces.

In the past, the SWP would have said "stop the bombing", while (mildly) criticising Daesh's rule. Kimber says "Isis's rule has been appalling". He adds that fighting "civilians are now terrified of the air and artillery assaults and the gun battles in the streets" — but plainly shies away from any "Hands off Daesh" line. He does not call for an end to the assaults. He merely says (reasonably) that there will be little freedom when the sectarian militias arrive.

The SWP had little problem with the Shia sectarian militias involved in the assault on Mosul when they made up large sections of the Iraqi resistance and were tearing Iraq apart on sectarian lines.

The SWP conclude by saying, "Neither the US nor Russia has anything to offer the suffering people of the Middle East. Only a renewal of the revolutionary wave of 2011 can provide a way out."

The recognition that to shout "stop the bombing" is not an automatic "anti-imperialist" duty, when the alternative is like Daesh, marks a real shift. But where is the accounting?

The millionaire regulator

PRESS

IMPRESS — "a community interest company" — has been given official state backing to operate as a press regulator. But as IMPRESS has been majority-funded through charities set up by former Formula 1 tycoon Max Mosley, how "independent" is it likely to be?

After the Leveson Enquiry into the conduct and ethics of the UK press, the question of how to manage press regulation has been fought over by rival groups of newspaper owners and lobby groups like Hacked Off! The widely discredited Press Complaints Commission has to be replaced, but what with?

The main charge against the PCC was that it was too close to newspaper owners. But to fend off greater regulation the majority of large newspapers rejected what they called illiberal state regulation through a royal charter and founded IPSO, the Independent Press Standards Organisation. *The Financial Times*, *Observer*, *Guardian* and others rejected this new body and have their own internal policies for dealing with complaints.



Max Mosley

IMPRESS has the backing of Hacked Off! But just a handful of smaller publications and websites have signed up to its charter.

Some magazines with a large circulation like *Private Eye* are not signed up to any of the bodies. Newspapers like *Solidarity* will stay away from both the multi-millionaire press barons and influential rich people who control IPSO and IMPRESS.

In other words there is now a dog's dinner of press regulation and effectively a complete

lack of truly independent regulation across the industry.

Concern around the decision to grant IMPRESS a charter hinges on whether the government will trigger Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. This would mean that media groups who do not join IMPRESS would be liable to pay the legal costs for both sides in any libel case, even if they won the case. The spiralling costs of libel cases and declining sales of printed newspapers means those newspapers committed to IPSO may need to go over to IMPRESS.

Labour's Shadow Culture Secretary Tom Watson has called on the Government to urgently implement the Crime and Courts Act as the only way to ensure fairness when the press is essentially self-regulated. The dangers of press self-regulation are clear. But so is state backing for a rival body funded by a multi-millionaire and Hacked Off!

Social control of the press, the right to expose the manoeuvres and dealings of the rich is vital. While the ability to take actions to court and win expensive libel cases remains solely with the rich, there will never be a fair system of press regulation.

Bankers' greed brings us down

"For questions about the survival of big European banks to be swirling almost ten years after the financial crisis started is utterly damning", writes the big business magazine *The Economist*.

Questions are indeed swirling. On 26 October the Bank of England asked British banks to say how much they are owed by Germany's huge Deutsche Bank and Italy's oldest bank, MPS, in case those banks prove unable to pay.

Deutsche Bank's share price has fallen by over 50% this year. The stock markets value this giant of international banking at less than Snapchat, a social-media business with a few hundred employees and hardly any physical assets.

The bank faces 7,800 lawsuits for misconduct, and possible large fines. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* of 28 October gives a long list of misdeeds, many of which Deutsche Bank has admitted: mis-selling, money-laundering, tax avoidance, manipulation of interest rates and prices, and more.

"Greed... unfocused aggression... mania... mendacity... arrogance": those traits of Deutsche Bank bosses are maximised by the workings of the modern capitalist system. They brought it huge profits for a while and are now bringing it down. So says *Der Spiegel*.

Deutsche Bank seemed to weather the 2008 financial crash better than others. While other banks scaled down, Deutsche's "Global Markets" chief and then CEO, Anshu Jain, a British-Indian whizzkid who did not even bother to learn German, took the once-staid Frankfurt-based bank further into whirligigs of speculation.

In June the International Monetary Fund said politely that Deutsche Bank "appears to be the most important net contributor [among banks] to systemic risks, followed by HSBC and Credit Suisse".

The banks that went bust in 2007-8 were bailed out by governments. Some are still being propped up that way. The Royal Bank of Scotland has notched up £50 billion losses, and there is no chance of the government recouping the money spent to bail it out.

Ultra-low interest rates and "quantitative

easing" have meant, essentially, that banks can borrow from the state at ultra-cheap rates.

Some banks have recovered substantially from 2008. Most banks have started again on paying out huge dividends and huge salaries and bonuses.

But the general sluggishness of growth and trade, the stagnation of productive business investment, and the low interest rates depressing banks' gains from the loans they give out, have limited the overall pool of revenues from which the banks feed; and some have done poorly.

Governments have talked about tighter regulation of banks. The result, though, has been to slow banks down a bit — and expose many of them, not just Deutsche, to a blizzard of fines, as soured scrutiny picks up years of misdeeds — but not to change the rule of ruthless profit-grabbing over the financial piping of economic life.

What the conservative *Financial Times* columnist Martin Wolf wrote in the midst of the 2008 crisis remains true: "Banks, as presently constituted and managed, cannot be trusted to perform any publicly important function, against the perceived interests of their staff [meaning their top bosses, not the routine clerical staff]."

"Today's banks represent the incarnation of profit-seeking behaviour taken to its logical limits, in which the only question asked by senior staff is not what is their duty or their responsibility, but what can they get away with".

In today's global-markets capitalism, the financial piping is central. Banks are not quiet enterprises, doing backroom work in a steady and cautious fashion, but the leaders in general capitalist speculation, corner-cutting, and reckless greed. If banks go down, as they did in 2008, they bring everything else down.

Recipes like breaking big banks up into smaller units, or developing National Investment Banks alongside the commercial banks, leave the banker-profiters' ruinous effects untouched. (Germany already has a National Investment Bank, a huge one. Slump-ridden Brazil has a huge national investment bank).



The way to curb the destructiveness of the profiteers is to make banking, finance, mortgage-lending, pensions, and insurance into a public utility, publicly owned, democratically controlled and scrutinised, and managed by elected officials chosen for competence rather than spivery.

Small shareholders should get compensation; the bigger ones have already drained far more than they deserve in dividends and speculative gains.

Making finance a public utility would give pensioners and homeowners some security, and quell some of the most lurid drivers of crisis. It would open channels for democratic decision-making to mandate and guide in-

vestment in socially useful economic activity, for example in "greening" industry and creating good new jobs in areas where old industries are declining.

Only a full mobilisation of the labour movement can achieve it. High finance has huge entrenched power, which is what accounts for the weakness of the "re-regulation" since 2008 even when conservative governments were angry about what the banks had done.

But nothing less than that full mobilisation will do. Otherwise we are all still at the mercy of the "greed... unfocused aggression... mania... mendacity... arrogance" of the billionaires.

Not sacrosanct!

Brexiter Tories are attacking Bank of England governor Mark Carney for not raising interest rates.

They say Carney is leaving rates low because he is too pessimistic about Brexit. They should be raised to guard against inflation (and — the thought is probably there — to increase banks' revenues).

Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has responded: "Labour gave the Bank of England independence to stop Tory Chancellors leaving monetary policy to the whims of their backbenchers. Operational independence for monetary policy, as I've made clear in the past, should be sacrosanct".

To scorn the call for higher interest rates is one thing. To do it in the name of having central economic policies controlled by unelected bankers rather than by elected authority is another.

Labour nationalised the Bank of England in 1946. Before then, weirdly, monetary policy was in the hands of a private company.

In his memoirs of the 1964-70 Labour government, Harold Wilson wrote that its reforming drive had been wrecked by the stubborn resistance of the Governor of the Bank of England. He wrote that only in his memoirs, and while prime minister did what the Governor asked, but at least he



perceived that unelected bank bosses are an obstacle to social reform.

Gordon Brown gave Bank of England bosses the right to make their policies independent of any elected control in a sort of "coup" after Labour won the 1997 general election. Brown had not dared to put that move into the Labour manifesto, or to whisper to the Labour Party that he planned it; so he did it immediately after Labour had won office, when his credit from the election victory was strongest.

We should oppose the Brexiter Tories in the name of democracy and equality, not of the supposed right of unelected bank bosses to control our economic destiny.

Boris's Brexit skills



[illegible]

nature?

cial morality, of shifting ideas of right and wrong, proves what I say to be true. What would be the opposite of wish-thinking — wish-armoured refusal-to-think? That's what you are doing here.

B. Again, you juggle irresponsibly with words — mere words! — and ideals. Reality is much harsher and more intractable than you think. Stubborn human individualism is the unsurpassable barrier to socialism.

A. Then let me tell you the strongest reason why the idea that capitalism corresponds to human nature is nonsense. In the oldest human societies we know about, long before capitalism, the sense of belonging to the collective is stronger than the sense of individual self. It was like that for god-knows how many hundreds of human generations. Individualism is itself a product of social and human development.

B. So now your socialist ideal takes as its model primitive groups of hunter-gatherers wandering in the primeval forests. We will go from primitive communism to... primitive communism!

A. This time, not primitive. This time, in a society which can exercise a tremendous degree of control over natural and social environments. In terms of the argument about human nature and capitalism and socialism, don't the facts about the earliest human soci-



eties say something to you?

B. Yes, thank god for rugged individualism!

A. Moving on from primitive collectivism and to the development of individualism was progress. But our instinctual "human nature" was not different in "primitive communism" from what it is now.

B. So it's back to the old Stone Age! That's your socialism for the 21st century?

A. Forward to a world in which the sense of human interconnectedness and interdependence is revived on an immensely higher level of human ability to produce and repro-

duce the material means of life.

B. And individualism? You concede that was progressive in its time.

A. Individualism and a strong and governing sense of belonging to a great social interconnectedness are not in contradiction: they are complementary.

B. You are feeding me gobbledegook "dialectics" again!

A. You know what the great paradox here is? Individuation that produces individualism, the development of diverse minds and personalities, is very limited under capitalism: that is one of the things socialists criticise

in capitalist society. It is one of the great possibilities opened up by capitalism before humankind that capitalism does not deliver for most of its citizens. Under wage-slavery, most people are compelled to spend most of their energy being "cogs in the machine" of production-for-profit. At best they can hope to develop their individualism in a very limited way outside work hours.

In a world of material well-being, of democratic collectivism, individualism would flower in a way it can never flower under capitalism.

The ABCs of Socialism

By Simon Nelson

The team behind *Jacobin* magazine have produced a great set of short simple essays tackling questions often asked about the politics of the socialist left titled *The ABCs of Socialism*.

As with any book with multiple authors — this has 13 in total — there are differences in style, emphasis and political conclusions (which I will address later). Nonetheless the book is remarkably consistent and reads well. The whole book, despite its incomprehensibly ridiculous (tall, thin) shape, could easily be read in a couple of hours.

I enjoyed two chapters in particular. 'Will socialists take my Kenny Loggins records?' tackles the question of private versus personal property. And 'Why do socialists talk so much about workers?' gives a clear account of why the working class are the motive force in the successful transformation of society. There is no equivocation on this point, no faith in amorphous "masses" or "people power".

Other chapters cover whether socialism will be boring, eurocentrism, feminism, the environment and questions of democracy and dictatorship.

The book is a product of the renewed interest in socialism in the US, particularly since the movement around Bernie Sanders. It is also a measure of the success of *Jacobin*. The US context in the book may slightly baffle UK readers. In the US the existence of public services and institutions as evidence of an "already existing socialism" does not inhabit the public sphere and right-wing libertarian thought does.

It is striking that the book is unequivocally for a class-struggle democratic vision of socialism, but some important questions are left unanswered, or, as with the issue of Stalinism, with contradictory answers. This may be because of lack of space or because of differences between authors.

As noted by Todd Chretien in his review for the US *Socialist Worker*, the book is light on what revolution actually means. In his chapter Jonah Birch draws a clear line between the violence of the state and ruling class and "the violence of the oppressed". But in another chapter Joseph M Schwartz, the vice-chair of the Democratic Socialist of America, takes a swipe at the Bolshevik revolution. He appears to lump together the revolution of 1917 and its gains with the Stalinist counter revolution of the late 1920s. He uses criticisms of Rosa Luxemburg and Victor Serge to attack the Bolsheviks. But Luxemburg's criticisms were not

an argument against revolution! And Serge joined the Bolsheviks and was a part of the revolution that Schwartz implies should not have happened!.

Another chapter suggests that Mao, Kwame Nkrumah, Che Guevara and Amilcar Cabral could all have reasonably called themselves socialists, "whatever their differences." And David Icke and L Ron Hubbard could call themselves scientists? This does nothing to help bring clarity to the left that the authors intend.

In contrast, the final chapter 'Will Socialism be Boring?' by Danny Katch, an ISO member, correctly (in my view) and unambiguously defends the great strides made by the Bolsheviks and defends the role of Lenin and Trotsky in one of the defining periods of global working-class history.

The book is a good primer for more detailed works, and could quite easily be read alongside *Can Socialism Make Sense?* edited by Sean Matgamna which draws out in greater detail many of the same questions about socialism. That book also provides the reader with further reading and some texts of historic importance.

***The ABCs of Socialism* provides a list of further reading from *Jacobin*, and not all just short articles, alongside each chapter. That's a nice touch and will assist the *Jacobin* reading groups now operating in over 70 cities.**

• To order: bit.ly/abc-s. To find out more about *Jacobin*: www.jacobinmag.com



The book is illustrated by Phil Wrigglesworth

Rezso Kasztner and Zionism

Dale Street reviews *Kasztner's Crime* by Paul Bogdanor (Transaction Publishers 2016)

Was Rezso Kasztner, leader of the Budapest-based Jewish Relief and Rescue Committee during the Nazi occupation of Hungary, a hero who saved the lives of tens or even hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Holocaust?

Or was he a collaborator who knowingly played an indispensable role in assisting the Nazis in the deportation and murder of nearly 500,000 Hungarian Jews in a matter of weeks?

To answer that question Paul Bogdanor has examined previously unused documentation, including Kasztner's private papers, and evidence provided by Kasztner himself in two libel trials held in Israel in the 1950s.

Bogdanor's answer is summed up in the title of his recently published book: *Kasztner's Crime*. (Bogdanor's own politics are certainly not socialist. His personal webpage is the cyberspace equivalent of "The Black Book of Communism".)

Bogdanor concludes that Kasztner deliberately withheld information about Auschwitz from Jewish communities in Budapest and the Hungarian provinces, and then misled them into believing that the Nazis were deporting them to another part of Hungary rather than to Auschwitz.

Kasztner also undermined and blocked rescue activities organised by other Jewish activists, knowingly delivered hostages to the

Nazi SS, misled foreign contacts about the fate of Hungarian Jews, and betrayed to the Gestapo Jewish paratroopers sent to help organise resistance in Hungary.

After the war Kasztner gave evidence at the Nuremberg Trials in defence of high-ranking Nazi war criminals who, as he knew full well, had played a central role in the Holocaust.

Bogdanor describes Kasztner as "a high-level informer for the Gestapo" and "a collaborator in the genocide of his own people". He was someone who had been "recruited by the Nazis as a collaborator" and who "betrayed his duty to rescue the victims and placed himself at the service of the murderers."

Kasztner occupies an almost iconic status in those "anti-Zionist" versions of history which claim that Zionists collaborated with the Nazis in carrying out the Holocaust, as part of their "strategy" to achieve the creation of Israel.

PERDITION

The most notorious example of this is Jim Allen's play 'Perdition'. Dating from 1987, it purports to be a dramatised version of a libel trial dealing with the role played by a Dr. Yaron (i.e. Kasztner by another name) in Nazi-occupied Hungary. Allen described his play as:

"The most lethal attack on Zionism ever written, because it touches at the heart of the most abiding myth of modern history, the Holocaust. Because it says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the

extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state, Israel, which is itself racist."

In summing up the play's central argument, one of the characters talks of "the Zionist knife in the Nazi fist", describes Israel as "coined in the blood and tears of Hungarian Jewry", and claims: "To save your hides, you (Zionists) practically led them (Jews) to the gas chambers of Auschwitz."

The play treats Yaron/Kasztner not as an individual but as the embodiment of Zionism per se. The now defunct *Flame* magazine summed up the central argument of the play:

"There is a story here which the Zionists do not want you to know ... about the role of the Zionist movement in the war and its collaboration with the Nazi regime. The Zionist leadership of Hungary bought their freedom in a shameful deal with Eichmann, whilst the Jews of Hungary were led to the gas chambers."

"The Zionist movement stands accused of sacrificing the majority of the Jews in Hungary so as to save a thousand Jews to fulfil the Zionist conquest of Palestine. Clearly, the Zionist movement regarded the establishment of the state of Israel as a higher priority than saving their brethren from the concentration camps."

Bogdanor makes passing mention of the controversy about 'Perdition' and the identification of Kasztner as "the avatar of a Zionist-Nazi conspiracy to murder the Jews of Europe in order to justify creating the 'fascist' state of Israel."

Bogdanor's riposte: "such ideas, if they can

be dignified as such, have no contact with reality."

In Nazi-occupied Hungary, there was no "neat" dividing line between bad Zionists (or bad Zionist leaders) and good anti-Zionists. On all sides there were people foolishly thinking Jews could benefit from trying to do deals with the Nazis.

The Budapest Judenrat (Jewish Council), for example, was created by anti-Zionist community leaders acting under instructions from the Nazis in March of 1944.

It "demanded blind obedience to the Nazis from the Jewish community" and was "enlisted in Eichmann's effort to deceive the widest strata of Jewry." By 24 April it was "summoning selected Jews for 'internment' – which in reality meant death – at the hands of the Nazis."

Only in mid-June did it reverse its "previous decision to handle news of the slaughter [in Auschwitz] confidentially" and begin to "circulate the eye-witness report [of Auschwitz] among the Hungarian elite."

REALITY

Far from being the ultimate expression of Zionism, Kasztner himself repeatedly came into conflict with other Zionist activists who were doing exactly what 'Perdition' claimed they were not doing, i.e. opposing the Nazis and trying to save Jewish lives.

In late 1943 Hungarian Zionists began organising an armed underground movement in preparation for a possible Nazi occupation. The movement was to be open to all Zionist parties (apart from the Revisionists) and to non-Zionists.

But Kasztner scuppered the plans for armed resistance in favour of "negotiations" with the Nazis.

Hungarian Zionists also helped to smuggle Jews out of Poland and Austria and issued them with forged Hungarian ID papers, as well as providing financial support to Jews in the Polish ghettos and Jews in hiding in Austria.

Kasztner wanted an end to such activities, for fear that they would jeopardise his "negotiations" with the Nazis. But the Zionist youth ignored Kasztner's instructions and continued their activities, with the support of most of the Hungarian Zionist leaders.

When the deportations of Jews began in Hungary itself, Hungarian Zionist youth activists set about encouraging Jews to flee the Nazi-created ghettos in Budapest and the provinces. Again, Kasztner sought to undermine and block such activities.

Other Zionists organised "protected houses" in Budapest (i.e. houses covered by Swiss diplomatic immunity, or by the protection of other foreign missions) and children's homes with Red Cross extraterritorial status which provided safety for thousands of Jews.

As Bogdanor points out, the number of Jewish lives saved by Zionists without any help from Kasztner is an indication of how many more could have been saved if Kasztner, as head of the Relief and Rescue Committee, had not placed himself at the service of the Nazis.

The gap between Kasztner and the broader Zionist movement is further underlined by the fact that in mid-April of 1944 the entire Hungarian Zionist movement was banned by the Nazis.

Kasztner's Relief and Rescue Committee, on the other hand, enjoyed the patronage first of the Abwehr and then of the SS.

REASON IN REVOLT

SATURDAY 10 DECEMBER 11AM-6PM IOE, LONDON, WC1H 0AL

Workers' Liberty: Where we've come from and where we're going

Buy tickets online: bit.ly/revolt50

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Reason In Revolt is a day of talks and discussions to celebrate our 50 years and work out what they can teach us. We invite all comrades, friends, and curious observers — old and new — to come and take part.

In 1966, a group of socialist activists founded Workers' Fight. Their aim was to renew and rebuild the socialist movement as a revolutionary and democratic movement — free of the deadening culture of Stalinism, and inspired by a critical, Marxist spirit.

Over the years, this tendency has broken much new ground in socialist ideas, and rediscovered lost histories of the Marxist-Trotskyist tradition, especially that of the "other" American Trotskyists — the group of comrades around Max Shachtman and Hal Draper. We have developed a uniquely serious, Marxist approach to imperialism, starting with debates around the struggle for democracy and unity in Ireland.

We have also been at the forefront of the biggest struggles waged by the working class over the last 50 years: the development of a working-class women's movement, the mass strike movements of the 1970s, and the rank-and-file revolt that shook the Labour Party and the British ruling class in the early 1980s — always trying to organise the grass-roots of those movements, building organisation in the workplace, and arguing and debating to clarify the view of the way ahead.

Polish women's movement grows

Anastazja Oppenheim*, a student activist and member of the Polish left party Razem, explains the background to the recent women's strike for abortion rights.

Polish abortion laws are some of the most restrictive in Europe. Abortion is completely banned apart from in a few exceptional circumstances.

It is allowed on grounds of rape, incest, if there is a severe health risk to the pregnant woman, or if the foetus is severely deformed and has no chance of survival.

Doctors also have a conscience clause; they can sign an agreement saying they will not perform an abortion, but they have to direct women to another doctor who will do the procedure. There are also many cases of women being directed from one hospital to another because doctors who do not want to do the procedure.

Abortion law is an emotive topic in Poland. Every couple of years a dramatic case will become a talking point — of a teenager getting pregnant for example. Feminists will push for change and then there will be a backlash from religious groups wanting to restrict the law. Every now and then there have been feminist voices saying abortion is a right, but the much more dominant voices are those of the Catholic Church and far right groups claiming that abortion is evil and that it should be banned in all circumstances.

Poland is the most Catholic country in Europe. A particularly conservative form of Catholicism is a big influence in politics and in everyday life. Until recently feminism has been limited to middle-class academic circles and hasn't had a lot of influence.

There isn't really a generational divide on this issue. There has been equal support for abortion among younger and older women.

But it tends to be men who have become more conservative in recent years. There were men on the protests, but we also saw many reactionary comments in the media from men. There is definitely a divide between town and country, with some big cities, especially those with universities, being more progressive. On the other hand, some cities in east Poland, like Kraków, are conservative. Small country villages are more conservative. That is why it was very powerful to see the influence of the strike reaching everywhere.

It is estimated that there are as many as 50,000 "backstreet" illegal abortions in Poland every year. Many more women go abroad for an abortion.

There is a massive underground "movement" of women obtaining medical abortion pills. That is not being organised in a conscious way; it is people making money by selling the pills, and code words for the trade being used on the internet.

There are groups of women outside Poland who deliver abortion pills into the country. There have been abortion pills delivered by drones from the German side of the border! This was a practical and symbolic action.

Most women who are desperate for an abortion will probably be able to get one somehow, but it is not always safe.

It is a class issue as much as a gender and health issue. Women with more money can afford to go to expensive illegal clinics and have a fairly safe procedure. Or can afford to go to other European countries. Poorer women are either forced to go through with the pregnancy or resort to dangerous methods. A number of women every year either

die, or become disabled or have long-term health issues.

Some Polish women come to the UK to have an abortion for free. But there has been a backlash about that — articles in the *Daily Mail* condemning these women who are having a life-saving procedure.

It wasn't always this way. Up until 1993 abortion in Poland was technically allowed for social and economic reasons — in practice "on demand". Any woman who wanted an abortion could have one for free. Because Poland had poor access to contraception and poor sex education, the country had one of the highest ratios of abortions to population in the world. Most of society supported this — it was just common sense. A lot of women had an abortion at some point in their lives, but it wasn't a topic that was discussed.

Then in 1993 the current law came in — the result of an agreement between the state and the church. In a so-called compromise, abortion was outlawed apart from the very specific circumstance. The church got a lot of influence — in schools, in family law and other areas of everyday life.

One study suggested that this was because Poland never had a feminist movement in the same way as western Europe. Women never fought for the right to have an abortion. It had always been framed as a public good, as something for society's health and safety, never because it was a woman's right to chose.

OPINION

Public opinion has changed again. Whereas 20 years ago most people preferred a more liberal law, currently more people are asking for the law to be more restrictive.

As in many places in Europe we have seen the rise of the conservative right. Sometimes they use some of the language of the left — on welfare rights for instance. But on social questions it is extremely conservative. We have one of the most right-wing governments in Europe and not a single centre-left party is represented in our parliament.

The attack on Poland's limited access to abortion came from a conservative group of lawyers. They got up a petition proposing to outlaw abortion in all circumstances. That got 400,000 signatures and won them the right to a debate in parliament. The ruling Law and Justice Party and the prime minister, a woman, Beata Szydło, came out in favour of it.

This provoked the first big wave of protests. I was in Warsaw and Kraków at the time [April 2016] and people were talking of nothing else. Within two days, with my comrades from Razem, Young Labour Women and other groups, we managed to gather 300 people for a protest outside the Polish embassy. Similar protests were held in other European capital and this was quite widely reported in Poland.

An association of Polish feminists wrote a counter petition. The proposal was to legalise abortion on demand up to the second trimester of pregnancy and also to introduce free contraception and for sex education in schools. They got 200,000 signatures and a parliamentary debate. It was very quickly voted down but it got the debate widened out, and showed that there is so much more we can be talking about and could be demanding.

Over the summer there were some smaller protests but the law was going through parliament and looked like a real prospect. At this point Razem, my party, came up with the



Polish women took to the streets again on Sunday 23 and Monday 24 October. They chanted "we are not folding up our umbrellas", meaning they will not go away just because the proposed abortion bill has been withdrawn.

idea of the woman's strike. A date was fixed for Monday 3 October. The idea was for women not to go to work, to classes, and to not do housework. Many were at first quite sceptical. Maybe it would be just a small group of middle-class women who can afford to take the day off. But it was a hugely successful initiative. One estimate is that seven million women participated, possibly that is somewhat exaggerated, but I have seen pictures of streets, big stores and shopping centres completely empty. It was the biggest mobilisation in Poland for decades.

This protest got a couple of individual minister and then the whole government to withdraw its support.

The movement spread in different ways — through social media, through word of mouth in workplaces and schools in community centres, and even in churches — people handing out flyers and talking to each other. It was very organic, it was a genuine uprising. It was a matter of people being scared and realising that the change was about to become reality.

The first protests were very moderate in their demands, talking about keeping the current so-called compromise, and about abortion being rare. As the movement progressed it became more and more radical, the view that maybe abortion should be a right came more to the forefront and into the media. At the beginning the myth that abortion was not needed for "good women" was being said, but that idea was effectively challenged.

Unfortunately the trade union movement in Poland is very weak and also quite conservative and has not formed part of the protests. In fact we don't have lot of activism in Poland at all. Doctors' unions did not take sides and weren't part of the abortion debate. The broad left has also been very weak. The old centre left recently ran on a platform of free market and lower taxes.

About 18 months ago Razem [Together] emerged, inspired by parties like Podemos and Syriza. They are trying to be the new socialist progressive force, but also careful not to use the old left-wing language, as it is really discredited in Poland. You will, for instance, rarely hear the term socialism in Poland; it is associated with Stalinism.

Razem do not openly call themselves anti-capitalist, but many of their members are. Their approach is about trying to revive the

trade union movement, connecting grass roots struggles of people fighting for issues like social housing and health care. Also supporting the LGBT movement which until recently worked very separately. At the moment it is polling about 4%.

There is a Razem group in London. It is quite strong abroad, because a lot of left-wing Polish migrants feel able to express their views more easily outside the country, they feel less isolated. But there are not a lot of spaces where Polish migrant workers can get together. In the Polish cultural centre in London for instance there are screening of films and sport, but it is not really political. But maybe there will be more organising with the migrant backlash.

However I think there will be a lasting impact on political consciousness from these struggles. A lot of people who have never been involved in politics have been mobilised for the strike and going on protests. It has been six months of smaller and bigger actions. The word feminism is being said much more frequently.

It will be long struggle for abortion rights. Whether it will spread to other issues that affect women is much harder to say. There is a link with general opposition to the current government. Since the ruling party got into power around a year ago there have been protests — by the so-called movement for the defence of democracy. That was a middle-class liberal movement for defending democracy but also the free market.

There is more dissatisfaction in society, but is very varied. Personally I think the attempts to rebuild the trade union movement give us hope.

Society is now more polarised than ever. The consensus compromise that we have had for the past 20 years is dead. We have the hard right calling for a complete ban, but we also have an emerging modern pro-choice movement and an awakening of Polish feminism.

And this movement has already inspired women in other countries. We have seen similar "black protests" in South Korea. In Argentina there has been a women's strike against gender violence with protestors wearing black.

* Anastazja was speaking at a Workers' Liberty meeting in south London

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Events

Saturday 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

Sunday 6 November
Why Socialist Feminism? Bristol reading group
4.20pm, University Of Bristol Multifaith Chaplaincy, 1 Woodland Road, BS8 1AU
bit.ly/2f6w3he

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

Tuesday 8 November
"Repeal the 8th" public meeting on abortion rights in Ireland
6.30pm, Amnesty International, 25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA
bit.ly/2dZ8Yxy

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/2dFtxPk

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

What sort of democracy?

LABOUR

By Sacha Ismail

The row in Momentum is being "spun" as one between those who want a workable broad movement, and those who want a sectarian bearpit.

This is false. Momentum groups are not being torn apart by different socialists tearing strips off each other about political program.

The acrimony and division comes from the people at the top whose fear of political discussion and debate is leading them to suppress democracy in the organisation, and generating predictable outrage.

In the first half of 2016 some argued that it would be too divisive for Momentum to take a position on the EU referendum. In fact, after debate, the advocates of a left "remain" vote (which included us) won and the relatively small but substantial minority accepted it.

We don't want votes on every issue. But it has to be possible for members to decide what they want to propose and what they will vote on, rather than just being able to click "yes" or "no" online to choices formulated by the office.

Most of Momentum's campaigning work is being driven by local groups, and not by the office. Those fighting for democracy in Momentum now have also led the way in pushing for national campaigning — on the NHS, in support of strikes and for migrants' rights, for instance, as well as at Labour Party conference.

The Momentum office helped organise a big and valuable fringe event alongside Labour conference, but did almost nothing to help the left organise within that conference. One reason why: to do that, Momentum would have needed structures capable of deciding democratically which issues to push at the conference, which motions to support, which to oppose.

We have no option but to fight to democratise the organisation — which will open up the possibility of more and better campaigning.

Some say "one member one vote" is the most democratic sys-

tem, or at least that it was the system that elected Jeremy Corbyn.

Local general meetings of local groups, in which everyone has a vote, are good. You could call that "OMOV" if you like. But, if that's OMOV, it's a different sort of OMOV from the proposal not to have a decision-making conference and instead to have online votes.

Unlike real-world general meetings and delegate conferences, that online voting allows for no real deliberation, challenges, amendments, persuasion or democratic control; it puts power in the hands of a bureaucracy that sets the questions and of the capitalist media. Such systems have been used to undermine both democracy and political radicalism in left-wing parties such as the Brazilian PT and Podemos.

When the right-wing introduced OMOV for Labour leadership contests, they thought it would undermine the left. The history of other left parties and of Labour itself suggested that they were right. On this occasion it didn't turn out that way.

Usually online OMOV will help the candidates who get the best coverage from the media, and hurt those who depend on argument and discussion within the movement to make their case.

It also encourages the already widespread idea that you can change things just by casting a vote online rather than by engaging in meetings and activity.

That idea is a product of a period of defeat and retreat for the labour movement: something we should challenge, not encourage.



Stop the Labour Purge!
National Conference
Saturday 26 November
Queens Walk
Community Centre
Nottingham
Tickets £5

transparency • accountability • democracy
stop the labour purge

Broxtowe CLP in Nottingham is working with local Momentum groups to host a national conference with Stop the Labour Purge. The conference will bring together activists from CLPs, Momentum groups and other labour movement organisations

All Labour Party members and supporters who want to oppose the purge are welcome, but we are asking organisations to formally support the conference and send representatives.

A full agenda will be released shortly Initial speakers include:

Tosh MacDonald - ASLEF President
Christine Shawcroft - Labour NEC member
Jill Mountford - Momentum National Steering Committee
Mark Sandell - Brighton District Labour Party
Pamela Fitzpatrick - Suspended and now reinstated Harrow Councillor

All speakers in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated

Can you get your CLP, union branch or Momentum group to pass the model motion of support for the conference?

Buy Tickets at bit.ly/2enlJkp
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Stop the Labour Purge

Right-wing Labour MPs show their stripes

By Martin Thomas

According to right-wing Labour MP John Woodcock, "the support we [the UK] are giving [to Saudi Arabia, over the war in Yemen] is largely to help train pilots in targeting practices that reduce civilian casualties, trying to influence the Saudis into unambiguous compliance with humanitarian law".

And so Woodcock and about 100 Labour MPs abstained or were absent on 18 October when the Labour front bench moved that Britain stop supporting Saudi Ara-

bia in the war.

The UN estimates that over 7,000 people have now been killed in the conflict, two-thirds in Saudi airstrikes. The Saudi military campaign has also destroyed schools, hospitals and factories, and left over 14 million "food insecure", according to the World Food Programme.

In March 2015 the Saudis' preferred president of Yemen, Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi, fled the country, and since then Saudi has been bombing to push back Houthis forces from the north of the country allied to former president Ali Ab-

dullah Saleh.

Saleh no more deserves support than Hadi. But to back the Saudi war, with the bland excuse that support might inflect it towards less brutality, is sickening.

These right-wing Labour MPs also criticise Corbyn as tolerating antisemitism.

Yet they support a Saudi regime which prescribes school textbooks presenting the old Tsarist forgery, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, as fact, and listing the traits of Jews as "treachery, betrayal, and the denunciation of covenants".

Strikes ahead on Tube

By Ollie Moore

Station staff on London Underground are balloting for strikes, and industrial action short of strikes, against job cuts.

The ballot begins on 1 November and closes a fortnight later. Both the RMT and TSSA unions are balloting their members.

London Underground's "Fit for the Future" restructure programme on stations has seen nearly 1,000 jobs axed and thousands of workers forcibly regraded and displaced. Workers say that new rosters are unworkable, and recent incidents at North Greenwich and Canning Town stations have highlighted the risks of de-staffing.

Unions are demanding a reversal of the job cuts and ticket office closure programmes.

In a separate dispute, RMT is also balloting driver members on the Piccadilly Line. That ballot also closes on 15 November.

The dispute involves a number of issues, including management



bullying of RMT safety reps Gary Fitzpatrick and Carlos Barros, as well as abuse of attendance and discipline procedures. An RMT statement said "only a serious threat of industrial action seems to focus [management's] mind".

Hammersmith and City Line drivers also have an ongoing dispute, creating the possibility of co-ordinated action involving station staff and drivers on at least two

lines.

Drivers' union Aslef is also balloting its members over a number of breaches of train operators' agreements.

After London Underground confirmed it had been testing driverless train technology on the Jubilee Line, union activists have called for a wider dispute against possible de-skilling and job cuts on trains.

Ritzy workers give bosses a fright

By Gemma Short

Workers at the Ritzy Picture-house cinema in Brixton, south London, struck again on Monday 31 October.

The strike coincided with national Living Wage week, and an announcement by London Mayor Sadiq Khan that the London Living Wage will go up to £9.75 from next year.

Workers held a "night of the living dead" picket line and protest outside the cinema in



Windrush Square, Brixton. The picket line was joined by sup-

porters from across London and by a lot of pumpkins.

Durham teaching assistants plan strikes

By Charlotte Zalens

Durham teaching assistants will strike on 8 and 9 November as part of their fight to stop a 25% pay cut.

Teaching assistants in Unison voted by 93% in favour of strikes, those in the ATL by 84%. Over half term teaching assistants and their

supporters have been holding a vigil outside Durham County Hall which ended in a rally on Friday 28 October.

Teaching assistants in Derby fighting a similar battle suspended their strikes for negotiations with the council, those negotiations have now been extended another week, meaning teaching assistants in Derby and Durham will not strike

at the same time.

Durham teaching assistants will hold a lobby of councillors at 9am on Wednesday 9 November, followed by a rally at noon, they ask trade unionists and supporters in the area to join them.

• Details of the rally: twitter.com/durhamUNISON

Southern workers protest at Parliament

RMT members and supporters demonstrated outside Parliament on 1 November, in support of Southern guards' fight against the imposition of "Driver Only Operation".

A rally following the demonstration was addressed by speakers including Paula Peters from Disabled People Against Cuts, and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Guards will strike again on 4-5 November, with further strikes planned for 22-23 November and 6-8 December. Drivers' union Aslef is also balloting its members on Southern, in a vote due to close on 18 November.

Southern has given guards a 4 November deadline to sign up to new contracts as "On Board Supervisors", a role with no safety-critical function. The company has threatened to sack guards who do not accept the new roles.



Image: RMT twitter

IDS not a friend of workers or claimants

By a DWP worker

Former Work and Pensions secretary of state Ian Duncan Smith has seen Ken Loach's new film, 'I, Daniel Blake', and he's not happy with the way Jobcentre workers are portrayed in the film.

In an interview with Radio 4 he particularly bemoaned an instance where the main character wanted assistance with drafting a CV but was referred to on-line advice. "This is the sort of thing jobcentre workers do day in day out to help the unemployed", he claimed.

Either he is very badly briefed or he is telling lies. Unlike his approach to claimants, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

Due to savage cuts in staffing levels and a fundamentally anti-claimant regime which has as its starting point that it is your fault that you're out of work, jobcentre workers spend most of their time effectively policing the unemployed. The carrot part of the job ended years ago to be replaced

with a big stick.

DWP consistently denied that there were targets for staff on the number of sanctions they had to issue until that lie was exposed by an e-mail leaked to the *Guardian* saying that the East London district manager was not happy with the position of jobcentres in East London in the London league table of sanctions. Staff have been through performance procedures, put on warnings and sacked for not issuing enough sanctions, or "not doing your job properly" as DWP would say.

It is a gross exaggeration to say that all staff working in Jobcentres buy into the anti-claimant ethos. Many genuinely want to help. But it would also be wrong not to acknowledge that a significant number of staff that do buy into the scrounger image promoted by DWP, the right wing media and the Tories.

The PCS union has a role to play in countering this and promoting claimant/worker solidarity.

Post Office strike

By Peggy Carter

Post Office workers struck again on Monday 31 October in defence of jobs and pensions.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, Post Office bosses plan to close the Post Office pension scheme, leaving many current workers out of pocket come retirement and leaving new workers with a worse pension. Closures and redundancies also continue within the Post Office, before the last strike bosses threatened to reduce severance pay to workers who strike.

The attack on workers' terms and conditions is more than just an attack on them. It is part of a wider



picture of a "managed decline" of the Post Office. Striking Post Office workers carried a symbolic coffin around Parliament Square and to Post Office headquarters.

The CWU plans more strikes in the lead up to and during the Christmas period.

Uber loses in court

By Gemma Short

On Friday 28 October taxi app company Uber lost a court case about their use of "self-employed" workers brought against it by a group of drivers.

The case is a useful precedent in a situation when an increasingly large number of companies seek to avoid minimum wage requirements and social benefits by their staff being spuriously self-employed. The case heard that self-employed workers at Uber were a

"slave" to the app, with workers being "deactivated" for missing too many job alerts or getting bad ratings.

This practice is not unique to Uber and Deliveroo. Cleaning contractors on London Underground have been using it for a while, and cleaners organising in the RMT union have been fighting for rights for those workers.

Recent strikes within Deliveroo show that workers can fight back despite the attempt to erode their collective bargaining power.



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For a democratic, activist Momentum!

By Sacha Ismail

A row has broken out in the Labour left movement Momentum, and gained wide publicity on the web and on Labour List.

On 28 October the majority on the Momentum national Steering Committee voted to cancel the Momentum National Committee (NC) which had been called for 5 November. The NC has now not met since May. Other meetings in the meanwhile have also been cancelled by the SC.

The NC is now due to meet on 10 December, but seems at risk of being cancelled again.

The 28 October meeting, called with less than a day's notice, also voted to shortcircuit ongoing discussions in the organisation about its national structures, should be designed by imposing an undemocratic system in which there is no real national conference and members vote on (some) policy in on-line ballots

Momentum was initially set up as an offshoot of and with contacts from the Jeremy Corbyn leadership campaign. In its first months, it had an office, but no structure and no system of membership. (There was initially, behind the scenes, a sort of steering committee of left MPs).

In January this year, an attempt to set up an essentially appointed National Committee collapsed after a revolt by local groups and the Momentum office staff. There then emerged a system in which the majority of NC delegates were elected by regional meetings of delegates from groups.

This system was far from perfect but it did serve to bring some co-ordination, networking and democracy to Momentum. The NC



Many Momentum members want active, campaigning local groups

met in February and elected the Steering Committee. It met again in May — and then the Steering Committee started cancelling meetings.

LIFE

The reason seems to be that the NC showed too much life, passing policies for a left Remain vote over the EU, for NHS campaigning, for opposition to the Labour purge, etc.

The initiators of Momentum were not necessarily opposed to those policies in substance, but were reluctant to see any detailed policies adopted — i.e. to see the Momentum office tied down by

any substantial policy-making process outside the office.

We, and many others, want an activist organisation based on local groups, which get people out on the streets and which campaign systematically in the Labour Party, and which therefore debate ideas and policies to put forward. Others, as far as we can see, want a sort of Labour-focused version of the 38 Degrees organisation, which has an unelected board of worthies, an appointed office staff, and members connected mostly by electronic communications from and occasional consultations by the office.

The Fire Brigades Union is supporting the opposition to the Steer-

ing Committee. Within two days of 28 October, four of the eleven Momentum regions had voted to condemn the Steering Committee's actions by huge margins, with more likely to follow. If the Steering Committee meeting on Wednesday 2 November doesn't restore the 5 November NC meeting, then many NC delegates will be attending an unofficial meeting called by FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack and other NC and SC members on 5 November in Birmingham.

The idea, retailed by some, that the issue is the AWL trying to "take over" Momentum, is baseless.

AWL voted with the initiators of Momentum to remove Jackie

Walker as vice-chair of the Steering Committee when she repeatedly used that position to denigrate Jewish concerns about anti-semitism. We have campaigned against antisemitism in the left for many years, and often been unpopular for doing so.

In the current row about democracy, we are on the same side as many who are on the other side in the row over left antisemitism. Our stance is based on principles, not on calculations about "takeovers". We are for democracy. We are against the "absolute anti-Zionism" which denies the Israeli Jews' right to self-determination and dismisses concerns about anti-semitism as fabrications to serve Israeli policy.

Momentum is a new and broad organisation. It needs to move slowly and carefully in developing policy and politics. But no organisation which aspires to play a serious role in the labour movement and wider society can avoid formulating political positions and debating ideas. The problem with not doing so was shown, for instance, by Momentum's almost total failure to do anything organised inside or even on the doors of the Labour Party conference on 24-28 September.

The real divide is not between people recklessly seeking to impose a very detailed, ultra-radical program on Momentum and people who are more sober and reasonable.

It is between those who want Momentum to discuss politics and develop policies at all, however gradually, and those who prefer the 38 Degrees model.

• What sort of democracy for Momentum? page 10.

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