



Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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SOCIALIST IDEAS CAN BEAT TRUMP

Donald Trump, who becomes US president on 20 January, threatens to push the USA, and maybe more of the world, back decades on women's rights, ethnic minority rights, migrant rights, and civil liberties.

He threatens to batter and marginalise the long-beleaguered US trade-union movement.

With his swagger and desire to throw the USA's weight around, he threatens to set off a surge of trade wars and maybe shooting wars.

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NHS crisis isn't going away



Claudia Raven reports on the latest in the NHS crisis.

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Organise for a member-led Momentum



Solidarity argues to keep fighting in Momentum and build local groups.

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John Berger and seeing politically



Hugh Daniels looks back on the life of John Berger.

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Join Labour!

Yes to a maximum wage!

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Tristram Hunt's "accomplishments"

By Ola Antol

Tristram Hunt has resigned from being a Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central to take up the lucrative post of director of the Victoria and Albert museum.

Although a surprising appointment, it would be unfair to say that Hunt lacks any qualification for his new job.

The son of Baron Hunt of Chesterton holds a First Class degree in history from the University of Cambridge, is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and has written books on Victorian urbanism.

However, more than with his knowledge of the past, in recent years he has become associated with other "accomplishments" — such as crossing a UCU picket line to deliver a lecture on Marxism, telling Cambridge students that Labour should be led by "the top one per cent" or arguing that the party needs to embrace English nationalism.

In 2011, Hunt also made a case for bringing back entrance fees to national museums and galleries, which had been scrapped under New Labour ten years earlier. Un-



surprisingly, Hunt has also been a prominent opponent of Jeremy Corbyn.

For Labour, Hunt's resignation means a difficult by-election. The constituency, once considered a safe seat, has recently registered declining turnout, a strong UKIP vote and one of the highest Leave votes in the country. It will be a test for Corbyn's leadership as well as an opportunity to stand a socialist candidate who can reconnect with Stoke's largely working-class population.

What Hunt's appointment means for the arts, we are yet to see. While he will not be able to introduce charges, his Parliamentary record would suggest that we can expect more English art for the English one per cent.

At least his brand of politics will finally find itself in a museum, where it belongs.

Against Borders for Children

By Joe Booth

On 14 January I went with another member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty to the Against Borders for Children (ABC) conference.

The event was about fighting for refugee children, and was organised by ABC, a group that allies with teachers and students to fight for refugee children who are being spied on or even arrested by the government.

Speakers included National Union of Teachers General Secretary Kevin Courtney and National Union of Students President Malia Bouattia, as well as representatives of various refugee rights campaigns.

The main focus was on resisting the government's intention to make schools give pupil nationality data to the Home Office.

The NUT has argued that

"schools are not part of policing immigration", and even Ofsted head Michael Wilshaw stated that he was "amazed by it and shocked by it. Schools shouldn't be used for border control."

The ABC's #BoycottSchoolCensus campaign urges parents to exercise their legal right to refuse to give their children's school the details of their nationality or country of birth.

I believe that we need to organise teachers and students to support the refugees, to show solidarity and to convince and involve the labour movement.

We need to get people together, workers and oppressed, to unite against the government and start a mass movement, with agitation, education and organisation.

• Contact: www.schoolsabc.net
@Schools_ABC

Bosses refuse to fix pension gaps

By Rhodri Evans

Corporate bosses moan about the "unaffordability" of decent pension schemes, and have closed most of the defined-benefit schemes they used to offer.

Remaining defined-benefit pensioners, like those in the steel pension scheme, live under threat of their pensions being cut.

Yet a survey by the *Financial Times* (14 January) has found that nearly half the top 100 companies in

Britain could have cleared their pension fund deficits completely with just one year's worth of dividend payments.

In 2015-16, FTSE 100 companies paid out £69 billion to shareholders, and only £13 billion in pension contributions.

Many of the shortfalls in pension funds are due to companies giving themselves "holidays" from contributions in times when share markets were booming and funds were expanding even without contributions.

Al Jazeera's phoney scandal

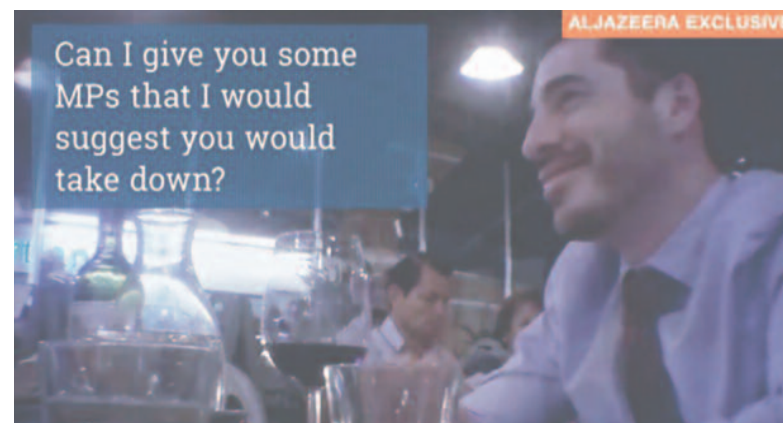
By Keith Road

The "scandal" over the activities pro-Israel groups in the UK and their links with the Israeli embassy uncovered by Al Jazeera is largely manufactured.

Al Jazeera's story got blanket news coverage after the main protagonist in their undercover footage, Shai Masot, a minor Israeli Embassy official resigned. Masot was caught on camera saying he would like to see Junior Foreign Minister Alan Duncan removed.

The documentaries run to the best part of two hours, with a lot of repetition. You do not need to spend that time watching. It is hardly shocking that Israeli diplomats and embassy staff have good connections with pro Israel groups, seek to support them and to carry out the policy of the current government of Israel. Clearly Shai Masot occasionally has too much to drink, has a big ego and shoots his mouth off about his work.

It is perfectly reasonable and indeed necessary to reject much of the views of pro-Israel groups. Does that make these groups



unique, or fundamentally worse than other lobbyists, diplomats or even those who are agents of espionage by other states? Not really. And the revelations that the Qatari-government-backed Al Jazeera have uncovered are low level and uninteresting. These are:

1. That Labour members of the NUS executive oppose the current President, Malia Bouattia, have been building support to see her deposed, and have taken part in Union of Jewish Students organised trips to Israel.

2. That Labour Friends of Israel receives support from the Israeli embassy

3. That antisemitism in the Labour Party is something that concerns the Israeli government and ambassador.

4. That Labour Friends of Israel has made complaints of antisemitism against Labour Party members

5. That the Jewish Labour Movement has among its staff someone who previously worked for the Israeli Embassy

The documentary seeks out comment from the likes of Jacqui Walker, Peter Osborne and Ilan Pappé; constantly reminds that Israel is engaged in an offensive against the BDS movement; and constantly refers to Israel as an apartheid state. All that makes the "revelations" more dramatic than they really are. The film also describes various people who work or support pro Israeli groups as "operatives"

The documentaries seek to show there is a shadowy cabal of Jews who seek to control real organisations for their own gains — the unremitting and unqualified defence of the occupation of Palestine and the project of a greater Israel.

Much drama is made out of preparations by various members of LFI, BICOM, and members of the Israeli Labour Party to attend a meeting at Labour Party Conference of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East. Then, in passing, it says that the meeting went off peacefully. So nothing the film makers felt worth sharing!

One of the final events the undercover reporter is taken to is co-sponsored by AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The voice-over tells us that it is not widely known that AIPAC operate in the UK. Maybe that is true, but is it really surprising or scandalous that it does?

We should oppose the lobbying and espionage of governments and organisations who want to promote harmful ideas. But we should do this consistently, and not just for those instances where it is connected with Israel. Will Al Jazeera be a follow up on the lobbying done by the Gulf states particularly around arms deals? I somehow doubt it.

There is nothing original in these documentaries; their aim — to promote a conspiratorial attitude to the "Zionist lobby" — is very transparent.

Campaign: pay Yemeni oil workers!

From LabourStart

The Norwegian-based oil company DNO has not paid its 175 workers in Yemen for 18 months.

The company stopped its operations after the war broke out in Yemen in summer 2015 and terminated its employees via a simple SMS or email, showing neither respect to its workers who had worked for the company for over 10 years, nor to the local legislation obliging the company to follow a handover process and redundancy procedures upon its withdrawal.

So in time of hardships workers faced a double trouble: war in the country and no further income for their families.

Even earlier the company used to

pay the lowest wages in Yemen compared to other oil companies operating in the country.

Back in 2013 and 2014 workers organised a number of wage related strikes. Management responded with a written threat to dismiss all striking workers in violation of workers' legal rights to strike in Yemen.

DNO, which operates all over the Middle East, made a third quarter profit of \$19.8 million last year.

Give your support to 175 Yemeni workers and their families joining an online campaign of letter writing to DNO Executive Chairman Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani.

• To access letter follow this link: bit.ly/2j5iCgA

NHS crisis is being used to boost private healthcare

By Claudia Raven

Most days there is a new NHS horror story in the news.

The BBC documentary 'Hospital' showed the difficulty many hospitals are facing every day to find beds. In some hospitals even emergency surgery — the so called CEPOD lists — have been cancelled. The *Mirror's* front page picture of a child being treated on plastic chairs due to a lack of beds was picked up by Corbyn at Prime Minister's Questions.

The Prime Minister's response, along with Jeremy Hunt, was to

bury her head in the sand, denying that our problems are abnormal for winter, endlessly repeating the "more doctors" and "£8 billion funding" mantras. Simultaneously, blame is being distributed to others — patients for seeking healthcare, and GPs for not being open out of hours.

This is part of a broader attempt by the Tories and press to shift public consciousness, to start conversations about "alternative funding solutions" and "new and innovative means of delivering care". All are euphemisms for private funding, co-payments, health insurance

and privatisation.

The *Daily Mail* was upfront about it, with the headline "As the NHS crisis deepens, could you afford to go private instead?".

Doctors' forums are alive with colleagues questioning NHS sustainability and suggesting co-payments to discourage attendance and ease the load, or restricting what is provided on the NHS.

This crisis is a deliberately event. The Tories want to popularise the idea that the NHS is unsustainable and poor quality. Many will be convinced. Increasingly, those who can afford to will avoid the NHS, and those who cannot or will not will be left with the remnants.

General practice, already underfunded and understaffed, has erupted in outrage at the suggestion they are at fault for the crisis, and will face further cuts if they fail to open longer. Many GPs already work 14-15 hour days. Opening on a Saturday or in evenings requires the loss of a session elsewhere in the week, and there is little evidence that this is desired by patients or produces better outcomes.

The deliberate overwork, poor workforce planning and antagonism from the government has led to many retiring or leaving the country. Some fear further attack will precipitate the collapse of primary care.



Jeremy Hunt continues to deny NHS is in crisis

Also rearing its ugly head is the concept of a cross-party commission on the NHS, "removing the NHS from politics".

Heidi Alexander helpfully quashed this idea last year in her time as Shadow Health Secretary, refusing to accept that questions about the NHS were not political: "it's about who pays and who benefits".

There can be no consensus with Tories on the idea of public provision and funding of healthcare so any cross-party commission will not be based on those principles.

The main proponents are Lib-Dem MP Norman Lamb and former Labour MP and now government functionary Alan Milburn. Both are cheerleaders for privatisation. The commission would be designed to give a veneer of legitimacy to political ideas currently unpalatable to the public. Many supporters of the idea, particularly NHS staff, come from a good place and need convincing.

A good cross-party solution to the crisis in the NHS already exists in the NHS Bill, supported by many MPs and NHS campaign groups. The bill aims to renationalise the NHS and will have a second reading on 24 February 2017.

Local campaigns against the "Sustainability and Transformation Plan" service and hospital closures are beginning to get going, often with parochial support from MPs who do not necessarily understand the broader context of NHS destruction.

The Labour Party NHS Campaign day on 21 January will be a good opportunity to talk about the necessary solutions: renationalisation, proper funding, decent employment conditions.

We must defend our NHS from the growing political attack on it: socialised healthcare is effective, efficient and capable of providing for all.

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
SATURDAY 4 MARCH 2017**

#ourNHS

no cuts | no closures | no privatisation

**12pm, Tavistock Square, London WC1 (tube: Russell Sq / Euston)
March to Parliament**

Called by Health Campaigns Together & The People's Assembly
For info, coaches & supporting organisations visit:
www.ournhs.info

Northern Ireland: political stalemate while cuts bite

By Micheál MacEoin

Amid a scandal over a botched renewable heating scheme, the Stormont-based power-sharing institutions collapsed on 16 January, sparking new elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The immediate trigger for the latest crisis was the resignation on 9 January of the Deputy First Minister, Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness. In resigning, McGuinness automatically deposed the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) First Minister Arlene Foster and paved the way for a new round of elections to the devolved Assembly.

In his resignation statement, McGuinness cited DUP "arrogance" as a motivation for ending the decade-long experiment in power-sharing between Sinn Féin and the DUP.

This is a reference to Foster's refusal to temporarily stand down without prejudice to allow an investigation into the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme, which was introduced on her watch as a minister in 2012.

The scheme, which is based on a wider UK initiative to reduce carbon emissions, subsidises businesses and other non-domestic energy users to install renewable heat technologies.

For every £1 spent on fuel, recipients receive £1.60 from Stormont.

Unlike in the rest of the UK, the Northern Ireland version of the RHI has no capped upper limit, leading to widespread allegations of abuse and corruption. Liabilities to the taxpayer are now predicted to be in the area of half a billion pounds over the next two decades.

Belying the DUP's claims of a conspiracy to undermine unionism, Sinn Féin tried hard to get its partner in government off the hook, abstaining on a vote of no-confidence in the Assembly before the Christmas recess, and issuing only lukewarm calls for an investigation.

As public outrage mounted, and under pressure from the republican rank-and-file, Sinn Féin finally decided to call on Foster to stand down, before giving her a final push with McGuinness's resignation.

Sinn Féin's position reflects the end of a crucial phase of post-Good Friday Agreement (GFA) politics in Northern Ireland and a shift in republican strategy.

RHI was only the trigger for a widespread feeling that republicans, McGuinness especially, made a series of real and symbolic concessions to unionism — signing up in support of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and meeting the Queen to name but two.

In response, the DUP's sectarian truculence has only increased with the election of Foster as First Min-



Northern Irish politicians are not fighting poverty

ister, as the DUP increasingly mocked the minority community's national and cultural aspirations. Nationalists have become frustrated by what are seen as diminishing returns from Sinn Féin's participation in government.

Widely seen as the last straw was the DUP-instigated cut, on the day before Christmas Eve, of the Lófa bursary scheme to enable poor students to study in Irish-speaking areas. Evidence that the DUP has over-reached itself was provided when the money was mysteriously "found" for the bursaries in the wake of McGuinness's resignation.

The post-GFA system institutionalised the sectarian blocs in Northern Irish politics, incentivising parties to compete to best represent "their" side in the dividing the spoils. In 2007, after several years of stop-start government and long periods of Direct Rule from Westminster, the DUP and Sinn Féin came together for the first time to share power as the two largest parties.

Yet, sectarian tension did not dissipate and now the system is in deadlock once again. This time, McGuinness stressed in his resignation that there will be "no return to the status quo", signalling that Sinn

Fein will require major concessions from unionism and the British government before it will countenance returning to government in Stormont.

This potentially re-opens the question of governmental structures which was ostensible settled by the GFA and 2007's St Andrew's Agreement.

The election is unlikely to fundamentally upset the sectarian balance of power but what comes afterwards is unpredictable and Northern Ireland could be set for a prolonged period of negotiations and instability.

Meanwhile, voters in the North become increasingly alienated with a political system widely associated with corruption and which continues to implement Tory cuts and attacks on living conditions.

As Gerry Carroll, the People Before Profit Assembly member for West Belfast put it: "RHI goes to the heart of the rotten politics of the Executive. People are sleeping rough on our streets. Food banks are reporting a record number of service users. And across West Belfast, workers and community groups have had to face wage freezes and job cuts, as politicians tell them that there simply is no money left."

"But there is money. £600 million was found to literally burn. It was always a question of priorities."

A trip to Israel and Palestine

By Omar Raii, NUS Executive, personal capacity

Last year I visited two countries — Israel and Palestine — about which I had discussed so much and yet seen so little.

On a four-day trip organised by the Union of Jewish Students we visited different parts of Israel, including the Golan Heights, and made a short sojourn to Palestine, mainly Ramallah.

It was a trip that was primarily organised to discuss the political issues around the Middle East.

To many it will have been disgraceful that I even visited Israel. Had I gone on a visit to my country of birth (Iran), a country that punishes homosexuality by execution, and hangs any Muslim who becomes an apostate, I doubt anyone would care in the slightest. And yet the idea of visiting Israel is seen as strange and wrong.

I went with people who held a wide variety of political views but I was the only revolutionary socialist. This was valuable — much discussion was had about the history and politics of the region. I quite like debating ideas with people who may disagree with me. Given that I was raised by a Muslim family with pro-Kremlin political views, I wouldn't get anywhere if I only talked to people who already agree with me.

One of the most prevalent problems in the student movement, and outside it, is the in-

ability of many to not only to fathom views other than their own, but even to find out about them. The President of NUS, for example, seems 100% certain of everything she needs to know about Israel and is 100% certain that boycotting everything Israeli is the way to achieve change on Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. My views expanded and strengthened after I discussed with people from the left, centre and right of Israeli politics.

Our guide for the trip was a British-Israeli lecturer who on everything, from wars with Lebanon to the prohibition on Jews praying at the Temple Mount, gave us every possible view espoused by different political traditions, while making it clear he was on the left.

In Jerusalem and Tel Aviv we saw both tourist areas and traditional sites such as the Temple Mount and Jerusalem's Old City (where I even got the chance to see the Al-Aqsa mosque, generally prohibited to non-Muslims). We also went to the Lebanese and Syrian borders and discussed the history behind those borders.

We visited Sderot, a town famous for having many rockets land on it due to its proximity to Gaza (seeing children's play centres that have been made resistant to rocket attacks was an unnerving thing that I won't forget in a hurry). We saw the occupation in Palestine as we went through Bir-Zeit and Ramallah and also a project for a new Palestinian town called Rawabi.

We met a charity run by both a settler and a former militant Palestinian who now argues for two-states and reconciliation. It was rather odd but then Israel has a lot of seemingly incongruous things coexisting: Arabs, Muslims and Christians, religious and secular Jews, LGBT people, hard-right nationalists and liberal vegans.

Our trip ended at an LGBT centre in Tel Aviv, which appears in the excellent documentary 'Oriented' (about the lives of a group of gay Arabs living in Israel). We discussed the position of LGBT people in Israeli society, something that would probably be ignored and dismissed as pinkwashing by some anti-Zionists.

The saddest thing about the trip was that, illuminating as I found it, I know for a fact it would have benefited some other people in NUS far more. Not so that they would end their opposition to the Israeli state and its occupation — I firmly support that opposition — but so that they could get a better idea of what it was they were opposing.

But my view is premised on the fundamental view that Israel is a real society like any other; like British, or German or Tunisian or Peruvian society. Within the pre-1967 borders, while it may have some laws that should be opposed, Israel is not an illegitimate regime that sustains itself only through brutal military force. To the anti-Israel Arab states, at least in history, Israel is a temporary illegitimate statelet. To some misguided left-

ists it is a racist endeavour simply and only for being a nation-state of a certain people. Yet they do not regard as racist and evil any other state, let alone the myriad of those that explicitly describe themselves as Arab or Islamic states, despite not being ethnically or religiously homogenous.

Outside the 1967 border, it is of course a different matter. The continuing occupation and the blockade of Gaza are not examples of a democratic and peaceful society but of an injustice that must end immediately, so that the Palestinian people achieve the same right that the Israelis currently enjoy to live in their own state and have a functioning society.

The occupation is a crime and the settlements are illegal. The trip, which I am thankful to UJS for inviting to take part, did not blind me to these facts.

Seeing the desolation and poverty on the road from Ramallah to East Jerusalem cannot make anyone less sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinian people. While Israel may be the most democratic country in the Middle East, the West Bank is not Israel and Israel's control over it (as well as the blockade of Gaza) is anything but democratic.

I still believe that the only immediate peaceful and just end to the conflict should be through a free and independent Palestinian state alongside Israel and a dismantling of the settlements in the West Bank.

A discussion with Pakistani socialists

In December, Farooq Tariq, a leader of the Awami Workers' Party in Pakistan, visited London, and during his visit talked with activists from Workers' Liberty. Martin Thomas reports.

We started by saying we appreciated the strong socialist line he had taken against Islamic-fundamentalist politics in his speeches during his visit, but questioning the uncritical praise for Fidel Castro in AWP statements after Castro's death on 25 November.

Farooq replied straightforwardly that it was an AWP decision to be uncritical of Castro and Cuba.

For that decision, he gave two reasons. One, that politics in Pakistan is in a "counter-revolutionary period" which allows no space for debate such as over criticism of the Cuban regime. Second, that Cuba has built good

health and education provision.

So has Sweden, and more so, we replied. But, said Farooq, you have capitalism in Sweden.

To our mind that begs the question of whether the "command economy" in Cuba is a superior system to Swedish-style capitalism, and whether any economic superiorities outweigh the lack of freedom for Cuban workers to organise independent unions or political parties, or to have independent media.

We couldn't agree on Cuba, and moved on to other issues. What are the AWP's main current activities? Campaigning among the peasantry and working with trade unions, especially against privatisation, and for workers' rights.

The AWP is also campaigning for women's rights and working to "feminise the party".

The AWP now has 6000 members. Some 3000 come from the Labour Party Pakistan,

which Farooq previously led, and the LPP contributed most members to the merger which formed the AWP in 2012, but other components contributed more "mass base".

Since the merger new AWP units have been formed in new areas, for example in Baluchistan, where all the main trade-union leaders are now AWP members. Sindh is also an area of strength, but not so much Karachi (Sindh's biggest city).

The AWP committees were at first formed on a parity basis from the three components in the merger (one-third, one-third, one-third), but since then the AWP has held two congresses, in 2014 and 2016. Now it is planning for the 2018 legislative elections.

Land reform in Pakistan has been scanty even by comparison with India. The 1972 land reform law has been blocked as "un-Islamic", even though it is written into the 1973 constitution.

The AWP campaigns for the big landhold-

ings to be nationalised, and for land reforms. There have been land occupations on some farms owned by the military near Lahore.

Some 61% of Pakistan's population is still rural (the world proportion is now 46%). Large numbers leave the rural areas to go to the cities, even though they can hope for little there beyond life in a shanty town and bits of casual work. The AWP is supporting legal challenges to the demolition of shanty towns around Islamabad.

The "informal sector", outside official labour laws, is 73% (and increasing) of jobs outside agriculture. Only about 3% of workers are unionised. Those are mainly in the public sector, and mostly they are older workers, since the public sector takes on few new recruits, instead outsourcing any new activities.

The AWP supports a Union for Informal Workers, organising mainly home-based workers, which has been able in some cases to negotiate on piece rates.

The biggest industrial sector is textiles. There has been a surge of Chinese investment, especially in power generation. Farooq said he regards China as a new imperialist power.

The AWP is active among university students, although only 10% of the age group get to university in Pakistan (much fewer than in India), and no student unions are allowed.

Pakistan spends only about 2% of its GDP on education, which is an exceptionally low figure even among poor countries. Literacy is only 58%, and most students get only five years of schooling, from about age five to age ten.

The AWP is working with the Punjab Teachers' Union on a campaign against a form of privatisation of the education system in which state schools are handed over to NGOs.

Help us raise £20,000 to improve our website

We need to build a left that is open to debate and is serious about self-education.

Our website, including its extensive archive could help build a different kind of socialist culture — one where discussion and self-education are cherished.

From Trotskyist newspapers of the 1940s and 50s, to older Marxist classics, to discussion articles on feminism, national questions, religion and philosophy and resources such as guidelines for Marxist reading groups — it's all there on the Workers' Liberty website.

But to make our archive of real use we need professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date

and subject and optimised for mobile reading. We need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our news coverage is up to the minute and shared on social media. We want to raise £20,000 by

our conference in November 2017. Any amount will help.

In the last week *Solidarity* readers have sent in £67 bringing our running total to £321.

- If you would like to donate by paypal go to www.workersliberty.org/donate
- Or set up an internet bank transfer to "AWL", account 20047674 at Unity Trust Bank, Birmingham, 08-60-01 (please email awl@workersliberty.org to notify us of the payment and what it's for); or
- Send a cheque payable to "AWL" to AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Rd, London SE1 3DG (with a note saying what it's for).

Take a look at www.workersliberty.org



Socialist ideas can beat Trump

Donald Trump, who becomes US president on 20 January, threatens to push the USA, and maybe more of the world, back decades on women's rights, ethnic minority rights, migrant rights, and civil liberties.

He threatens to batter and marginalise the long-beleaguered US trade-union movement.

With his swagger and desire to throw the USA's weight around, he threatens to set off a surge of trade wars and maybe shooting wars.

Even the most moderate liberals are horrified. But a bland, moderate, liberal defence of the status quo will not defeat Trump and the other politicians of his type, Le Pen and Wilders, Grillo and Putin, Erdogan and Duterte, Modi and Sisi.

Only a resurgent labour movement, fighting for a different world-view, and a different world, of co-operation and solidarity, can do that.

Back in the year 2000, the historian and essayist Perry Anderson declared: "neoliberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history".

The 2008 crash and its grinding aftermath showed neoliberalism as not so successful at guiding an economic system. Yet the left was too fragmented, too timid at the time to seize the initiative. Soon the neoliberals were strident again, demanding more cuts, more privatisations, more labour "flexibility".

But their ability to fill the whole sky of social thought had cracked. There have been surges on the left: Corbyn, Sanders. And on the right, an eruption of xenophobes and demagogues.

Trump and his type are more the acme of neoliberalism than a negation of it. They strip off the cosmopolitan, liberal-ish, consensus-management, mildly "social" trimmings that neoliberalism developed, especially with Clinton and Blair. They strip it down to the hard metal.

They want their states to act in the world arena, not as staid and moderate negotiators

of long-term alliances and frameworks, but in the same sort of "post-modern", supposedly "creative-chaos", way that corporations act economically: eye-gouging rivalry mediated and alternated with a whirl of deals, consortia, joint ventures, contracting-out arrangements.

Whether Trump will persist with trying to run state-to-state relations on that model, and whether Trump's bluster will generate a spiral of protectionism and trade wars, is scarcely uncertain.

Around their nationalist drive, the new demagogues build new padding for neoliberalism: nationalist ideologies to appeal to the millions disillusioned with established neoliberalism. Neoliberalism boasts about eroding glass ceilings, and glass walls between countries, but for millions it has meant glassy floors — insecurity, difficulty finding a stable job, difficulty finding and keeping a home, difficulty dealing with ever-harsher demands for more "flexibility" and "continuous improvement" at work.

GROUND

Trump and his like do not promise to change economic fundamentals. But they offer a story about making the ground beneath people's feet firmer, a promise of government which puts "its own" country and "its own" people first.

Thus we have, as political economist Leo Panitch puts it, the rise of a "xenophobic right which claims to represent the national interest in cultural and ethnic terms.... Their main thrust is to define the nation again in xenophobic terms, which also combines with protection of old cultural values that would restore hierarchies of race, gender, and sexual orientation".

Their appeal is first to older people who feel more marginalised. The Brexit and Ukip votes are heavily weighted towards older males. The demographic variables most correlated with Trump-voting last November were ill-health and alcohol consumption: people in poorer health and people who drank more voted for Trump.

The xenophobic right is strengthened by low electoral registration and voter turnout among younger people: in France, for exam-

ple, only 25% of voters are under 36. But in France, too, the far-right Front National has been able to build from an initial base among older males in small towns to win large support, now, from young people in big cities.

Although Trump and his like play on the theme of "taking control" and security, as against the bewildering and uncontrolled swings of the capitalist world markets which established neoliberals worship, they paradoxically also have cultivate personal unpredictability.

It's one of the "48 Laws of Power" according to an influential American pop-psych book. "Keep Others in Suspended Terror: Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability. Your predictability gives them a sense of control. Turn the tables: Be deliberately unpredictable. Behaviour that seems to have no consistency or purpose will keep them off-balance and they will wear themselves out trying to explain your moves. Taken to an extreme, this strategy can intimidate and terrorise... Appear to have no clear strategy... Scramble old patterns..."

A "moderate", or "centre-ground", or "centre-left", response, which offers only bland and geeky tweaks to give a little more social padding to neoliberalism, cannot win over the disillusioned working-class and plebeian millions who have drifted to Trump, or Brexit, or Ukip, or Le Pen. They have not drifted as the outcome of detailed economic calculations which convince them that Trump, or Brexit, or Ukip, or Le Pen, offer them x% higher income. They have drifted on issues of world view. They have drifted because they resent and fear the world of neoliberalism, and because the right-wing demagogues offer them, not really a different world, but a niche within that slippery, elusive world within which they can at least have some anchoring, within which they can be really "American" or "British" or "French".

Only a resurgent labour movement, fighting boldly and unequivocally for a different world-view, and a different world, of co-operation and solidarity, can turn the tables.

A Trump primer

By Junco Ashow

The return of Bush-era tax cuts are to be Trump's opening act, but these it has been said will be accompanied by an increase in infrastructure spending.

Already, the capitalists are reacting well to this, with the International Monetary Fund predicting 2.3% growth in 2017, above that predicted before the election.

On the world stage, Trump has promised to introduce tariffs on imports from China and Mexico, with the object of bringing jobs back to America, as well as paying for the proposed border wall with Mexico. Trump's opposition to free trade is further demonstrated through his promise to not pursue Obama's policy of TPP and TTIP. This is confounded, however, by Trump's recently announced support for a free trade deal with the UK — perhaps angling for support in the coming trade disputes with China.

Trump has further promised to renounce other major Obama treaties, most notably the Paris Climate Agreement, which is the UN's last ditch attempt to achieve a slow-down in global warming. Reneging on the Iran nuclear deal also has featured in Trump's campaigning.

Back at home, the Republicans have already laid the foundations for repealing Obamacare, which mandated that Americans buy health insurance. It is unclear what, if anything, the Trump administration plans to replace this with.

Interestingly, Trump has vowed to enforce stronger bidding for pharmaceutical products and to use federal powers to "penalise unjustified prices" — this was a policy Clinton proposed in her campaign.

Who are some of the people tasked with bringing these policies about?

Rex Tillerson is the nominee for Secretary of State. Until recently the Exxon Mobil CEO, he gave \$2 million in the election to various candidates, mostly to Republicans but also \$90,000 to Clinton, in addition to millions more on lobbying. Tillerson has strong ties to the Putin regime in Russia and strongly opposes sanctions for their invasion of the Ukraine.

Mike Pompeo is to be CIA Director. He strongly opposed the Iran deal, but also opposes Trump's extreme calls to bring back waterboarding and further disagrees with Trump on Russia's hacking in the election, which Trump has publicly doubted.

Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, is already being called one of the most powerful men in America and has acted as Trump's senior advisor for the past year. Like Trump, he is a real estate mogul, with dealings in the US and in China. He is seen as a moderating influence on Trump.

Former Wall Street lawyer Jay Clayton is to head the Securities and Exchange Commission, tasked with the objective of tearing up regulation, freeing up the corporations to exploit more.

Clayton has been very vocal in his plans to target the anti-bribery laws, which he claims give the US an international trade disadvantage.

Solidarity 428 will be out on 1 February, and 429 on 8 February.

By Ed Maltby

*"The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar"
Matthew Arnold, 'On Dover Beach'*

Steve Bloom, in his long review of *The Two Trotskyisms Confront Stalinism* and subsequent discussion ([Solidarity 400](http://Solidarity400.com) and bit.ly/1TaAuFp), has produced a thoughtful and historically knowledgeable response to Sean Matgamna's re-appraisal of the Trotskyist tradition.

Bloom objects that Matgamna's judgement is too harsh: that it paints a picture of the Cannon "Orthodox Trotskyist" tendency as a totally politically lost and inadequate tendency from whom nothing can be learned. He takes issue, for example, with this:

"The story of the Orthodox Trotskyists told in this introduction and in the documents in this book is one of political confusion, bewilderment, inadequacy, and defeat. Of a small political tendency being overwhelmed by events and, despite its revolutionary, working-class, anti-Stalinist best intentions, magnetised by the Stalinist USSR as it conquered and consolidated a great European empire. Of a small political tribe that got lost trying, half-blind, to work its way through the murderous maze of mid 20th century history."

Bloom responds by saying that the Cannon organisation — the Socialist Workers' Party — which he joined in 1968 was "an organization filled with dynamic and critical thinkers... How did such a party grow from the roots of Cannonism, if the roots of Cannonism were as decayed as this book suggests to us?"

But Matgamna writes, "James P Cannon and Max Shachtman, the main representatives of the two currents of Trotskyism, were, in my judgement, heroes, both of them. Cannon, when almost all of his generation of Communist International leaders had gone down to Stalinism or over to the bourgeoisie, remained what he was in his youth, a fighter for working-class emancipation. I make no excuses for the traits and deeds of Cannon which are shown in a bad light in this volume. It is necessary to make and keep an honest history of our movement if we are to learn from it."

Bloom was part of an opposition within the SWP, which fought against the eventually-successful efforts of Jack Barnes [from 1979] to close off critical discussion within the SWP to an extreme degree, and to politically transform the SWP into a flatly pro-Castro satellite of the Stalinist Cuban regime. He is at pains, then, to emphasise the wide gulf that separates the party under Barnes from its politics and culture under Cannon.

He underlines the difference with reference to two different political "binges" of the SWP leadership: the "Leningrad delirium" of 1941; and the lurch, led by Jack Barnes, into enthusiasm for Castro's regime in the 1980s. Bloom points out (rightly) that the Cannon-led SWP corrected its "binges" of the 1940s, but that the Barnes-led SWP did not.

As far as it goes, Bloom is right: when Natalia Sedova Trotsky criticised the SWP for its uncritical cheerleading for the Red Army, the SWP newspaper *The Militant* changed tack, in mid-September 1941, with headlines which once again put the accent on the need to fight Stalin's rule. Another correction took

Orthodox Trotskyism: a mi

place shortly after the Second World War: the SWP insisted that fighting for democratic measures in liberated Europe was pointless as a revolution, instigated in part by the advance of the Red Army, would shortly sweep the continent. When this did not materialise, the thesis was quietly dropped from the publications and statements of the SWP.

This was a correction, to be sure: but it was an "office correction": there was never any open admission of an error, much less an accounting.

Cannon retained the anti-Stalinist instinct to pull back from the political excesses of the 1940s, and, for example, fought against a more conciliatory line towards Stalinism which was proposed by supporters of Michel Pablo and Bert Cochran in the 1950s. But the political method in use here was to store up problems later on: within a party regime for which the maintenance of the prestige of the leadership was of primary importance, political correction became a matter of deft adjustments by licensed experts, rather than political struggle and clear public accounting within the organisation at large.

Matgamna diagnoses the issue: Cannon's "governing notion", he says, was "of a fixed 'prestige' for certain leaders, and a common leadership duty to maintain it, [and this] could not but play a deadly role. Inevitably a leader's prestige fluctuates. Everyone, even a Trotsky, sometimes makes mistakes, is slow to understand and too hasty or one-sided in response. To try to stop the natural fluctuation of prestige involves putting the judgement, and the freedom to think and express themselves, of the organisation's members in a bureaucratic straitjacket. It comes to involve falsification of the political records, covering-up, and the stifling of anyone who might politically undermine the leaders' prestige."

PARTY

Bloom himself supports this view when, in reply to discussion from Duncan Morrison, he writes, "by building a party that failed to train its membership adequately in Marxist theory, and that actively discouraged critical thinking about the actions of the leadership among the rank and file, the earlier cadre of the SWP paved the way for the Barnesite disaster."

The issue is that this was not a matter of an incidental error, like issuing an off-the-mark headline in this or that issue of the *Militant*. It was a fundamental part of Cannon's method — a method that was encoded in the "manual of Trotskyism" that the SWP-USA produced and transmitted like genetic code to a generation of post-Trotsky Trotskyist organisations.

Whatever the virtues of the Cannon organisation and its history may be — and there are a lot of virtues — this part of its legacy is surely fatal.

Contrary to Bloom's suggestion that Matgamna's aim in the book (or Workers' Liberty's view) is to laud the Shachtman current (and by extension ourselves) as the "true continuation" of Trotskyist thought and to anathematise the Cannon current, *The Two Trotskyisms* makes clear that the two main trends of the Trotskyist movement, by 1945,



Trotsky and Cannon in a mural painted by Diego Rivera

had both departed from Trotsky's positions of 1940, albeit in different directions.

By the end of the 1930s, Trotsky's view of the USSR as constituting, in spite of substantial degeneration, a proletarian state which had to be defended, was subject to a major tension. In an earlier article replying to Paul LeBlanc's review of *The Two Trotskyisms*, I summarised that tension as follows:

"In an April 1939 article Trotsky urgently raised the slogan of an independent Ukraine. He pointed to, but refused to draw, the logical conclusion: that the USSR's behaviour in Ukraine should be called imperialist. In his September 1939 article *The USSR in War*, Trotsky remarked that to give the USSR bureaucracy the label of a new ruling class would be a "purely verbal" change. The distance between Trotsky's view and the view of the Soviet bureaucracy as a new class, was narrowing. Trotsky resisted taking the final step. Why?

"It seems that foremost in Trotsky's mind was this: when the expected crisis of the Soviet regime came, the Trotskyists in Russia must be ready to lead the fight against capitalist restoration, and turn this into a struggle for workers' power. They must not say, 'a plague on both your houses — bureaucrat and capitalist alike'. He resisted any theoretical expression that might lull the Trotskyists into sectarian abstention from an expected struggle. Calling the USSR a new class society might be reasonable in theory, but it might be premature and it might encourage dangerous conclusions."

This position, whose internal tensions were based on the dynamic situation of the late 1930s, was not tenable for long. The conclusion eventually drawn by the Shachtman current was that the only possible explanation of developments in Russian society was that there had developed a new exploiting class, that a counter-revolution had in fact triumphed, and that a new social revolution was required to restore the workers' republic of 1917. They did away with the qualifica-

tions with which Trotsky hedged his assessments which pointed in this direction, and followed those assessments to the conclusion which Trotsky had resisted.

For the Cannon tradition, the meaning of Trotsky's slogan for the "defence of the USSR" in the context of an expected capitalist-restoration crisis (which did not materialise) was altered in more or less the opposite direction: it became a timeless obligation to laud the fact of nationalised industry as inherently socialist or proletarian. The Stalinist system, as it expanded across the globe, was re-cast as the bearer of the still-living October Revolution, which was now incarnated not in working-class rebellion and self-rule, but in the fact of state ownership of the economy.

CONSOLING

In a period of expansion of Russian influence around the globe, this view served an important purpose to the beleaguered Orthodox Trotskyists — it served as a consoling illusion, and permitted an embattled and witch-hunted Trotskyist movement to feel that, no matter how bad things were at home, its ideas and project were vindicated by the march of "nationalised property" and "workers' states" around the globe.

There can be little wonder that, whatever the anti-Stalinist record and instincts of the Cannon group, that this consoling and sustaining identification of Stalinist advance with socialist advance became an article of faith — or that Cannon would so often repeat that deviation on "the Russian question" was the error which would inevitably lead a socialist to damnation.

But that sustaining world-view fell apart with the collapse of the USSR and its satellites. The central consolation of that system of beliefs disappeared — and what of the theory that the Orthodox Trotskyists had constructed around it? The oddly apologetic, half-hearted tone of Bloom's reply to

misleading manual



Matgamna's book gives us a clue, I think: it sounds a lot like Arnold's "long, withdrawing roar".

It is odd that in a review of a long book which is dedicated to attacking the Orthodox Trotskyist assessment of the class character of the USSR, Bloom's defence of that assessment is minimal.

Whereas in 1939 Cannon could write: "the Russian revolution has proved for all time the superiority of nationalized property and planned economy over capitalist private property, and planless competition and anarchy in production", here Bloom asks whether nationalisation of the Eastern European economies after 1945 had a socialist character and answers himself: "To me it's obvious that the right answer is both 'yes' and 'no'." When pushed on this in an article by Gemma Short, Bloom replies that the nationalisations led to the development of potentially-revolutionary workers' movements in those countries. He goes on:

"Gemma identifies a different point as obvious: 'that nationalized property is only progressive (and has any socialist content) in so far as the working class has control of the state.' I would like to contrast these two uses of the word 'obvious,' however. They are not parallel. My 'obvious' is derived from a consideration of events in the world. Gemma's 'obvious' is derived from consideration of the purely theoretical: a definition of 'socialism.' The Marxist method must, above all else, place its priority on what the world itself makes 'obvious,' not what we 'obviously' derive from our own theories and definitions. That is, I believe, what we mean by a 'materialist' method."

I think that this argument of Bloom's is both wrong and wretched. "What the world makes obvious" about the spread of nationalised property courtesy of Stalinist police-states around the world, rather, is the following: that it played a powerfully counter-revolutionary role by systematically liquidating the labour movement and oppo-

sitional movements of the oppressed everywhere it prevailed — with the result that when the rotted-out system collapsed at the end of the 1980s the working class of the Eastern Bloc was too atomised and politically disoriented to resist the neoliberal flood that followed.

Wretched, because this marks a very substantial retreat from the bombastic boasts made by the Orthodox Trotskyist tradition in general and Cannon in particular about the specific virtues of nationalised property. Again, Cannon on the Russian Question, 1939: "Nationalized and planned economy, made possible by a revolution that overthrew the capitalists and landlords, is infinitely superior, more progressive. It shows the way forward."

But also wretched is the attitude to socialist theory that Bloom betrays. Bloom seems to be suggesting that the long-worked-at body of socialist theory surrounding how we define socialism is simply abstractions picked from the air — rather than a distillation of and extrapolation from the experience of workers' struggle and capitalist development going back over a century — and should not be allowed to get in the way of his "reality-based" approach of tenuous speculations about Eastern European history. It is dismaying to read a philistine, off-handed dismissal of socialist learning from someone who has so long been a socialist educator by vocation.

Bloom's next substantial point is about "Trotskyist arrogance": Bloom objects to what he sees as overblown claims made by Matgamna on behalf of the Trotskyist movement: "There is no other authentic Marxist-communist tradition. . . . A revived revolutionary socialist movement will have to learn from the Trotskyist tradition". He writes that in fact a revived socialist movement will have to learn from a broader range

of sources, and that bombastic claims that we are the sole possessors of revealed truth will turn people off the Trotskyists.

Yes, Trotsky advised his French comrades in 1935: "For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out its moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results. Only the Stalinists have transformed agitation into a noisy monologue. For the Marxists, the Leninists, agitation is always a dialogue with the masses."

And in *Left Wing Communism*, Lenin wrote: "For about half a century — approximately from the forties to the nineties of the last century — progressive thought in Russia, oppressed by a most brutal and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for a correct revolutionary theory, and followed with the utmost diligence and thoroughness each and every 'last word' in this sphere in Europe and America."

BETTER

This is surely a better attitude than that expressed by the leading SWP activist Morris Stein at the party's 1944 congress: "Ours is the only correct program that can lead to revolution. Everything else is deception, treachery. We are monopolists in politics and we operate like monopolists". It is right that Bloom would want to correct this.

But the important corollary of listening broadly to a wide range of radical voices is that you do so in the spirit of seeking the truth: that you weed out what's useful, thought-provoking and true in what you hear from what's false and concealed.

Bloom's offhand dismissal of "theory" in his response to Gemma, his remarks that "it's time for us to relativize the Trotskyist tradition" and "there is an arrogance in the belief that Trotskyism somehow has a privileged place in [reviving the socialist movement]" suggest that he lacks this "arrogant" intention which is necessary for serious socialist debate. His suggestion that we should "give considerable weight" to the insights of such "genuine revolutionaries" as those "rooted in

the Maoist movement, national-liberation struggles, guerrilla warfare and the Cuban revolution ... [and] indigenous-centric ideologies" (i.e. political tendencies which are in general anti-socialist and in some cases inspired by regimes which make a virtue of having physically liquidated the workers' movement) supports this impression.

To return to Cannon's 1939 speech, it seems that his remarks on the subject of arrogance, tolerance and theoretical clarity are more reasonable than Bloom's self-effacement or derisive treatment of "our own theories and definitions":

"To be sure, we do not decline cooperation with people who agree with our political conclusions from different premises... As Trotsky remarked in this connection, 'If we wait till everything is right in everybody's head there will never be any successful revolutions in this world', (or words to that effect.) Just the same, for our part we want everything right in our own heads. We have no reason whatever to slur over theoretical formulae, which are expressed in 'terminology'."

Again: it seems to me that the collapse of the Stalinist states has paradoxically led Bloom to lose faith in Trotskyism as a whole. This makes sense, given that the Orthodox Trotskyist school of thought reduced Trotskyism to a doctrine which relied substantially on the identification of Stalinist regimes which nationalised the means of production with some form of socialist progress. With that keystone removed, the edifice — which sustained the Orthodox better and longer than did the more-clear assessments of the Heterodox — crumbles.

But rather than junking Trotskyism as a doctrine, it is surely better to re-assess whether that so-called "foundational" doctrine really did represent the crucial political core of the tradition of the Russian Revolution and the world revolutionary movement — and to tease out what really did.

That aim, the re-foundation of Trotskyism, the correction of the errors introduced by the Orthodox strain after 1940, inspires Matgamna's book.

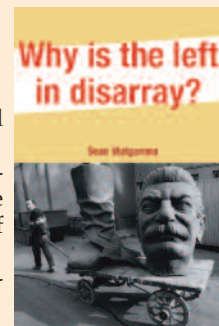
• Abridged. Full text at bit.ly/2jv2HuH

Why is the left in disarray?

With the Corbyn surge, the Sanders movement, and more, there is new life on the left. But the left's positive political ideas, slogans, arguments are still paler than the right's.

After decades of Stalinist domination and infection, and then of retreats, the left needs rigorous debate to renew itself. It argues through two issues in particular: the endorsement by much of the left of political Islam as a progressive "anti-imperialism"; and the spread within the left of an "absolute anti-Zionism", unwittingly informed by decades of Stalinist "anti-Zionist" campaigning after about 1949, which becomes effectively antisemitic.

The book concludes by criticising also the mechanical inverse on the left of the addled "anti-war" and "anti-imperialist" negativists: those who respond by going for an idealised bourgeois democracy.



The Russian Revolution: when the working-class dared to win



The 1917 Russian revolution was the greatest event in political history so far — the first time working-class people took political power and held it for several years. Yet the real history is buried under myths. Many Western academic accounts portray 1917 as a mutiny of peasant soldiers leading ultimately to a coup d'état, led by a small group of fanatics who established a Stalinist totalitarian state.

Worse, the mirror image of 1917 became the foundation myth of the Stalinist state: the 1917 revolution was used both in Russia and across the world by "Communist" parties to glorify the terrible Stalinist regime that endured after workers' self-rule was extinguished in the twenties. The original, liberatory working class essence of the original revolution was lost.

Since the 1960s, and especially since the opening of archives in Russia from the 1990s, much more is known about the Russian revolution. This book aims to bring original Marxist perspectives together with a wide range of scholarship. It is written from what Lenin and Trotsky called the "third camp" independent working class socialist perspective.

This book explains some irreplaceable ideas developed a century ago — uneven and combined development, permanent revolution, democratic centralism, soviets (councils), workers' control, consistent democracy, socialist feminism, transitional demands, the united front and the workers' government. These ideas are highly relevant to students and activists in today's struggles.

Both books coming soon. Available to pre-order now for £8 — www.workersliberty.org/books

Organise for a member-led Momentum

Simon Nelson reports on Momentum after the 10 January coup

Momentum was launched in early October 2015, by a segment of the organisers of the effort which got Jeremy Corbyn elected Labour leader on 12 September 2015.

Boosted by the flood of new Labour members around Corbyn's election in 2015, and a second flood around his re-election in 2016, Momentum has over 21,000 members, which probably makes it the biggest membership-defined left caucus in Labour's history.

The way Momentum has been run centrally has made it harder for local groups to develop, but there are now 150, many lively and active. That is probably the biggest network of local left groups in the Labour Party since the National Left Wing Movement of the mid-1920s.

On the evening of 10 January the Momentum office staged a coup. On the strength of six votes (from a Steering Committee of 12) got in a sudden email exchange lasting about an hour, it dissolved all Momentum's existing elected committees.

The coup was organised at that time in order to forestall the Momentum conference due in February, which, after many delaying tactics by the coup-makers, had at last been scheduled by a meeting of Momentum's elected National Committee on 3 December.

The office had refused to cooperate with the elected Conference Arrangements Committee, by cancelling all meetings of the Steering Committee, and by launching a manipulated online "survey" of Momentum members. With the coup, the office freed itself to cancel the conference and replace it with a rally and workshops session on 18 February, to be organised by the office so that no motions or votes will be allowed.

The "e-democracy" of the instant email exchange on 10 January also imposed a new constitution for Momentum, in less time from proposal to decision than it would have taken to study the constitution carefully.

Many of those involved in the coup have made it clear that they see no or little value in the local groups. The coup cuts local groups out of even a notional say in Momentum's overall policy and it will make it harder for them to develop.

Debate among activists, especially new people drawn into politics, will not be just a series of press-friendly sound bites; but processes of argument, debate and clarification are necessary for a living movement.

The most important thing now is for activity to continue, and to not quit in demoralisation or disperse in different directions.

The elected Conference Arrangements Committee was tasked with organising the delegate conference that was set for February. We welcome their decision to continue to plan for a conference. We believe this should be an opportunity, as the CAC says, for groups to be able to "network and to politically educate ourselves..."

It is not at all our intention — nor, we believe, the intention of any large section of Momentum members — that conference should be as the coup-makers caricature it, a debauch of esoteric quarrelling over detailed theses. It should discuss policy, but in broad outlines governed by what the local groups need in order to be able to campaign in a co-operative way.

It should be a conference of Momentum local groups, allowing them to communicate and co-operate, to set up a local groups network within Momentum, not as splitting Momentum.



Many activists have been using Momentum groups to co-ordinate activities within local parties, both campaign activity and standing for and winning positions in branch and CLPs. All of these activities are necessary both to defend the Corbyn leadership against the sabotage of the Labour right, and to build a fighting, activist left-wing party.

Where groups have done this they have done so with little help from the office. Most of those groups' activists should and will want to continue their activity. It is that activity, rather than the online pomp and circumstance, which is the real life and value of Momentum.

Possibly the Momentum office will now "de-recognise" some local groups, and refuse to "recognise" new local groups. But maybe not. Anyway, that can't stop the groups existing and being active as long as they have the will to do so.

The elected Steering Committee is continuing to meet, in the person of those members who reject its summary abolition. The most important thing they can do is to help create space for those groups to cooperate and network with each other.

ANALOGY

An analogy might be what local Labour Leagues of Youth did between 1955 and 1960.

The official Labour Party machine dissolved and banned all conferences and committees linking the different local youth groups. Probably it would have been happy to see the local groups disappear. But it did not dissolve them. They continued and activists set up connections and unofficial conferences; this was effective activity that paved the way for the left quickly to draw in large numbers when, in 1960, the official Labour Party licensed youth conferences again.

The young Labour activists in those years were not splitting from the Labour Party: far from it. Activists now should not split from Momentum. To do so would be self-marginalising. It would abandon the bulk of Momentum members, who will have joined Momentum because they generally sympathise with Corbyn and want a left organisation in the Labour Party to counter the right-wing MPs and factional organisers.

Because the Momentum office has had a monopoly over direct electronic communication with the Momentum membership, it has used that monopoly in a one-sided way, and supplemented it with scurrilous articles in the press by chosen allies such as Owen Jones and Paul Mason; many Momentum members know little about the issues leading up to the coup, or what they think they "know" is mostly misinformation.

It needs to be made clear — and will be made clear "in life" by a vigorous continuation of a local groups network — that the issue at stake here is not fine detail of what sort of democratic structure Momentum should have. It is about whether it has a dem-

ocratic structure at all. In the debates, we, and others arguing for a democratic structure, have been flexible and open to compromise about details and modalities.

The post-coup Momentum structure is not one of instant online democracy, with every important decision made by online vote of all members, such as was demagogically promised in the run-up to the coup. Regardless of whether such a structure is really possible, or whether approximations to it would be really democratic — we think not — the post-coup constitution is no approximation at all.

Most decision-making will be in the hands of the unelected office staff and a few unelected "directors". The next tier is a "National Coordinating Group", meeting four times a year, of 28 plus maybe four co-optees, on which only 12 are elected from the Momentum membership. It will be almost impossible to get an online plebiscite to block office or NCG decisions, let alone initiate new policy.

The issue is not about whether Momentum should have any outward-looking activity at all — beyond acting as a database and phonebank for Labour Party and sometimes union polls — and how it can get workable arrangements to decide the political shape of that activity, week by week, month by month.

When, in the last year or so, elected Momentum committees have voted by large majorities for public campaigning for "Remain" in the Brexit referendum, for the NHS, for protest against the "Compliance Unit" purge, for defence of freedom of movement, etc., the Momentum office has scarcely even communicated the committee decisions to members, let alone campaigned for them.

Nor is the issue as another demagogic misrepresentation has it: that the coup-makers want Momentum oriented to the Labour Party, and the advocates of democracy want to dissolve it into an impractically diffuse "social movement".

At Labour Party conference 2016, Momentum, under the control of those who are now the coup-makers, organised no intervention. Instead they put all Momentum's resources into a "social-movement-y" fringe event with no clear Labour focus. Consequently the right triumphed. Only one ill-resourced subsection of Momentum intervened effectively in the conference — Momentum NHS, in which advocates of democratic structures and a campaign orientation were well placed. If the local groups are able to coordinate, they will as a natural consequence also want to, and be able to, develop a concerted intervention for Labour conference 2017.

Some Momentum activists may be tempted to hive off a few of the feistier local Momentum groups into a new structure, or to try to bring them under the wing of one of the old groups of the Labour left (LRC, Red Labour, etc.) That would be foolish and self-marginalising.

More politically-defined strands in the Momentum membership, such as the strand around the magazine *Clarion*, are an essential

leaven to its democracy and vigour. But they should not — and so far as we have influence, will not — react now with a short-sighted policy of trying to hive off a segment of Momentum groups under their political platform, and explicitly or implicitly abandoning the rest. We want a broad and representative network of all the local groups, within which different political currents can and will advocate their views in a comradely temper.

We do not accept the implication of the new Momentum constitution that all those whom the Compliance Unit has expelled from the Labour Party (600-odd and rising) should also be expelled from Momentum.

On that point, in fact, one of the Momentum "directors", Christine Shawcroft, has written:

"No one is being expelled... The section on ceasing to be a member does NOT mean expulsions. 5.8 says if anyone ceases to be a member of the Party they MAY be deemed to have resigned. Not WILL, but MAY".

Responding to a direct question online, "will Nick Wrack or Jill Mountford be expelled from Momentum?", Shawcroft replied: "No, they won't".

We should keep Shawcroft and others to their words.

PROTEST

Many local Momentum groups have already passed resolutions of protest against the coup. Others should and will.

In the short term the strongest protest may have difficulty shifting the coup-makers. The email announcing the coup said more or less clearly that the initiative for it came not from within Momentum but from the Leader's Office and union leaders. The prime decision-makers here will have been people in the Leader's Office and in union hierarchies such as Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray of Unite. (Whether Milne and Murray personally, we don't know, but surely people in their circles).

These people are insulated from rank-and-file Momentum pressure by thick walls. They are Stalinists politically. They got their positions of power in the labour movement not by distinguishing themselves in rank and file activity but via careers in journalism and union officialdom. They probably also share to a limited extent a common prejudice that the "model" for left-wing activity now should be the NGO rather than the activist organisation.

Those political factors explain why they have resisted moves for democracy and positive campaigning in Momentum so tenaciously, and why they were so panicked by the prospect of a conference that they got the Momentum office to organise the coup. The factors also explain why they are so resistant to compromise or discussion.

Yet they are not all-powerful. As well as continuing the local groups, and helping them coordinate and create a campaigning profile, we should also keep up the pressure on the new Momentum structures and use every crack in them to promote the case for democracy and campaigning. As long as Momentum retains life, and activists do not disperse, it is not at all certain that the new Momentum regime can sustain autocracy indefinitely. We will also be doing the best that can be done to crystallise the Corbyn surge into an effective force.

We do not give up. We do not split. We do not abandon the battle to group the activists of the great Labour influx into a force which can really transform the labour movement, so that the labour movement can defeat capitalism and build socialism.

John Berger and seeing politically

By Hugh Daniels

Since the death of John Berger on 2 January the bourgeois press has squirmed over the task of commemorating a major public figure who was also a lifelong Marxist.

Some have responded by simply attacking him. In the *Sunday Times* (8 January 2017) Waldemar Januszczak made snide jokes about Berger's speech impediment, deliberately misunderstood his refusal to fetishise art objects and pretended that his decision to give significant screen time to female commentators in a TV episode on art and gender was somehow a sign of his own chauvinism.

Others have generally been milder in their criticisms, trying to separate Berger's politics from his cultural interests. This approach is arguably more damaging.

When Berger won the Booker prize for his novel *G* in 1972, he criticised its sponsors for exploiting labour in the Caribbean and gave half the prize money to the Black Panthers. But just as important as publicly biting the hand that fed him and sharing his earnings with armed revolutionaries was the justification he gave for keeping half the money himself. Berger stated that creative writing was his own means of engaging in class struggle

and so he would use the money to fund new literary projects.

Berger's insistence on art as a political practice was the chief provocation of his work, and we cannot appreciate his achievements without taking this seriously.

Throughout his life Berger continually returned to the theme of looking. For him this everyday activity was a permanent mystery. Each time he revisited this issue he found more questions rather than clearer answers.

At stake in this lifelong investigation, I believe, was the issue of how we situate ourselves in the world. Looking was for Berger was an activity in which we open ourselves up to objects, creatures and other people. Berger was a humanist and his politics emerged from empathy rather than science.

In his art criticism Berger commonly wrote about little known dissident artists whose work expressed highly personal perspectives on situations of oppression. In the 1960s and 70s this put him at odds with the majority of leftist critics who, influenced by structuralism and analytic philosophy, largely sought to achieve critical distance through a radically de-personalised perspective.

As demonstrated in his seminal 1972 BBC TV series (and accompanying book) *Ways of Seeing*, Berger shared the period's wariness



about the dangers of seductive ideologies. However he responded by encouraging us to locate contradictions and complexities within our experience of the world, rather than keeping our distance.

Today, *Ways of Seeing* looks even more radical than it did at the time, primarily because it would now be absolutely impossible to make anything so unorthodox for a major broadcaster. Central to the series is Berger's faith that, by seeing beyond the mystifications of bourgeois criticism and authentically engaging with the art of the past, the working

class might reclaim its own history.

This is arguably naive, since so much of the "high art" discussed in the series was created by and for the upper classes, congealing their ideology and not the memory of *our* class.

Nonetheless, by demonstrating that our "ways of seeing" are not merely "subjective", but instead conditioned by the material conditions of human existence, Berger went far beyond the populist pluralism of so much contemporary arts coverage. He turned the experience of art into an unavoidably political concern.

From 2008 to fighting capitalism

HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST

By Caroline Jeffries

When the housing bubble burst and a full-blown financial crisis developed in 2008 I was ten years old. I lived in an upper-class neighbourhood, so very few people around me were greatly affected by the crisis. 2008, however, would come to bother me for years after the recession

ended.

At the time I didn't know any socialists or truly understand what socialism meant. However, when the newly elected president, one who promised "hope" and "change", bailed out the very same businesses that caused millions around the world to lose their jobs, something felt wrong.

By the time I entered high school, Occupy Wall Street had spread across the country, even making it to my hometown. And while it seemed that the country had barely

changed, my family had changed a lot. In the three years since the initial crisis, our family relocated from a banking town to a university town. My father, having suffered acute anxiety after the collapse, quit his job at a business consulting firm and started to work at a state university. While my parents were finished with the big banks, Occupy served as a reminder of the regressive nature of the world we lived in.

I still failed to associate these events with the follies of capitalism, but the movement had radicalised me. I began to question why

The other students went to state-funded universities, two-year programs, work, and the army. I sat somewhere between these groups. My family was not working class, but we were not the "one percent". While all my friends drove new cars and holidayed in Europe, I rode the bus and my family vacations usually meant camping or visiting my grandma. My family was by no means financially struggling; yet even sitting just below my peers' socio-economic status allowed me develop outside of the neoliberal norms of my school.

The summer after I left high school, I listened to an extended radio piece on desegregating schools. The program covered not only the busing of students across counties in the 1970s, but the dire need for integration now. To me and many other educators, integration was the clear fix to drastic inequality amongst students. Diverse classrooms proved to be valuable for all students, despite family background. But I found that even though the system was mutually beneficial, the ruling class wouldn't compromise their unwavering status by uplifting those who sat on the bottom of society.

This is where I finally broke. Here I learned to blame capitalism and turned to socialism.

Retrospectively, my path to becoming a socialist was clear, however unclear it may have been in the moment. Now in my daily life — organising campaigns, reading history, watching film — I find it hard to see anything but the greedy hands of capitalism hurting the "little guy". I think about 2008 constantly and I wonder when capitalism will fatally hurt us again. These thoughts are arduous, but here I am reminded of Sylvia Pankhurst's words: "I am going to fight capitalism even if it kills me. It is wrong that people like you should be comfortable and well fed while all around you people are starving."

Being a socialist, I've decided, is the only way to be.

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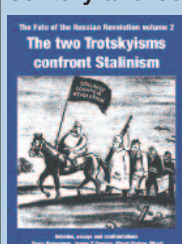
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uncharted, unexpected, terrain. Central to it has been the fight against Stalinism, to understand it, to wipe the labour movement clean of it. This book surveys and documents for the first time the formative debates in the 1940s between the two main strands into which Trotskyism divided.

£23 (inc postage) from bit.ly/twotrotskyisms



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.

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- Independent working-class representation in politics.
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- 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 21 January

Sussex defend the NHS rally
11am, Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton, BN2 5BE
bit.ly/2jsHpyo

Saturday 21 January

Women's march on London to protest Trump
12 noon, Grosvenor Square, London, W1K 2HP
bit.ly/2iK1Fu1

Sunday 22 January

Bristol Momentum general meeting
2.30pm, Malcolm X Community Centre, 141 City Rd, Bristol, BS2 8YH
bit.ly/2jvq47x

Monday 23 January

Haringey Labour Momentum public meeting: Housing in crisis
7pm, Earl Haig Hall, 18 Elder Avenue, London, N8 9TH
bit.ly/2ixvhfV

Friday 27 January

Brighton and Hove Momentum fundraiser
8pm, Cafe Plenty, Brighton, BN1 4GW
bit.ly/2k1dVIw

Saturday 28 January

NHS D-Day March
12.30pm, Old Palace Yard, Westminster, London, SW1P 3JX
bit.ly/2jsIJl2

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

More online at www.workersliberty.org



Workers' Liberty



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Yes, a maximum wage!

LABOUR

By Gerry Bates

Jeremy Corbyn's recent call for a maximum wage is a good move, even though he has now faded it out.

Around midday on Wednesday 4 January, after just two and a half days of the new work year, Britain's top bosses passed the UK average salary of £28,200.

They had passed workers on the minimum wage, and others like the present writer, after a single day or so. A few days later Oxfam reported that just eight individuals own as much wealth as the poorer 50% of the world's population added together.

It is hard for most of us to understand why millionaires are not content, and strive so hard to become billionaires, and then multi-billionaires.

But they do. That is how capitalist society works. The urge to become even richer increases at higher levels of income and wealth.

And the result is that more and more people live in poverty.

As right-wingers so often point out, it is relative poverty: poor people in many countries today have fridges and phones which even the richest did not have 100 years ago. But, above the level of actual starvation, relative poverty is what matters: being able, or not able, to take part in society in a reasonably economically-secure, relaxed, dignified, and comfortable way.

In the Bolshevik years after the Russian revolution of 1917 (before the Stalinist counter-revolution), the "party maximum" rule prevented any party member, however high her or his official post, getting more than a skilled worker.

NEW

A maximum wage is not new in the UK.

In 1944-5 (under a Tory-led government), Britain had a top income-tax rate of 98%, which meant that almost no-one was paid a rate in the top tax brackets. There was a de facto maximum wage.

The top rate remained around 90% or higher for a long time. It was 96.25% in the late 1960s.

It was reduced decisively — then, down to 40% — only by the



Thatcher government after 1979. As soon as the top rate was slashed, a process began of top pay spiralling higher and higher above ordinary wages.

Francois Hollande won the French presidential election of 2012 partly by promising a top income tax rate of 75%. But then he backed down.

A maximum wage, or a punitive top income-tax rate, would be good, but would put only a very loose limit on inequality. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, the rich in Britain did not cease to live it up. They just found ways of raking it in — high "expenses", for example — which escaped income tax.

To tackle inequality seriously, we need public ownership of all the major concentrations of productive wealth.

Help Labour in Copeland

By Dave Pannett

The resignation of MPs Jamie Reed (Copeland) and Tristram Hunt (Stoke-on-Trent Central) will have not caused Corbyn supporters in the Labour Party any sorrow.

Constant critics of the democratically-elected leader who have decided to leave their jobs for much better-paid positions at the Sellafield nuclear plant and the Victoria and Albert Museum will not get much of a send-off.

However, it is now vital that the we mobilise to get Labour victories in both seats.

Labour last lost the Copeland constituency in 1931, the year Ramsay MacDonald led a right wing split from the party. The seat that makes up parts of Stoke Central was lost in the same year. Both have been Labour ever since. The poor situation for Labour in the polls, a strong UKIP showing, and in Stoke a history of the far right doing well in local elections means difficult fights ahead. As Copeland is situated in the far north west of England, it will need more coordination to get campaigners to.

In Copeland Rachel Holliday, a Momentum-backed candidate, hopes to win the nomination. That would be good news. The NHS, housing and transport are key issues in the constituency. Socialist arguments against private profit, for public ownership and social investment are essential measures.

The Sellafield nuclear power fa-



cility which employs close to 10,000 people is based in the constituency — there will need to be a discussion on the left about our policy on nuclear power and what Labour should argue. The strong union presence there should be mobilised to back the Labour campaign.

Momentum and other labour movement activists should organise to get to Copeland and Stoke Central and prepare for a quick but intensive campaign.

Momentum groups in the northern region have already begun coordination in Copeland and will be helping coordinate with activists in Copeland and West Cumbria Momentum; they are also working closely with Labour North and Copeland Labour, who have already opened a headquarters in the constituency.

- See *The Clarion* for more information on how you can help in the election: bit.ly/2jk5KE1

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Tube workers plan further strikes

By Ollie Moore

Tube workers' union RMT has announced its members on stations will strike again from 6 February unless London Underground bosses meet its demands for an increased staffing level.

The company's latest proposal is to reinstate 250 of the jobs it cut under the "Fit for the Future" programme, but RMT has rejected the offer as insufficient.

An RMT rep told *Solidarity*: "There's no way we'd settle for winning back only a quarter of the jobs lost. We want all cuts reversed. Most of the company's proposed 250 jobs will come back at the CSA2 grade, which we're fighting to abolish.

"It's not fair for workers to be doing similar work with a £7,000 salary differential. It's a way for the



employer to lower the rate for the job. We want the staffing level restored, with jobs at CSA1 grade and above, and we're prepared to fight on to win that."

RMT reps and activists are discussing how to escalate their action if management do not meet their demands. Their last strike, on 8-9 January, was for 24 hours, but there is now a firm consensus amongst reps that escalated action will be needed.

It is unclear whether smaller Tube union TSSA will participate in any further action. Its negotiators and General Secretary recommended to workplace reps that they suspend their strike to accept LU's 250-jobs offer, but were forced to keep the action on after a rank-and-file revolt.

In a separate dispute, RMT has announced it will ballot fleet maintenance staff over job cuts and roster changes.

Tories backing Southern's war

By Gemma Short

Drivers on Southern Rail struck from 10-13 January, and plan to strike again on 24-27 January, in their on going fight to reverse the imposition of "Driver Only Operation" (DOO)

Guards, members of RMT, have now announced plans for a 24-hour strike on 23 January.

On the 11 January a CCTV image was used in a court case which shows a woman whose hand got stuck in a door on a First Great Western Service and was dragged 60 feet along the platform before she could free herself. Mick Whelan, general secretary of Drivers' union ASLEF, said: 'This sad case shows that what we have been saying is right, and what the company is saying is completely wrong. Southern says DOO is safe. It isn't. Southern says the traction interlocking system, which is supposed to prevent a train leaving the station if something – such as a bag, briefcase, shopping bag, wheelchair, child's buggy, or, as here, the



Aslef drivers from the across the country joining Southern pickets

hand or arm of a passenger trying to get on or off the train – is trapped in the carriage doors, always works. It is, the company says, a failsafe system. This picture shows it isn't.

Aslef also released a leaflet for passengers on Southern showing contrasting images of what Southern says the drivers' monitors show of the platform and images taken by drivers of in-use monitors.

Southern is not the only place fighting DOO, and in a show of solidarity Aslef reps and activists from across the country visited Southern

picket lines on Friday 13 January.

The RMT also revealed last week (12 January) that clauses in franchise agreements between the government and rail companies mean that companies will be compensated by the government for any lost revenue due to strikes against the imposition of DOO.

Effectively the government is using public money to bankroll a war against rail unions, whilst the Railway Safety Standards Board says that train companies will benefit to the tune of £1.1bn in the next 20 years by getting rid of guards.

Derby teaching assistants fight 25% pay cut

By Peggy Carter

School support staff in Derby struck between Monday 16 and Friday 20 January over changes to pay and conditions.

Similarly to recent strikes in Durham, and previously reported in *Solidarity*, new contracts have been imposed on workers resulting in a 25% loss of pay. Strikes in September and October brought the council to negotiations but they failed to make any significant changes.

In the lead up to and during the

16-20 January strikes, teaching assistants and their supporters have been out campaigning, door knocking in residential areas and petitioning in the city centre.



the strike fund:
derbycityunison.co.uk

• Find out more and donate to

Cinema strike solidarity



By Michael Elms

Haringey Labour Momentum and members of the BECTU trade union at the Crouch End Picturehouse organised a fundraiser gig to support the Picturehouse strikes.

Supported by artists like St Leonard of St Leonard's Horses and Zsa Zsa Sapiens alongside comedians James Ross and Chris Coltrane, an audience of over 100 raised £1,000 for the strike fund and made a big display of local support for the dispute.

The Picturehouse dispute is spreading - from one site being on strike in September, the workers' campaign for union recognition, sick pay, maternity pay and the living wage has now extended to involve four sites in strike action: Brixton, Hackney, the flagship Leicester Square cinema and Crouch End.

The preparations for the gig

played a role in putting management under pressure and increasing the confidence of the staff. From 2 January to 13 January there were leafleters talking to customers at the cinema almost every day at peak time, explaining the dispute, leafleting and poster. Customers were uniformly shocked at the employer's anti-union stance and tight-fisted pay policy. Students at University of Arts London opened their studios to staff and helped them paint banners for use at the gig and in the strikes to come.

A few days before the gig itself, it was announced that Crouch End would be joining the Picturehouse strike ballot. This was the crowning achievement of months of work by the local reps.

The atmosphere of unapologetic support for the strike created by a local Momentum group and local residents getting active surely helped.

Cabin crew strike again

By Gemma Short

"Mixed fleet" cabin crew at British Airways will strike again for 72 hours from 00.01 on Thursday 19 January.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, "mixed fleet" cabin crew are part of a two-tier workforce created by BA in an attempt to solve a previous industrial dispute. They are on far inferior pay and conditions,

and are now fighting for a pay increase.

Despite claims by British Airways that the strikes would cause no disruption, the first strike resulted in a number of flights into Heathrow being cancelled as over 2900 Unite members struck on 10-11 January.

Since the start of the dispute over 800 workers have joined Unite.

Teachers fight unfair scrutiny

By Charlotte Zalens

Teachers at New Charter Academy in Manchester struck on 10-11 January over scrutiny of teachers.

Teachers, members of the NUT and NASUWT, struck for two days in December as well. And members of the ATL plan to join a third period of strikes starting on 17 January.

Teachers at the school say they are constantly asked to implement new initiatives that lead to extra workload and are causing stress and high staff turnover. They are also fighting against increased monitoring and the use of data targets in performance management.

Teachers plan more strikes from 17 January if management does not back down

Kings cleaners' strike ballot

By Peggy Carter

Cleaners at Kings College London have voted for strikes against job losses and high workload by 98%.

Cleaners at Kings were contracted out to cleaning contractor Servest after they won a successful

campaign for the Living Wage in 2014. Since then Servest has consistently paid staff late, refused to pay for overtime, and forced huge workloads onto workers when their colleagues are ill.

Servest has also sent all staff a letter threatening them with redundancies and a cut in hours.



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Labour: vote against Article 50!

By Martin Thomas

Theresa May has at last (on 17 January) made one thing about her Brexit: she plans to pull Britain out of the European single market, because staying in requires freedom of movement for workers.

The "single market" (and Margaret Thatcher was one of the main figures in pushing it through) means that the same regulations about safety, labelling, and standards apply across the whole market. Factories anywhere in it producing in line with local rules know they can sell everywhere in it without further checking or paperwork.

May was not clear on whether she also wants to pull Britain out of the EU customs union.

Norway is in the single market but not the customs union, meaning that Norway decides its own tariffs on non-EU imports, but Norwegian exporters can sell freely in the EU as long as they can show that their stuff is sufficiently Norwegian-produced (i.e. not just imports relabelled).

Turkey is in the customs union but not the single market, so Turkish exports enter the EU tariff-free

but require checks on safety, labelling, and standards, but Turkey has to apply the EU's regulations on non-EU imports.

Labour should be taking its stand on freedom of movement — on defending the right of EU workers to come to Britain, and the right of British people to work, study, or retire with near-citizen rights anywhere in Europe.

The Labour leadership has retreated to a stand in favour of staying in the single market. On freedom of movement it has retreated to hinting that it would back freedom as part of a package with the single market.

An opinion poll published in November 2016 showed that an amazing 90% of voters want to stay in the single market (bit.ly/1-mkt).

When the pollsters asked voters whether they'd accept losing the single market in order to stop free movement, or go for the single market with free movement, the split was about 50-50.

There's a solid base for Labour to win a majority for a single-market-plus-free-movement package.

However, in his first response to May's 17 January speech, Labour front-bench spokesperson Keir Starmer seemed to retreat from



Labour's previous insistence on staying in the single market to a line of support for staying in the customs union.

And the Labour leadership has also said that it plans to vote for

May's motion to Article 50 even if Labour fails (as it will) to pass amendments in Parliament.

Yet the 23 June vote creates no democratic obligation on Labour to support May's version

of Brexit. Labour should take a stand in defence of existing freedoms of movement — and for keeping economic barriers suppressed, too — and vote against Article 50.

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Write to us: The editor
(Cathy Nugent), 20E Tower
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Solidarity editorial:
Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent
(editor), Gemma Short, and
Martin Thomas

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