



# & Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## ON THE STREETS AGAINST "MUSLIM BAN"



# STOP TRUMP!

Organise, on the streets and in the labour movement! Argue for socialist, democratic, internationalist ideas which offer a real answer both to Trump's rancid, right-wing, regression, and to the discredited status quo. That is how we can block Trump.

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*Solidarity* examines the likely impact of the changes to council funding.

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## Join Labour!

Momentum: local groups plan to coordinate

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# Copeland, Corbyn, and the future of nuclear

By Luke Hardy

**The by-election in Copeland in Cumbria focused attention on the Labour Party's attitude to nuclear energy.**

The Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant is the largest employer in the constituency and the previous Labour MP Jamie Reed is leaving politics to work in the nuclear industry.

Over the last 30 years the default position of the left has been to oppose nuclear energy. However recently Corbyn visited the constituency and told Labour members that nuclear power would be part of Britain's "energy mix" under a Labour government. This statement has caused some controversy on the left.

Socialists should deal in facts. To move away from fossil fuels to greener energy and at the same time keep the lights on cannot be achieved just by an expansion of renewables such as wind and solar. Socialists should therefore advocate a new generation of publicly owned safe nuclear energy.

To support moving to a carbon neutral renewable-dominated electricity industry you need a baseline level of electricity generation that can provide sufficient predictable reserve power to the grid. Power supply needs to be there when the wind doesn't blow, when the sun doesn't shine and if there is a drought. Whilst there are some renewable energy forms like hydro and tidal that can provide this base-

line they are very geographically specific and require vast numbers of operations to provide the amount of power a nuclear power station can.

Britain has a small and ageing fleet of seven nuclear power stations (with 15 reactors) built between the late 60s and the early 80s. Despite this, during quarter 3 of 2016, nuclear energy provided 25% of electricity generated in the UK. Renewables provided another 25%, and fossil fuels 50%, of which gas was by far the largest.

A massive programme of investments in renewable energy would be needed to close this gap. It is currently made up by fossil fuel generation. Renewable energy alone will not be able to provide the shortfall without at least keeping the nuclear plants open. But to provide energy security into the next decades we need to replace and expand these ageing plants.

## OBJECTIONS

**There are four main objections to nuclear power from the left.**

The first is that the amount, and enduring radioactivity, of the waste produced. These are serious issues. However third and fourth generation reactors dramatically cut down the amount and level of radioactivity of the waste. Safe handling of waste by responsible publicly-owned bodies can and does minimise this issue.

In the future fusion energy maybe be developed with research and public investment that profit



**Nuclear power can be better**

making companies will not provide. Fusion power could eliminate waste entirely.

The second issue is safety. Many opponents of nuclear do recognise that nuclear has a good safety record compared to other technologies, even if you include Chernobyl in the comparative figures. People say truly that when things do go wrong they have very dangerous consequences; but even then they can be minimised, and more so with properly-regulated generation and modern safeguards.

The reactors at Fukushima for instance were made using an ageing design; warnings had already been raised. Faults in training and avoidable human error helped

cause the relatively minor incident at Three Mile Island. The Chernobyl disaster was a result of the neglect and negligence of the rotten bureaucracy of the Stalinist state in its dying days.

Public ownership, workers control and democratic administration could have stopped all of these incidents. There is always some potential risk, but pollution and global warming is a key threat; safe regulated nuclear energy is an indispensable part of the answer to this.

The third objection has been cost. While initial outlay on nuclear energy plants is expensive, once up and running plants are one of the most efficient non-fossil-fuel based

ways of producing large amounts of power. The estimated unit cost of nuclear is cheaper than solar, tidal and offshore wind generation.

The Hinckley Point deal that the Tory government has greed with EDF, to build a new nuclear plant is a terrible deal for users of power due to the high guaranteed strike price. However this deal tells us more about the issues with privatised energy than nuclear energy per se. A publicly-owned and funded nuclear sector would eliminate such rotten deals.

The fourth issue has been the relationship between civilian nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. The history of nuclear energy in the UK is intertwined with the British government's nuclear weapons programme. However this isn't the case for most countries with nuclear energy.

There is no contradiction between supporting new nuclear energy generation and opposing all nuclear weapons. The coupling of an anti-nuclear energy stance with the very necessary campaign to ban the bomb undermines the campaign as it alienates it from those who see nuclear energy as important.

**Labour and the left should be fighting for the common ownership of the energy sector. New safe nuclear generation has to be a key part of any working-class plan for keeping the lights on and stemming human-made climate change.**

# Shut down coal power, nationalise the Big Six

By Mike Zubrowski

**A protest demanding the closure of Aberthaw coal-fired power station — and "green jobs now!" — took place on 28 January.**

It was organised by Reclaim The Power in collaboration with local working-class activists. Around 150 people of all ages marched around the coal station, with giant red dragons in tow, after opening speeches and live music.

It was an incredibly positive, peaceful and fun demonstration, yet extremely surreal. As we got off the minibus, we found ourselves surrounded by beautiful Welsh rolling hills, on a sunny beach looking over the misty blue of the Bristol Channel.

Towering over us on the other side, surrounded by razor wire, was the coal power station that not only belches out huge quantities of greenhouse gasses but has caused the premature deaths of over 18,000 people, 400 a year, since it opened 45 years ago.

The European Court of Justice recently fined the UK government over Aberthaw power station, which has for seven years produced more than double the legal



amount of nitrogen oxides, the main pollutants responsible for these deaths.

It was encouraging that the organisers and most participants recognised the importance of linking investment in green jobs and energy to ending coal — a link sometimes missing in the environmental movement.

One speaker from the PCS civil service union emphasised the importance of tackling climate-change for working-class people, and of working-class and trade-union activism in tackling climate change. Others stressed that for the destructive effects of the power station and the open-cast coal min in Merthyr Tydfil which supplies it, to be

moved elsewhere in the world, and imposed on other communities, would not be a victory. Instead, we need international solidarity in challenging this destructive industry.

Another speaker advocated that energy should neither be owned by private corporations nor by the state, but instead by organisations with shares which could be bought up by local people, a perspective I think many listeners agreed with.

However, this is not a good solution. It would exclude those who could not afford shares and is not very democratic. Moreover, those owning energy production, whilst local rather than larger investors, would still be forced to prioritise

profit over the needs of the workers, the community, wider society and the environment.

If adopted nationally this proposal would not differ greatly from the current situation, and on its own it lacks a strategy to seriously combat the power of the fossil fuel industry. That renewable energy sources allow a greater level of decentralisation, with energy organised on the scale of communities may be a good thing, but the approach to bringing this about must be different.

Instead we should advocate nationalisation of the energy industry and national grid, run democratically by energy workers, the local community and people who rely

on it. This would also be a crucial step towards ending UK carbon emissions and ensuring affordable energy for all.

Workers' Liberty Students are launching a campaign for such a democratic nationalisation, "Nationalise the Big Six". Reclaim The Power are planning more actions over the next few months, particularly against fracking.

• [nationalisethebigsix.com](http://nationalisethebigsix.com)  
Facebook: [nationalisebig6](https://www.facebook.com/nationalisebig6)  
[nationalisebigsix@gmail.com](mailto:nationalisebigsix@gmail.com)

**The demonstration was a collaborative effort of local activists from United Valleys Action Group (Facebook: United Valleys Action Group) and of national organisations: Reclaim The Power ([reclaimthepower.org.uk/](http://reclaimthepower.org.uk/)), Coal Action Network ([coalaction.org.uk/](http://coalaction.org.uk/)) and Bristol Rising Tide ([risingtide.org.uk/bristol](http://risingtide.org.uk/bristol)). The Coal Action Network are planning a demo in London, "Ditch Coal Now", on 8 February from 12-2pm, outside the Dept. of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**



# Labour should fight cuts, not manage them

By Will Sefton

Local authorities are currently putting the final touches to budgets for 2017-18, which will herald another round of swingeing cuts across the UK. These cuts follow £20 billion cuts to the core government grant made between 2010 and 2015, a 40% real-terms reduction.

A new system of funding based on the retention of Business Rates (NNDR) the tax levied on the basis of the value of business premises is set to completely replace the block grant.

A trial of the scheme involving several councils in the north west and midlands is set to begin from April. According to the treasurer of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, they are satisfied that councils cannot be any worse off through participation in the pilot. Hardly a glowing endorsement of the new scheme.

There is not yet any finer detail on the proposal which is a kind of "top slicing" or redistribution mechanism to help balance the income levels of local authorities.

But income is likely to be uneven across the country. Boroughs like Westminster or Hillingdon which include government departments and Heathrow Airport will be able to raise much more income than councils like Wakefield or Barnsley. The scheme will allow councils to set their own local business rate, but in an increasingly competitive market for inward investment, it is more likely that there will be a race to the bottom, as councils compete to be the most business-friendly destination.

These moves have been introduced under the auspices of providing greater devolved power to regions and local authorities. Evidence so far suggests devolution has far more to do with the passing down more decisions on cuts than



with giving real local autonomy from central government.

Since the EU referendum and the uncertainty over Brexit, talk of devolution has quietened down. Many local authorities relied on large grants financed with EU money. How this funding gap will be closed, and what kind of programmes the government will continue to fund will leave many schemes, particularly those in areas of high deprivation, in jeopardy.

## RATE CUT

**Adding further insecurity, the government has also recently lowered the rates for smaller businesses and exempted and provided rate relief to even higher numbers!**

The background to this is the push to get more people to view themselves as "wealth creators" and entrepreneurs. It is the wholly inadequate answer to cuts to jobs in the public sector and a lack of skilled employment in many post-

industrial areas. The rate of small business failure remains incredibly high. Also most 50% of small businesses collapse in the first five years of trading.

Devolution has also produced further layers of bureaucracy and has acted like a kind of regional centralisation, with hollowed out democratic structures. Largely unaccountable bodies like the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, made up of council leaders and party group leaders, alongside Council Chief Executives control large infrastructure projects and transport. The only oversight over these people is through their own council elections.

In both Tory and Labour boroughs and districts decisions can be made that fail to take into account the issues in a given local area. An example is the fiasco of the Sheffield City Region having to re-run its consultation on their devolution deal because Chesterfield residents had not been consulted properly — wasting more of their limited funds. The end result, as in Manchester and elsewhere, is likely to be the imposition of a directly-elected mayor, a further assault on local democracy.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies reports that authorities like Salford, South Tyneside and Oldham have had to cut their services by up to nine times as much as more affluent areas in the last seven years. All of these authorities cut their services by more than 40% compared to 5% and 6% cuts in Surrey and Hampshire.

Even in the richest authorities these cuts have frequently targeted the poorest residents and represent a cut in workers' standards of living.

But it should not be a case of playing off authorities against each other but getting them to campaign collectively as part of the labour movement — to fight against the cuts and for real investment.

For both vulnerable adults and children six years of cuts have seen

the number of councils who have children's services rated outstanding drop down to 25%. The number of rough sleepers has risen by 102% since 2010 and by 30% since 2014.

## LIBRARIES

**Library visitors and borrowing numbers are also down as councils take away as much funding away from libraries as they can whilst maintaining their statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive library service" under a 1964 Act. The legislation is rarely if ever enforced and many authorities would be in breach of it if it were.**

More and more libraries are now run by trusts and community groups. There has been a fall in paid staff and a de-skilling of the job; far fewer library staff are now properly-trained librarians. Since 2010 almost 8000 jobs have been lost, replaced by 15000 volunteers, keeping libraries open for much shorter hours with a vastly reduced service. More than 350 libraries have closed, and hundreds more are under threat of closure.

The government's Library Taskforce is at best a sop to show they are doing something when they know what is required is funding; at worst it shores up the mythical belief that libraries are now irrelevant.

In four areas — Sefton in Merseyside, Brent in north London, Stoke-on-Trent and Sunderland — more than half the libraries have closed since 2010. In 2016 Lancashire announced they were going to shut 20 of their libraries. Where libraries have been kept open there have been major cuts in stock, reduced opening hours and a much smaller proportion of paid staff.

Harrow in north-west London has seen the biggest drop with more than 100 paid employees no longer working since 2010. The whole service in Ealing, Croydon and Hounslow has been outsourced to a private provider.

Reports from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy reports show that book borrowing has fallen year-on-year and that even other services like computer use which most libraries

provide free of charge is also dropping.

In Doncaster, where five libraries are still run by the city council and 19 by community groups, there were 629,000 book "issues" in 2014, compared with 1.2 million two years earlier. Compare this to the Hillingdon in West London, who refurbished their libraries and have seen a rise in visitors and book issues. There is a clear link between non-investment in the service and a fall in usage.

But the fall in usage is used as a pre-cursor to closure. Helen Milner of the digital inclusion charity The Good Things Foundation has publicly said libraries should not be saved from austerity where they are not performing. She echoes the government's call for libraries to diversify and offer more services. As other services are cut away, libraries are already offering far more than they once did, and often at the expense of properly-funded community centres, mental health day centres and other services that have faced brutal cuts.

As budgets are set, many Labour councillors will be doing their yearly hand wringing over the "tough decisions" they are being asked to make. Labour Party conference has passed policy against councils setting no cuts budgets and neither Jeremy Corbyn or John McDonnell support councils refusing to pass on the Tory cuts.

Since 2010 where Labour councillors have rebelled they have been isolated, easily picked off and effectively abandoned by the labour movement. But as difficult as it may seem we need to coordinate Labour councillors to work with their local parties and trade unions to lead campaigns against the cuts. This means not token demonstrations of opposition but demanding to get lost funding back and refusing to set a cuts budget.

**Both Corbyn and McDonnell know a radical anti-austerity Labour government would face huge challenges in reversing the government's austerity programme, but they must take a lead now and back the labour movement in fighting back to defend and extend local services.**

## HMRC lets super-rich off the hook

By Charlotte Zalens

**The Commons Public Accounts Committee has looked into the running of HMRC's specialist unit which collects tax from individuals worth more than £20 million.**

It found that "the amount of tax paid by this very wealthy group of individuals has actually fallen by £1 billion since the unit was set up" in 2009.

It seems HMRC does not chase these individuals for their tax bills in the same way as it does less wealthy individuals.

The report criticised the role that the unit's cosily-named "customer relationship managers" play saying "we were not convinced by [HMRC's] assertion that there is a clear line between giving

its view on potential transactions and giving tax advice and we do not think there is enough clarity about what customer relationship managers can and cannot do". So HMRC may in fact be helping people avoid tax!?

About a third of the super-rich individuals dealt with by the specialist unit are currently under inquiry by HMRC for unpaid tax, with potentially £1.9 billion of unpaid tax collectively.

Yet it has an awful record at prosecuting the wealthy for tax fraud — just 72 fraud investigations into high net-worth individuals in the five years up until March 2016, with only one resulting in a criminal prosecution.

**Not only are the super-rich not taxed enough, they get away with not paying what they owe!**

**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](http://www.ournhs.info)





# Trump: threat to abortion rights worldwide

By Elizabeth Butterworth

One of Trump's first executive orders after being installed as President was to reintroduce the Mexico City Policy, or "Global Gag Rule": a technicality in the funding of overseas aid, which was introduced by Reagan, revoked by Clinton, re-introduced by Bush and revoked again by Obama.

The "rule" means that international organisations risk having federal funding pulled if they "perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning".

The US does not fund abortions abroad, nor does it give general funds to organisations that provide terminations. The funds it gives are not used to fund abortion services.

The Mexico City Policy blocks service users in the developing world from accurate information on abortion and prevents organisations from signposting people to abortion providers.

The policy has been a statement of intent from successive administrations' stances on reproductive rights. But it has darker consequences than just its symbolism.

Abortion rates have decreased in the global North but have remained at a similar level in the global South – which accounts for around 88% of abortions worldwide. Every year, 6.9 million women in the developing world are treated for medical complications resulting from unplanned pregnancy and 22,000 women a year die from these complications. If the Trump administration cuts contraceptive services through USAID, the consequence will be women dying from unsafe abortions.

The abortion rate in countries where terminations are available on request is lower than in countries where it is restricted. 29% of all abortions take place in countries where it is either banned wholesale or allowed only in the case of saving the carrier's life.

This is due to a wide-ranging list of factors

including the accessibility of contraceptive services and rates of poverty, rape and incest. However, the evidence is clear that, as well as being reprehensible on the grounds of women's rights, restricting abortion on moral grounds is also not practical.

Vice President Mike Pence has shown his consistently anti-woman views on reproductive rights. He has said he believes that a foetus has the "unalienable right to life", overruling the rights of the pregnant person over their own body.

He has voted for stopping under-18s from being able to travel to another state to access abortion services, effectively preventing young and potentially vulnerable people from the ability to end a pregnancy safely.

He has voted to criminalise doctors who abort in order to protect the carrier's health (only allowing abortions which put the carrier's life at risk).

He has called for an embryo or foetus to be considered a "person", with personhood beginning at fertilisation.

## US

**Trump-Pence are going after abortion rights in the US as well as globally.**

Access to abortions is heavily restricted in the US compared to many countries in the global North. 90% of US counties do not have an abortion clinic, meaning that many people have to travel long distances to end a pregnancy. Under-18s must have parental involvement in order to access abortion in 38 states. 47 new restrictions to abortion came into effect in 22 states between 2012 and 2014.

Despite this legislation often putting up costly and inconvenient barriers to pregnant people, the notable impact on abortion rates is not restrictions on abortion but access to contraception. Many US women go through multiple hardships in order to end their pregnancies, which will only get worse and more common if Trump-Pence are able to introduce further restrictions.

In the years to come under this administra-



tion, as Trump appoints conservative judges, it is possible that Roe v Wade could be overturned. This legal precedent, which passed in 1973, decriminalised abortion services on a national scale.

Mike Pence has, in the past, repeatedly voted to pull all federal funding from Planned Parenthood, the leading national organisation in reproductive healthcare. If he succeeds, millions of Americans will be significantly limited in their access not only to abortion (which is already not federally funded), but through other sources of income), but also to reliable family planning and contraceptive services, which would increase the unintended pregnancy rate and thus increase the demand for terminations.

Worse, Congress is likely to either partially or fully pull funding to Title X, the US government's flagship family planning programme. This was introduced by Nixon and George H.W. Bush in 1970. The Christian Right have turned their fire onto Title X due to the providers it works through using separate funds to allow service users access to abortions.

Title X serves four million clients through 4000 clinics every year, accounting for around

one fifth of public family planning services. Two thirds of Title X's client base live under the federal poverty level, as the programmes it funds are placed in the US's poorest counties. Without access to Title X's services, rates of unintended pregnancy would be 33% higher.

If people cannot access safe abortions, we may see an explosion in abortion pills being bought off the "dark web", through unregulated online pharmacies, with likely complications arising and needing medical intervention. We will also see more unintended births, resulting in more women being stuck in poverty and abuse situations.

**We are facing a state of emergency in the state of reproductive rights both in the USA and globally. We need a large and militant women's movement that will once again fight back social conservatives and advance essential reproductive rights.**

• All statistics and estimates are from the Guttmacher Institute: [guttmacher.org](http://guttmacher.org)

• Feminist Fightback is working with others to highlight these threats and is planning action in the UK. See [feministfightback.org.uk](http://feministfightback.org.uk).

# Unite: danger of ring-wing swing under Coyne

By Dale Street

By the end of January Len McCluskey had secured 180 nominations in his bid to remain Unite General Secretary. Ian Allinson, standing on a platform of rank-and-file democracy, had 19 nominations.

Gerard Coyne, the candidate of the right, has not publicised how many nominations he has picked up. Outside of the Midlands region, where he is the union's Regional Secretary, he does not seem to be making headway. Nominations close on 17 February.

But the number of Coyne's nominations is not the best guide to how much support he might win when the voting period opens (27 March to 19 April).

Coyne knows that the bulk of the union's activists — who turn up to branch nomination meetings — will back McCluskey. The target audience of Coyne's media-backed "Take Back Control" campaign is the more passive union membership.

Despite being a highly paid and overpaid member of the Unite bureaucracy, Coyne is masquerading as the "anti-establishment" candidate in the election — a down-market version of Farage and Trump's claims to speak for the ordinary working man.

"I will clean up our union and let in the sunlight. ... It's time to take back your union!" claims Coyne in his manifesto. "I will clean up Unite and put power back in your hands," he writes in another election statement.

McCluskey is supposedly neglecting members' interests because he is too busy "pulling the strings" of the Labour Party: "Our current leader spends too much of his time — and your money — playing at Westminster politics. I will never try to be the puppet master of the Labour Party."

According to Coyne's manifesto: "Our current leader has been more concerned with playing Westminster politics than the bread and butter issues affecting you. Our union needs cleaning up, and our General Secretary should focus on protecting and defending Unite members."

What Coyne fails to mention is that his own campaign is backed to the hilt by the right wing within the Labour Party. "Progress" even called on its supporters to join Unite in order to vote for him.

The Labour right — Coyne's very own puppet-master — supports Coyne in order to undermine Corbyn — a pretty clear example of "playing Westminster politics" by any-

one's standards.

Coyne is also shameless in his attacks on freedom of movement. He does not do dog-whistle politics. He says it loud and clear for everyone to hear:

"There is one principle on which the UK government should not even begin to negotiate. That is over the question of control of our borders. ... Theresa May should be saying now that there can be no compromise on the principle of taking back control of our borders."

"For Britons facing job insecurity, the presence of a very large number of foreign nationals adds to pressures on them at a time of austerity. ... Those who voted for Brexit expect that promise of an end to uncontrolled immigration from the EU to be kept, and will feel betrayed if it is not."

It would certainly be a disaster if Coyne were to be elected General Secretary. In fact, even if his election bid is unsuccessful, it will still take years to eradicate the political poison which his campaign is injecting into



Gerard Coyne's campaign poster

Unite.

But the need to keep out Coyne cannot be a reason to abandon criticism of McCluskey's record while supporting him, or for failing to take on board Allinson's criticisms of the limitations of lay-member participation in Unite's decision-making processes.

**The McCluskey election machine cannot be allowed to ride roughshod over the need to take the openings provided by the election campaign — however few they may be — to rebuild rank-and-file organisation in Unite.**



# Stop Trump! On the streets against the “Muslim ban”

**Organise, on the streets and in the labour movement! Argue for socialist, democratic, internationalist ideas which offer a real answer both to Trump's rancid, right-wing, regression, and to the discredited status quo.**

That is how we can block Trump.

Trump's “executive order” of 27 January has stirred up protests across the world. Trump's “Muslim ban” halted the entire US refugee programme for 120 days, and indefinitely banned Syrian refugees fleeing Assad's brutality and the sectarian Islamist militias. All travellers who have nationality or dual nationality of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen are not permitted to enter the US for 90 days, or be issued an immigrant or non-immigrant visa. Customs and Border Protection agents have defied the orders of federal judges halting deportations.

Besides this outrageous act of anti-Muslim and racist discrimination, Trump has also signed executive decisions:

- To build a wall along the US-Mexico border
- To withdraw US federal grant money from “sanctuary cities” in the USA which refuse to deport undocumented immigrants
- To advance construction of the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines
- To order the commerce secretary to develop a plan (likely to breach WTO rules) requiring US-made steel for the pipelines
- To order public agencies to “waive, defer, grant exemptions from, or delay” all portions of Obama's Affordable [Health] Care Act that create financial burdens on states, individuals, or healthcare companies
- To ban federal money to international groups that perform or provide information on abortions
- To withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade talks.

Trump has suggested that South Korea and Japan develop nuclear weapons and US forces withdraw from those countries. He has courted Russian president Vladimir Putin, but talked of rescinding the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, in which Russia was an interested participant.

He has favoured the use of torture, but suggested for now he will defer to Defense Secretary James Mattis on that. He has promised to build up US militarism. He has given a green light for more-or-less unlimited Israeli settlement and creeping annexation in the West Bank.

On 27 January, too, the Holocaust Memorial Day statement from Trump's White House, unlike previous such US presidential statements, omitted Jews and antisemitism. Trump's chief of staff defended the omission: “I mean, everyone suffering in the Holocaust including, obviously, all of the Jewish people affected... is something that we consider to be extraordinarily sad”.

Trump's style is often fascist: authoritarian, demagogic, militaristic, nationalist.

The analytic difference between this and full-fledged fascism has importance. As Trotsky explained in the 1930s, when the Stalinists had the habit of describing all they disliked as “fascist”, fascism requires a street-fighting “movement of large masses, with new leaders from the rank and file... a ple-



**Protestors at JFK airport on Saturday 28 January as it came to light that passengers to the US had been detained and might be deported.**

beian movement in origin... from the petty bourgeoisie, the lumpenproletariat, and even to a certain extent from the proletarian masses... with its leaders employing a great deal of socialistic demagoguery”.

The reactionary mass movement gives fascism the facility, which ordinary decree from above lacks, to crush the labour movement, civil society, and civil liberties, and to impose demagogic, nationalist, racist, protectionist, militaristic policies which even the majority of the bourgeoisie dislikes. “Such a government does not cease being the clerk of the property-owners. Yet the clerk sits on the back of the boss, rubs his neck raw and does not hesitate at times to dig his boots into his face”. In return: “From fascism the bourgeoisie demands a thorough job; once it has resorted to methods of civil war, it insists on having peace for a period of years”.

To declare a right-wing government “fascist” before time amounts to declaring that social civil war lost before it has been fought.

## DAMAGE

**Trump's turn, however, can do great damage, and build conditions for actual fascism after the next great economic crisis.**

Already it shatters complacencies. Already it breaks up the comforting assumption that even if things get worse under neoliberalism, not all of them do, and worsening is slow, so if you have an established citizenship and good jobs you can keep ahead.

The globalised neoliberal world order has resilience. It has negotiated and absorbed many shocks. A great swathe of top-level opinion considers Trump maverick and dangerous. Within a few days of Trump's “Muslim ban”, over 9,000 US academics, including 50 Nobel prize-winners and 82 winners of Fields medals or similar, had signed a protest, and they included the doyens of neoliberal economics, Eugene Fama and Robert Lucas.

Yet, as the conservative writer Jonathan Rauch pointed out last year, the system of political mediations, consultations, information-flows, safeguards for continuity and coherence, in the USA, had substantially fractured even before Trump, replaced by a chaos of demagogues negotiating an atomised and disoriented electorate and a welter of

wealthy lobbyists.

In this fracturing, and with the confidence of orthodox bourgeois leaders shaken by the crash of 2008 and the disarray since then, a militant and cohesive bourgeois minority — and Trump may be able to assemble that — can take the initiative. The rest will mostly adapt (as Theresa May and Boris Johnson are doing) or shrug ineffectually.

In the USA's State Department (equivalent of the Foreign Office), top officials had, as a conventional formality, submitted resignation letters on the arrival of a new president. Usually new presidents ignore most such letters and maintain some continuity of management. Trump has accepted all the resignation letters and made a clean sweep.

Against a determined push by Trump, the liberal bourgeoisie will not safeguard the moderate extensions of women's and LGBT equality, the modest opening of opportunities to ethnic minorities, the relative freedom of movement for some across some borders, the mild cosmopolitanism, on which it prides itself. Having already let so many civil rights be swallowed by the “war on terror” and the drive for “labour flexibility”, it will be no bulwark for the rest.

The liberal bourgeoisie may not even safeguard the achievement of which it boasts most, the reduction of economic barriers between countries.

Before the USA's Smoot-Hawley tariff law of 1930, which started a catastrophic spiral of protectionism and shrinking world trade, “economics faculties [in the USA]... were practically at one in their belief that the Hawley-Smoot bill was an iniquitous piece of legislation”. Over a thousand economists petitioned the US administration against it. It went through, and its effects spiralled.

It falls to the labour movement to defend even the limited bourgeois ameliorations. The labour movement cannot do that unless it mobilises; unless it cleanses itself of the accommodations to nationalism now so common over Brexit; and unless it spells out socialist answers which can convince and rally the millions of the economically marginalised and disillusioned.

**It falls to the left to make the labour movement fit for those tasks.**

## 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.

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# Trump: neoliberalism with a white nation

**Arun Gupta (from Jacobin\* magazine) interviewed Marxist academic Leo Panitch about Trump's economic agenda, his relationship to transnational elites, and how neoliberalism's crisis could mean revitalization for the left.**

## **AG: Are there positive outcomes from this election?**

LP: Certainly the Trans-Pacific Partnership is over, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is too. That said, I don't think this spells the end of neoliberal international trade arrangements that allow for the free flow of capital and the protection of that capital when it lands in another state, which is the main point of the free-trade and investment treaties now. And I don't think we are going to see the introduction of massive import controls that would interrupt the integrated global production network we have.

The Trump administration has an enormous interest in keeping the flow of capital and trade going. I expect we will see a diminution of the labour and environmental side agreements that go with these international arrangements, not that they were worth very much, including those that are a part of NAFTA.

As for any positive dimension to the outcome of the election I am thanking goodness it wasn't Bernie. Suppose Sanders won the nomination and then was defeated by Trump. I am agnostic on whether Sanders would have won or not. But had he lost after Trump's campaign was structured not in terms of "Crooked Hillary" but in terms of "Socialist Sanders," it would have set the left back a generation at least.

The Clintonites and the whole left-liberal establishment would have piled on, like they did against Jeremy Corbyn after the referendum on Brexit, and would have blamed the Sanders left, and socialists in much more general terms, for opening the way to Trump. It would have been absolutely disastrous for building a genuine alternative.

## **CLINTONISM**

**AG: One of the few positive outcomes seems to be the end of Clintonism, of which Obama was the last gasp.**

LP: I do think this is the nail in the coffin of the Third Way, that is, the social-democratic line of progressive competitiveness, globalisation, and the free movement of capital inaugurated by the Clinton administration in the 1990s and followed by the Blairites in the United Kingdom and Europe. The Third Way is attached to the promise that through retraining, workers in the United States could compete with Vietnamese women workers earning a dollar a day. We see the utter hollowing out of the Third Way project. It's a negative positive, but it's a positive.

**AG: So far Trump's economic agenda appears to be warmed-over supply-side economics, such as massive tax cuts. But it appears to be neoliberalism with a white nationalist face.**

LP: I think that's right, and it's not a small thing. Perry Anderson said in 2000 that neoliberalism was the most successful ideology in world history. Even then that needed to be taken with a grain of salt because NAFTA was not all that popular in the United States. NAFTA was the first multilateral free-trade agreement, the model one. One needs to remember it wasn't brought in on a wave of popularity, especially from the quote-unquote "white working class."

After NAFTA became law, you had the Zapatista uprising in Mexico in 1994, the revolt of peasants in India against free trade in 1995, and the Seattle protests in 1999 against the World Trade Organisation followed by the wave of anti-globalisation protests around the world. In practice, of course, so long as there was no other option inside the state, neoliberalism swept everything before it.

But it was never as popular ideologically among the masses as it was among policy makers, economists, and social-democratic leaders looking for a way out of their dilemma of not being able to reconcile a capitulation to free-market orthodoxy with historical commitments to social welfare and protecting the Western working class from the worst effects of capitalism.

What this moment represents — and it's been coming for some time since the 2008 global financial crisis — is a delegitimisation of the practice of neoliberalism as to whether it can actually deliver the economic goods, rather than its ideological popularity, which aren't quite the same thing. We're specifically seeing the delegitimisation of the institutions — from mainstream parties to the bodies of the European Union — that attached themselves to neoliberalism. The claim from these institutions that "the nation" can benefit from neoliberal globalisation is now all but dead, even as they continue to impose neoliberal austerity measures to keep the old arrangements going.

In this context, there has been a notable shift from protest to politics on the left. The focus of protest itself visibly shifted to emphasising class inequality in the wake of the financial crisis, from Occupy Wall Street to the indignados in Spain. But since then it's taken a turn to recognising that you can't change the world without taking power and the reentry of the radical left into electoral politics. This could be through new parties, as in Greece and Spain, or through old parties, as in the United Kingdom and the United States, where this shift surprised and roiled the old discredited political establishment of those parties.

But the delegitimisation of mainstream institutions also involved a much more powerful rise of the xenophobic right, which claims to represent the national interest in cultural and ethnic terms.

The big question is whether this nationalist political right represents a turn away from transnational capital accumulation. These forces sometimes express themselves as a protector of domestic manufacturing jobs. But I don't think that's their main thrust. 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.

Peter Gowan used to say of Sam Gindin's and my analysis of the American state's leading role in facilitating and coordinating global capitalism that this might come undone by a nationalist right taking power in Germany. Astonishingly, this happened first in the United States. We need to see if this xenophobic right, which is coming to prominence not only in the Western capitalist world — look at India, Turkey, and the Philippines — will oppose being open to and involved in capital accumulation on a global scale. Or we could see it start constructing a continuation of global capital accumulation that is deliberately asymmetric in terms of closing the mobility of labour.

That's another important question: is closing off international labour mobility feasible amid economic globalisation and capital mobility? I think that it could be feasible, tragically. It won't just be trickle-down economics, though that will be a large part of it. It may entail "brown" infrastructure capitalism, meaning brownshirts.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

**AG: Trump is talking about a Keynesian-style proposal, a trillion-dollar infrastructure program. But it's not a traditional program in which the government funds it directly. He is talking about tax breaks to incentivise the building.**

LP: I think it could be a really big infrastructure program. It will probably involve public-private partnerships (PPPs), and massive taxes, subsidies, and pork-barrel spending for the construction companies involved. After all Trump is a developer, and that industry often forms the main base of the Republican Party across the country. Their modus operandi is to accumulate at public expense while ideologically biting the hand that feeds them. The state currently funds infrastructure through private construction companies rather than direct public employment.

PPPs will likely entail the floating of corporate debt on an even more massive scale than we are already seeing, on the premise that the state will underwrite it. It will cost more money by virtue of being at higher rate of interest than what Treasury bills can be floated at to cover a federal budget deficit.

That's also part of the inegalitarian nature of this. Insofar as it's underwritten by a right-wing government, and as long as interest rates don't shoot through the roof, the US Treasury can borrow at close to zero percent, and these corporations can borrow at three percent or more. And the government will subsidise that in various ways, such as tax forgiveness and even covering private interest payments.

But it could involve mass employment on a big scale. We need to remember Trump is a construction capitalist, a developer. He hires construction companies, and I think we are going to see that applied in a significant way.

**AG: Trump's infrastructure ideas involve the material moving economy, building roads, ports, rails, bridges, airports, so it does integrate with transnational capital and goods. So do you think it could actually work?**

LP: Well, what does work mean? It could

involve putting workers dispossessed of their old jobs in manufacturing, or those who used to be employed by the state itself, to work building bridges and paving highways. And that involves a hell of a lot of movement of people around and disruption of communities. If Trump expels three million more Mexican immigrants, lots of whom work in construction, will his white working-class supporters take these jobs? Heck, they may be needed to work on golf courses, mowing the grass in Palm Beach or Palm Springs.

The logic in this infrastructure promise combined with a xenophobic threat to foreign labour is this: where the only option before for laid-off workers in Ohio was McDonald's or Walmart, maybe now they'll take a job doing construction, as labourers, and that would involve a lot more internal labour mobility within the United States.

This may end up involving more than old trickle-down economics, where the state offers the wealthy tax breaks in the hope they will invest without any state guidance to what they invest in, or whether to invest at all. It's so rational to have massive state-led investment. Without our side coming to power, it will never be anything other than a means of facilitating capital accumulation, of course. Can this type of investment be done without direct state employment and the direct state movement of labour? I don't know.

As for the international context for the rise of this new right, will we see states, led by the American state, reintroduce import controls, capital controls, and so on? I am not so sure. We don't see bourgeoisies who want to accumulate only within their own territory. Can you keep globalisation going via the cooperation of right-wing governments that are anti-immigration?

Trump's chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, articulates this as, "We are not against any culture, we just believe in cultural apartheid. They belong over there and we belong here."

If you look at the integration of China into American-led global capitalism, it notably does not involve the international movement of labour. Although it has involved huge migration of labour inside China, there aren't the hordes of Chinese migrants that people were made so afraid of in the imperialist phase beginning in the late nineteenth century. So long as the Chinese capital flows can keep coming in, so long as Walmart can keep its production chains going, whether with China or other countries in East Asia, it won't mean the revival of the American-based manufacturing industry.

But it might mean the continuation of American-led global capitalism on xenophobic nationalist grounds. Remember capitalist globalisation never bypassed the nation-state. The nation-state was always attached to the informal American empire and capitalist globalisation. We are in a new conjuncture that will try to keep capitalist globalisation going while denying international mobility for the reserve armies of the working classes even as mobility is preserved for the professional and business classes.

**AG: Is it possible to move the Democratic Party more toward the Sanders and Warren wing, or democratic socialism to become the left wing of capitalist politics**

\* <https://www.jacobinmag.com/>



# Capitalist face

## within the US?

LP: Starting from the Labour Party in the United Kingdom, the Corbyn example is an extremely positive phenomenon that indicates possibilities for similar developments in the US Democratic Party. That said, it's clear the insurgency behind Corbyn won't succeed without a recalibration of what the Labour Party is organisationally. That would involve a split from the party of those members of parliament whose first loyalty is to NATO, the monarchy, the current institutions of the British state, and the practice of class harmony with the City of London.

More fundamental, the insurgency has to remake Labour's apparatus outside parliament into a vehicle for transforming the party branches into centres of working-class life once again. They would need to engage in organisation, education, and class formation on a scale not seen in a long time, indeed perhaps never seen in that party in much of the country.

In the case of the Democrats, the possibility of organisational and ideological recalibration runs up against the loyalty of party leaders to the existing state and their deep links to Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and the military-industrial complex. But there is an additional obstacle. The Democratic Party's organisational structure is so diffuse and its links to the working class, or at least the active elements of it, are much less organic than is the case with the Labour Party. For Labour, the connections to the working class has always gone beyond the links of the political leadership to the union bureaucracy.

It's a harder thing to change the Democratic Party from a donkey into a gazelle and it's bloody hard already in the Labour Party. In my view that could only occur with a split and a fundamental reorganisation of what that party is. [But] there will be an attempt to recalibrate the Democratic Party.

More than that, given the ecological crisis as well as the capitalist crisis, this recalibration needs to actively involve working-class people in imagining and developing capacities for alternative forms of production and consumption in their own communities as well as nationally and eventually internationally, and showing that this can be done only through democratic economic planning.

I really think this has to involve the construction of new socialist parties with this central to their agenda, but they won't come out of nowhere. They will come out of the reconstitution of forces inside and outside of old parties. The actual organisational form it will take right now is hard to predict, but I do think there is a real opening.

## AG: What about the role of organised labour and the timidity most labour leaders are showing thus far toward Trump?

LP: I think organised labour leaders will throw themselves heavily behind the Elizabeth Warren wing of the Democratic Party, the wing critical of Wall Street. Labour leaders may try to pull working people behind someone like Kamala Harris, the woman of colour just elected US senator from California, as the standard-bearer.

Perhaps such Democrats will not simply use unions in a purely instrumentalist way and will offer real labour protections and re-



forms. Plus, they will adopt the line of Democratic Party economic guru Larry Summers that we need fiscal deficits and direct public spending on massive infrastructure. To some extent Hillary Clinton adopted this in her campaign, but her ties to the rich and Wall Street made it much more difficult for her to be credible.

The Democrats, because they're spineless, may back Trump's infrastructure jobs program. If it's really a trillion dollars, that could boost the economy and help Trump consolidate the control he needs to carry out his overt white nationalist agenda. It's not that the Democrats would support Trump's ethnic-cleansing policies, but by helping him create jobs, Trump gets all the credit and could use the political capital to implement mass deportations and even a Muslim registry.

Well, such an infrastructure program will be done with the type of labour rights, or rather lack thereof, that you describe so well in your great research on Walmart. Insofar as an infrastructure program involves workers moving from Akron, Ohio to build a bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, or to Palm Springs, California, to water a golf course, this is not an attractive option for workers.

I fear the Democratic Party and unions will line up behind a soft-left globalisation and more progressive domestic policy while leaving an organisational structure intact that continues to demobilise the working class rather than organise them as a class-conscious force.

I think what Sanders says needs to be changed. But what kind of contestation will it involve, and will it be possible within the frame of the Democratic Party to build people's capacities in the ways that are needed? Sooner or later there will have to be a break with Democrats. The break has to be not just from the party as a vehicle for the union alliance with the ruling classes and the policies of the old class alliance that incorporates large parts of Wall Street, but from the anti-socialist substance of it.

The Democratic Party of the Clintons and Obama redefined equality in aspirational identity politics terms that ostensibly promotes upward mobility for a relatively small

number of women, blacks, Latinos, LGBTs. But inevitably even that is limited mobility.

## AG: We have an organised labour that doesn't organise labour in that class society.

LP: Quite right, that's the main problem. But they haven't been helped much, you have to admit, by successive Democratic presidents. They did not push legislation to make organising any easier, even on the unions' limited terms. Labour leaders will now demand this in more vociferous terms than before, and will really expect they would get it from a future Democratic president and Congress. But in the meantime, things are going to go very badly for the unions once Trump fills the two open positions on the National Labor Relations Board and the Supreme Court seat.

## RHETORIC

## AG: After Trump was elected, Doug Henwood joked that the bourgeoisie have lost control. It seems there are two ways of reading 2016. I've been saying this was America's most Marxist election ever. Pure ideology against pure material force.

LP: If he starts imposing import controls and capital controls, then the US bourgeoisie as a leading global class force will have lost. I think that's extremely unlikely. There might be some marginal measures around imposing tariffs, but it would not amount to anything significant.

## AG: How about labeling China a currency manipulator?

LP: Well that's his deal-making lingo. Big deal. We've heard that a million times. The more significant question is whether a Trump administration goes so far as to interrupt global value chains. The rhetoric itself may be a means of keeping them going. It would be a profound disruption, much, much greater than what happened in the interwar period, what the British Empire engaged in when it introduced import controls and broke with free trade in 1931. It would be immensely more disruptive.

Capitalists, I think, will kiss the asses of an authoritarian, repressive Trump adminis-

tration in order to keep that global capitalism going. That's the scary thing. They may abandon all their liberal principles in order to keep global accumulation going.

## AG: If those liberal principles are bad for profits, then of course.

LP: Yes and no. Insofar as Trump's economic program involves mobilizing large parts of the university-technology apparatus behind infrastructure projects, explicit racism, antisemitism, and sexism will be a problem. Then the Right may close down dissent and organization, which is what we especially need to fear.

I have to admit I found myself surprised that I was increasingly anxious, in the last few weeks of the election, that Hillary Clinton might not be president. Mainly because I feared there might be a closure of political space under Trump. In a context where a Trump administration underwrites with greater and more arbitrary coercive powers the Blue Lives Matter forces against the Black Lives Matter movement, this could spill over into a generalised repression of dissent, and of class-oriented mobilisations as well.

That said, freedom of assembly is not going to be easily foreclosed. It's too deeply entrenched legally and culturally. Freedom of speech is even more difficult to foreclose because of the private media and communications corporations that accumulate capital through it. That's not to say the capitalists who own and control the media won't kowtow to Trump, but there is a limit as to how far the state can go in closing off dissent.

If political space stays open, then we may see a sudden upsurge of radical political activity. We may also see real progress towards the kind of long-term new socialist organisation-building that is so necessary. There are manifold arenas for discussion, including amazing communications channels, and some new organisational ones — though they are less developed.

**Will a more cohesive class-focused and class-rooted radical left in the United States be able to take advantage of the space? Who knows? But there is certainly plenty of hunger and some real potential for this.**



# The left in France's presidential election

## LETTER FROM FRANCE

By Marianne Davin

**In my last letter I wrote about the far right, the right, and the almost right (the Socialist Party), but things have evolved since then. Here I will try to describe the current situation of the far left.**

Les Republicans's candidate, Francois Fillon, has had a bit of a tough time. It has been revealed that his wife, Penelope Fillon, was being paid as an assistant while he was a minister. Not a problem in itself but for about nine years she was paid first €3900 and then €7900 per month, a total of 500,000 euros (£430,000) for a job that sources claim she never actually did. Causing further confusion, in a 2007 interview Penelope claimed she had always been a housewife and had never worked for her husband's political career. Then Fillon admitted to have employed two of his children as lawyers "for their competencies". Funnily enough at the time of this employment for their competencies, they were not yet lawyers but in Law School.

The scandal has lead many to wonder if Fillon didn't create an "emploi fictif" (fictitious employment) scam which is illegal. It is to be seen whether he gets prosecuted and what will happen to his run for President...

Meanwhile the Socialist Party has chosen their presidential candidate: Benoit Hamon. Hamon beat Manuel Valls 58% to 41%. Hamon's campaign is centred on two promises — a universal basic income, and governmental reform. The basic income would still be under the poverty line — €750 a month by

2020.

Hamon's policy is based on his belief that mass unemployment is inevitable and that robotisation is the cause of all the unemployment. He does not take into account the lay offs occurring in companies that are highly profitable (like Sanofi who gave €6.6 million to its stockholders in 2016 and laid off 600 works that same year!)

Hamon might say pretty things about the environment, assisted procreation, marijuana legalisation, and election reforms, but in the end he is only arguing for a "good" leftist government. One that is 100% compatible with capitalism, and will not contribute to a significant redistribution of wealth!

Among the more far left representation in the elections, we have Jean-Luc Mélenchon heading up his own party, La France Insoumise. Backed by the Parti Communiste de France (PCF), Mélenchon claims he is the only credible political alternative on the left.

He is trying to make us believe that he is very "leftwing" by proposing to abolish the Fifth Republic and try again with a Sixth Republic; that it will be a nicer capitalism.

However, JLM also proposes increasingly patriotic ideas including saying France should leave the EU. JLM denounces the fact that capitalism leads to constant international competition by evoking xenophobic clichés to attack Europe and especially Germany. He conveniently forgets that capitalistic competition also takes place at the national level.

Fundamentally JLM believes that capitalism can be reformed by keeping or modifying slightly the current institutions in place. A comrade expressed this well during a debate on JLM's "gauchisme" (leftism) — JLM's approach to politics centres around "I can do



Benoit Hamon

this, I can do that" while revolutionary socialist politics should be all about "Our class together can do this, our class together can do that".

A small side note on the presidential elections in France. To run in the election, parties or individuals must be "presented" by 500 elected officials in front of the Constitutional Council. To run a candidate needs to find 500 mayors, senators, members of the National Assembly, etc. to sign a paper saying they support this bid for the presidency. This doesn't mean that an individual personally supports that person or party, just their eligibility or ability to run in the election.

Until April 2016 the signatures were not published, thus mayors on the right didn't fear a backlash from their electorate for signing for a far left organisation. In the name of "transparency", a reform passed by the Socialist Party now requires that the list of signatures be officially published. At the same time, elected officials must be the ones to send their signatures to the Constitutional Council, not the individual running for office.

Small parties were hostile to this reform because it makes it much more difficult to obtain the necessary 500 signatures. Philippe Poutou of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) stated that this was "a way for the Socialist Party to eliminate all small candidates to its left, even a candidate who would only get 1 to 2%, like me"

Consequently NPA is struggling to find its 500 signatures and, as of early February, the candidate Philippe Poutou is not an official candidate for the election. The deadline for the 500 signatures is in March and it is important to get these so that during a voice of working-class politics can be heard.

With each candidate trying to remind us how anti-system they are (Macron is the main one but having worked at Rothschild Bank and being a minister in Hollande's government makes it hard to understand his anti-system discourse...) it is important to raise our voice and ensure alternative, anticapitalist, revolutionary and communist ideas are presented to a larger audience.

Although it seems ridiculous to have a whole presidential campaign only to achieve electoral scores of 1 to 2%, the point of the Poutou campaign is not to win the presidency. With the laws in France giving equal speaking time to candidates, our party and our ideas can be debated and presented to a larger audience for weeks. Rarely in the capitalist system does the media grant workers and communist ideas such air time.

**We are tired of always hearing the same discourse and we are ready to raise our heads and say no to a politics that continually attacks our rights and our standard of living.**

# Shrewsbury 24: how we started a campaign to defend pickets

## AS WE WERE SAYING

By Keith Road

**Our political group has recently celebrated our 50th anniversary. We have been reflecting on some of the movements and disputes that we have played an active role in. One of these was Shrewsbury 24 campaign over the victimisation of building workers in 1972.**

1972 saw a major wave of industrial action in Britain. There were more work days lost to strike action in that year than in any other since the 1926 General Strike.

States of Emergency were declared during both a miners' and a dockers' strike. The Tories tried to use the 1971 Industrial Relations Act to undermine the position of trade unions in various ways including outlawing of "wild cat" strikes. However, the Act was largely unsuccessful.

Frustrated, the government picked a legal battle it thought it might win against workers in the construction industry, an industry which had traditionally been poorly organised. A merger of smaller unions had created UCATT (now part of Unite), which alongside others formed an industry National Joint Council. The unions agreed to make a demand for £30 per week and a shorter working week of 35 hours. Refusal by the employers led to the only-ever (so far) national strike in the construction industry, with flying pickets moving from site to site. Months later, in February 1973, 24 pickets were arrested and charged with a variety of old offences (not using the Industrial Rela-



tions Act).

The AWL's forerunner Workers' Fight started the campaign to defend the pickets. At first the Communist Party (then a big force among building workers, and with a member among the 24) refused to take up the defence, but over months the defence campaign grew.

### Workers' Fight 25 April 1973

In Shrewsbury on 15 March, 24 building workers appearing in court were met by a show of solidarity from other workers, meeting out the court and then marching through the town.

At the court hearing the 24 — members of the T&GWU and UCATT — were up on a conspiracy law of 1875. There are also charges of damages, and, added 14 days later, unlawful damage and causing an affray. The police are using conspiracy law so that hearsay evidence will be admissible.

On 15 March, the police stopped all traffic going into Shrewsbury with a complete roadblock. The father of one defendant, John McKinsie Jones, was hit by the police. His wife found herself on her own in a court supposedly too full for relatives — but full of dozens of police. Only six people were allowed into court to support the defendants.

Liverpool builders' leaders Frank Marsh and Alan Abrahams called for the TUC to call a general strike on the day of the committal proceedings, 25 April, and for the lads to have full official backing. This needed to be not only in the form of finance but also in the form of organising national support.

The defendants in UCATT were offered official support only to hear the following day that it was being withdrawn.

The excuse given? A lawyer had said the trial would cost too much. First time we've ever heard of a lawyer complaining about earning a lot!

On 14 March UCATT General Secretary George Smith wrote to UCATT Branch Secretary Barry Scragg. "I have to acknowledge receipt of your communication dated the 24th February, in connection with the above...I would advise you that we have had legal advice on the lengthy and nature of the charges...and would be doing the Building Unions a great disservice, and indeed the Trade Union Movement a great disservice, to demonstrate or call a national stoppage in regard to these matters as the charges range from civil offences to criminal acts and our concern in matters of this kind is to defend the rights of Trade Unions to carry out picketing during the course of an official dispute."

"We must take the view that the legal processes are such that content among the charges based on the Conspiracy Act will soon be disproved as playing no part in the other charges that are made against the members concerned."

In other words — Smith will do nothing to defend worker prosecuted for official picket-

ing! Some are speculating that the union may be making a deal with the police to drop the conspiracy charge if the union drops support of the men on the lesser charges.

### Workers' Fight 27 May 1973

Police pile on more charges. Five of the 24 North Wales building workers who are being charged for picketing are coming up in court in Shrewsbury on 18 May. It is urgent that more places of work and trade union branches organise to send delegations to Shrewsbury.

Action to defend the North Wales 24 on trial for the "crime" of picketing on official union instructions last September is now being coordinated by a Defence Committee of North Wales Charter.

The fight to get jobs for union labour means learning from last September's success and repeating the use of picketing against lump sites. It also means putting pressure on union officials to mobilise official support the picket lines.

Meanwhile, the UCATT leadership have added to their record of betraying the North Wales 24 a refusal to postpone a branch officials' conference billed for the 18th.

We must recognise the trial for what it is — a political attack on our rights as trade unionists to take action.

**We on our side have a direct choice: either we leave the bourgeois courts to do their dirty work and act against our interests, or we take the trial seriously too, and mobilise for solidarity action.**

•Find out more here:  
[www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk](http://www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk)



# Remembering the Russian revolution

By Max Shachtman (1948)

**Less than three months after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin remarked at a meeting that the soviet power of the Russian workers and peasants had already lasted longer than the Paris Commune of 1871 which lived for only 10 weeks.**

The statement was made with pride, but no doubt with some wonderment. It reflected the conditions, incredibly complicated and difficult, under which the Russian proletariat took power into its own hands.

We live in an age when change is rapid, frequent and profound. The thirty-one years since the Russian Revolution have seen epochal changes. None is so deepgoing, so unexpected and so confounding as the change in the direction of that revolution. The attempt made in 1917 failed.

The hideous reality of Stalinism is nothing like the noble purpose of socialism which the Bolsheviks set out to achieve. In almost every respect, the former is the gruesome caricature of the latter.

In the great initiative of the Bolsheviks, millions through-out the world saw the beginnings of the new freedom. In the present-day outcome in Russia, millions see the new slavery and millions more suffer in silenced anguish under it.

When it began, there began also a stormy and confident offensive [around the world] of revolutionary socialism, of Marxism, whose principles and programs were embodied in the Bolshevik movement. With the triumph of the Stalinist counter-revolution, Marxism is today everywhere on the defensive.

The ideas of Bolshevism were summed up in this: the road to freedom lies through the establishment of socialism; the road to socialism lies through the overturn of capitalism by the revolutionary power of the working class.

The offensive against Marxism is directed against these ideas. It is an offensive on an unparalleled scale. It is sponsored by the highest government authorities. Dutifully

and enthusiastically, it is carried out in virtually every number of every daily, weekly and monthly periodical.

The theme of this offensive is quite familiar: "Bolshevism leads to Stalinism. The Stalinist totalitarianism was inherent in Bolshevism itself." The Russian Revolution could have produced nothing else than what we have in Russia today...

The aim of this offensive is a political one; its effects certainly are. And its political aim is a reactionary one. The whole capitalist world including that part of the working class world whose ideas and activities are decisively influenced by it. Is now mobilised for preparations for the third world war, the war between the US and Russia. War preparations are inconceivable nowadays without ideological preparation of the people to accept the war ...

The abysmal degeneration of Stalinist Russia and of the Stalinist movement everywhere has provided the enemies of socialism with all the basic materials for the weapons in their offensive, with materials of such a kind and in such quantity as they never dreamed of having in their century-long struggle against socialism.

They have slashed and mutilated the true portrait of the Bolshevik revolution so that it can no longer be recognised. We know a good deal already, thanks above all to Leon Trotsky, of the Stalinist school of falsification. We do not realise however that there is another school of falsification about the Russian Revolution that is actively at work.

It is the school run by the social-democrats, zealously assisted by turncoats from the revolutionary movement. It is at once the complement of the Stalin school and of the reactionary imperialist campaign against socialism. Like all falsifiers of history, it operates with outright lies, with half-truths, with significant omission, with snapshots of events ripped away from the attending circumstances, and in the best of cases with an utter failure to understand what a revolution is, or with criteria applied to a revolution which belong at best in a drawing room discussion or a game of cricket.

The fact which enemies of socialism are most anxious to keep in the dark is that the Bolsheviks represented not only the most revolutionary socialist movement of their time, but also the most consistently vigorous democratic movement.

There is no other intelligent or intelligible explanation for the big fact that the Bolsheviks, starting as a tiny party even after the overturn of the rule of the Tsar, took power and were able to maintain it for years with the support of the decisive sections, of the people of Russia.

Whatever the forms it may take, democracy must express the will of the people. In 1917, the people of Russia were completely exhausted by the war, tired of the horrible bloodletting, tired of fighting for the imperialist aims not only of Russian Tsarism but of British and French bankers and monopolists. They wanted peace above all other things. They wanted it so passionately that they overthrew the regime of the Tsars.

What they got in place of Tsarism [after the revolution of February 1917], was a government of the Russian capitalists which wanted to continue the war, which wanted to maintain the reactionary landlordism of Russia, which feared and hated the aroused masses and sought to circumvent the will of the people and to thwart their aspirations by all the vicious devices of modern governments. This government, the provisional government of Kerensky, was supported by the two non-Bolshevik parties which enjoyed popular support, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries (SRs).

## SOVIETS

**The Bolsheviks gathered millions and ever more millions of workers, soldiers and peasants around them by militantly supporting the demands of the people.**

They did not talk about them but fought for them. They were for immediate peace, for land to the peasants, for workers control of the factories, for immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly, for a truly democratic republic.

And that is the fundamental reason why the soviets rallied, in one locality after another, to the support of the Bolsheviks.

The taking over of power by the soviets was the greatest victory in history for democracy, and this victory was made possible by the Bolshevik leadership and no other. The Bolsheviks had not invented the soviets in some cellar or house of dogma.

The soviets were first brought into existence in 1905 by the Mensheviks. In the 1917 revolution, they were constituted and for a long time led by the Mensheviks and SRs and not by the Bolsheviks. But it was only the Bolsheviks who said that these most democratic organs and representatives of the people shall rule in the name of the people and in their interests.

Once in power, the Bolsheviks did everything in their power to bring peace to war-exhausted Russia. If Russia was to know very little peace within its own frontiers for the next few years, the responsibility was in no sense that of the Bolsheviks and the soviet power. The Bolsheviks took Russia out of the imperialist war, even if it meant great sacrifices in the form of tribute to the armies of the German Kaiser. The Bolsheviks actually gave the land to the peasants, which no other political group in Russia was prepared to do except the allies of the Bolsheviks, the left-wing SRs.

The Bolsheviks proceeded to suppress the counterrevolutionary forces and movements of the Tsarists, the bankers, the clergy, the re-

actionary generals and the landlords. And as is befitting in a revolutionary upheaval, they proceeded by revolutionary means. When rifles were raised against the soviet power, the soviets replied with rifles. No revolutionary government in history worthy of the name has ever acted differently. The criticisms of the Bolsheviks in this case are made by people who seem never to have heard of the Great French Revolution or even the American Revolution and the Civil War.

Every revolution has its traducers and its detractors who complain because it acted like a revolution and did not deal with its opponents the way you deal with them at a game of bridge. The Bolshevik revolution is no exception.

One of the great difficulties about a revolution is that these who oppose its victory seldom understand its purpose and its determination, seldom reconcile themselves to its working existence. Here too the Bolshevik revolution was no exception.

The Bolsheviks, for example, did not even start with the idea of suppressing the capitalist parties or of disfranchising the capitalist class. Nor did they start with the idea of confiscating all capitalist property and nationalising all industry. On the contrary, they opposed it. They knew the backwardness of Russia. They knew the lack of experience and culture not only of the workers in general but of themselves as well. They not only wanted the capitalists to remain in the factories but even guaranteed them a reasonable profit.

But the logic of the class struggle is inexorable. The Russian capitalist class could not reconcile itself with the idea of a soviet state ruled by the workers and peasants. They sabotaged their own plants; they refused to co-operate in any way. Confronted with this situation, with the fact that complete economic chaos threatened the already chaotic country, the Bolsheviks proceeded to take over industry, to nationalise it, or more accurately, to legalise the seizures of the industries which the workers themselves were spontaneously carrying out.

What held for the Russian capitalist class, held in substantially the same way for the two big popular parties, the Mensheviks and the SRs.

They could not reconcile themselves to the decisive fact that a great revolution had taken place which brought the Bolsheviks to power. They could not understand the decisive fact that the soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants were the most democratic and the most widely supported organisations in existence.

Instead, these two parties championed the Constituent Assembly which finally convened two months after the Bolshevik Revolution but which no longer represented the people of Russia. Not only the Bolsheviks withdrew from this Assembly but also the Left SRs. who had split with the right wing but which represented the big majority of the peasants.

The Constituent Assembly could only become a rallying center, a war-cry, for the counter-revolution in Russia, and that is why it was dispersed by the revolutionary regime.

**That is what the Mensheviks and Right SRs did not understand. But its truth was soon demonstrated. The Assembly became the program of every counterrevolutionist inside and outside of Russia — from the Cossack generals to Winston Churchill who was soon to spend millions of pounds sterling in the attempt to overturn the workers and peasants power in Russia.**

• Abridged. First published in *Labor Action* 15 November 1948.

## 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.

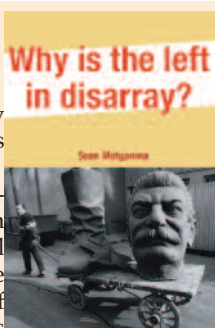
The book concludes by criticising also the mechanical inverse on the left of the addled "anti-war" and "anti-imperialist" negativists: those who respond by going for an idealised bourgeois democracy.

## The Russian Revolution: when workers took power

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.

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.

**Both books coming soon. Available to pre-order now for £8**  
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# Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Events

### Saturday 4 February

Protest Trump's "Muslim ban"  
11am, US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London  
[bit.ly/2kNOHOu](http://bit.ly/2kNOHOu)

### Saturday 4 February

North East march for the NHS  
11.45am, Framlington Place, Newcastle, NE2 4AB  
[bit.ly/2kn9rMp](http://bit.ly/2kn9rMp)

### Thursday 9 February

Islington Momentum NHS Q&A  
7pm, Vibast Community Centre, 163 Old Street, London, EC1V 9ND  
[bit.ly/2knfWhy](http://bit.ly/2knfWhy)

### Saturday 11 February

Iranian Embassy picket: Free all jailed workers!  
5pm, Iranian Embassy, 16 Prince's Gate, London, SW7 1PT  
[bit.ly/2kLSrFP](http://bit.ly/2kLSrFP)

### Monday 13 February

Workers' Liberty Leeds public meeting: Socialism or the new barbarism  
6.30pm, The Packhorse Pub, 208 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 9DX  
[bit.ly/2kQh5eu](http://bit.ly/2kQh5eu)

### Monday 20 February

Mass lobby of Parliament for the rights of EU citizens in the UK  
2.30pm, House of Commons, London  
[bit.ly/2kLNbZC](http://bit.ly/2kLNbZC)

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

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

## Momentum groups meet 11 March

### LABOUR

This report of Momentum's National Committee which met on Saturday 28 January is by Ed Whitby and Tracy McGuire, northern regional delegates. More can be found on Ed's blog: [edsunionblog.wordpress.com](http://edsunionblog.wordpress.com)

Approximately 20 committee members attended the 28 January National Committee, with a number of apologies.

There were also over 30 observers, mostly from London, though also a number from further a field. With apologies, it seemed that approximately half the National Committee supported this meeting going ahead including members from FBU, Red Labour and LRC, LGBT+, Disabled, Womens and Black Connexions. The majority of English Regions sent all or some of their National Committee representatives.

The day began with general discussion on the political landscape, by-elections, and the Labour Party situation introduced by Matt Wrack (Steering Committee member). There was an open discussion, including discussions around migrant rights, freedom of movement and racism, LP structures and bureaucracy, witch-hunts and expulsions, opportunities and risks for the future. People were honest about the real problems with face in the party and with Corbyn's leadership. Some practical ideas for campaigning were put forward and we agreed to come back to these in the next steps item at the end of the meeting.

What was very welcome was that this was the first time we had been able to have a political discussion at the National Committee, and this also gave an opportunity for us both to talk about what was happening in our region and our local groups.

After lunch we began the discussion on what had happened in Momentum.



The final afternoon session on next steps, outcomes and statements, while still open to observers, only allowed contributions and proposals from National Committee members.

### CONSENSUS

**Despite there being different views of the way forward and different opinions of how we relate to the group who are continuing to impose a constitution, there was consensus achieved around key things.**

Some people clearly felt that walking away was an option, other seemed more keen on pushing forward with the annual conference as planned for February with the existing Conference Arrangements Committee.

But a consensus was achieved (again another real achievement for the National Committee) that we go ahead with a national Grassroots Networking Conference, supported by as many local groups and regions as possible, on Saturday 11 March.

We agreed that this would not be the "founding conference" as originally planned for February, and this is not setting up a rival organisation.

There was some discussion on the upcoming National Coordinating Group elections. Some people felt that they should be boycotted. Others, that this was an opportunity to share our criticisms of what has happened and candidates are

one way to do that. The meeting agreed to take no position on this.

The meeting did agree statements opposing the coup and re-asserting the existence of the National Committee. We agreed a coordinating group of the existing Steering Committee, members and the Conference Arrangements committee with additional representatives to be coopted from regions not represented.

The meeting also agreed to do some work around key campaigning ideas in addition to policies passed at the last National Committee meeting. We will set up some working groups with volunteers via the email list. These will initially include: Migrant Rights; Expulsions and suspensions; the NHS

The meeting also agreed to discuss with John McDonnell arranging a meeting with representatives of our group and representatives of the Directors of the Momentum companies to see if there is any way to resolve this situation.

**Two resolutions were passed by the meeting. These resolutions condemned the imposition of a new constitution, encouraged those who disagree with the new constitution to stay in Momentum and organise together, and supported the call for a Grassroots Networking Conference on 11 March.**

• Full text of motions can be found online at: [bit.ly/2kQ3WCq](http://bit.ly/2kQ3WCq)

## Pro-democracy candidates stand for NCG

**The Momentum NCG elections are now open. Voting runs from 1-17 February.**

In each of the three regions, a pro coup slate has been drawn up seeking to win members votes for an endorsement of the new constitution and the way the whole thing was imposed on members without any consultation or vote.

The members elected onto the NCG will form a minority on a group that has the overall responsibility for the whole of Momentum: 12 out of 28 or 32, with the others chosen outside Momentum or coopted.

The NCG's power can be summed up in the ominous phrase in the constitution that it has the; "Power to do all other things necessary to achieve the aims [of Momentum]."

As Jamie Green, one of the candidates for the NCG, points out, "The NCG can co-opt four additional members at any time. Therefore, if a particular faction has a slender majority; it could add new members in order to bolster its position. In a more evenly split NCG, a faction could wait for a meeting where it knows it has a majority due to no-shows and co-opt a majority that

way."

Workers Liberty is backing a number of activists who have stood for the NCG on the clear basis of opposing the constitution and fighting for a democratic member-led Momentum, committed to socialist policies.

**SE Region — Anita Downs, Sahaya James, Jamie Green, Yannis Gourtsoyannis**

**Midlands, East & West — Liz Yeates, Rida Vaquas, Phil Pope**

**North & Scotland — Camila Bassi, Alan Runswick, Helen Rutherford Gregory, Gary Wareing**



# Derby TAs confront Labour

By Ralph Peters

Teaching assistants in Derby held a rally, march and picket of the Derby Council meeting on 25 January. 400 TAs surrounded the Council House prior to the Council meeting.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, TAs are fighting a pay cut that for some is as high as 30% and a complete rewriting of their contract.

The dispute so far has consisted of 13 strike days after a 9-1 rejection by the workers of the Council's last offer, as well as a number of rallies and lobbies of the council. Stupidly the Labour Council refuses to budge, using claims that its budget will not allow it. But at the same time money has been found for expensive building work on the Council House which has angered TAs.

Representatives from the TAs went to meet Corbyn during his rally in Derby and he promised them his support. There are reports that there have been some telephone conversations between Corbyn and council leader which ended acrimoniously. Corbyn needs to clearly and publicly state his support and differentiate himself. So far whilst saying complimentary things about the TAs, he uses the formula that Unison and the Council should sit down together and settle.

Talking to Unison representatives of the TAs, Prentis has promised national support — even indicating that Unison may recon-



sider its affiliation to the Party. Of course, this will not happen and would not do any good. What the Derby TAs need is for the issue to be raised on Labour's NEC, where trade union votes should support the TAs. Threats of repudiation from the NEC could lead to councillors facing disciplinary action.

## UKIP

**Certainly action from the Labour Party outside of the Derby Council is crucial.**

On the last lobby of the council, a UKIP councillor was working the crowds claiming that UKIP was the workers' friend and recruiting. A number of the TAs admit to having joined UKIP!

UKIP tried the same in Durham when the successful TA dispute was live there. Action was taken by trade unions there including the NUM, and UKIP were chased off. The same is needed in Derby.

Many Unison activists argue that the attack on TA jobs by the council

will be a catastrophe for Labour locally. The TA action is very visible and very popular. There are friendly relationships with an organised parents' group who know who is responsible for this dispute. Labour voters have dropped away in Derby dramatically as the right wing dominate. They are undoubtedly dismayed by a nominally left wing Party nationally that is confronting union members and low paid workers locally.

But the dispute really raises questions about Labour's handling of cuts to local government funding. Derby Council is implementing the cuts — incompetently, insensitively and confrontationally. But all local government cuts affect workers. They reduce jobs. They hold down pay and damage services.

**Ultimately unless Labour can oppose them instead of implementing them, not only will workers suffer but so will Labour as votes fragment to the left or more likely to the right and UKIP.**

# Tube station staff strike for jobs

By Ollie Moore

**Station staff on London Underground will strike again on 5-6 and 7-8 February, in selective strikes aimed at impacting peak-time travel.**

The rush-hour strikes follow a walkout on 8-9 January, which saw most central London stations completely shut down.

Workers are demanding a reversal to a job cuts programme that has seen nearly 1,000 frontline posts axed, as well as a return to permanent staffing of all station control rooms. The RMT union says that de-staffing of control rooms has either caused or exacerbated a number of recent safety incidents at Canning Town and North Greenwich.

RMT is also demanding the consolidation of the newly-created "Customer Service Assistant 2" grade, paid £7,000 less than existing CSAs, into the "CSA1" grade. The union argues that the new grade creates a two-tier workforce, paid significantly different wages for doing similar work. The union also wants London Underground's

ticket office closures reversed.

London Underground's latest offer to the RMT makes a number of significant concessions, including a promise to reinstate 325 of the jobs cuts. However, many union reps and activists feel it still falls short.

A supporter of the rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* told *Solidarity*: "That the company has moved this far is a testament to the success of our ongoing overtime ban and our recent strike."

"The lesson is: industrial pres-

sure wins concessions. So it stands to reason that, if we apply more pressure, we'll get more concessions." The leadership of smaller Tube union TSSA, which is still formally involved in the dispute, had advocated suspending its previous strikes following an earlier offer from LU, but was forced into u-turn following a revolt by workplace reps.

**RMT also planned a public rally in support of the dispute in central London on Wednesday 1 December.**

## Tube drivers strike

By Ollie Moore

**Drivers on London Underground's Central Line struck on 25-26 January, in an attempt to stop the forced displacements of several drivers in depots at the east end of the line to other depots, including in west London.**

The strike, which RMT union activists described as "totally solid", severely impacted the Central Line train service.

Aslef, a driver-only union which has a slight majority membership amongst Tube drivers, is also now balloting its members at the affected Central Line depots for strikes over the same issue.

# Southern dispute continues

By Ollie Moore

RMT members on Southern rail struck again on 23 January, but a planned three-day strike by Aslef drivers on Southern was called off.

The two unions are fighting the imposition of "Driver Only Operation" (DOO), a plan to make the driver the only safety-critical member of staff on board, reducing the role of the guard to that of an "on-board supervisor". Unions argue that DOO is less safe, and that the move is a prelude to removing the second member of staff altogether.

Aslef's leaders have begun extensive negotiations with Southern bosses, brokered by the TUC, but RMT, which represents the guards, has been effectively frozen out of the talks. The union has written to the TUC to ask why it is dividing the workforce by helping facilitate Aslef-only talks.

Meanwhile, a report in the *Rail Business Intelligence* magazine re-



vealed that the Department for Transport is considering a temporary nationalisation of Southern's routes, to prepare it for re-privatisation under a new franchise operator.

**A rail worker told *Solidarity*: "The immediate industrial solution to the dispute is for GTR [the parent company which runs Southern] to commit to a second safety-critical member of staff on all trains. The long-term political solution is real public ownership of the railways."**

# Ferry workers strike for safety

By Charlotte Zalens

**Workers at the Woolwich ferry, London, are staging a series of twelve strikes, each 24 hours, over a culture of bullying and sexual harassment, and health and safety concerns.**

The first strike was on Friday 27 January with a second planned for Friday 3 February.

The dispute escalated on Saturday 28 January when an ambulance had to be called for an engineer who collapsed while at work after inhaling fumes in the engine room of one of the boats a day after bosses emailed workers instructing



them to continue working in the engine room despite concerns.

**Further strikes are planned for 3 February; 10 February; 17 February; 24 February; 3 March; 10 March; 17 March; 24 March; 31 March; 7 April; and 14 April.**

# BA cabin crew set more strikes

By Gemma Short

**"Mixed fleet" cabin crew at BA will strike for six more days in their ongoing dispute over low pay.**

The workers will strike on 5, 6, 7 and 9, 10, 11 February. In the previous two strikes planes were grounded and BA has reportedly

spent millions of pounds attempting to mitigate the strike. The workers' union Unite argues that this shows BA has money to use, but they won't use it to improve workers' poverty pay.

**Unite has sent a letter to BA urging the airline to rejoin negotiations and make a decent pay offer.**

# King's cleaners strike for jobs

By Peggy Carter

**Cleaners at King's College London struck on 26 and 27 January. The cleaners, outsourced to Ser-**

vest, are fighting a reduction in working hours and job cuts.

**50 academics at the university have signed a letter supporting the cleaners' struggle.**





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## Corbyn is wrong on voting for May's Article 50

By Martin Thomas

**Jeremy Corbyn's decision (26 January 2017) to impose a three-line whip on Labour MPs to vote for Theresa May's Brexit Article 50 bill is wrong and destructive.**

The 23 June referendum did not create any mandate or moral obligation to endorse or facilitate Theresa May's Tory, "hard-Brexit", anti-immigrant version of quitting the European Union.

May has made it clear that the Tories will put limiting freedom of movement for workers first; will quit the single market; and also will largely quit the EU customs union (broader than the single market: it also includes Turkey, for example). Giving May the go-ahead is helping the Tories to pursue that agenda.

Back on 5 November Corbyn told the Sunday Mirror that Labour would vote in Parliament against triggering "Article 50" unless the Tory government agreed to Labour's "Brexit bottom line".

Corbyn stated the "bottom line" as continued UK membership of the "single market", within which customs duties and checks are abolished and trade regulations are uniform.

Better if he had said that the bottom line is freedom of movement in Europe — the freedom of EU-origin workers in Britain to stay here securely, for their friends and compatriots to join them, and for

British people to work, live, or study in other EU countries with almost citizens' rights, including such entitlements as public health care.

Since all sides more or less concede that Britain cannot stay in the "single market" without also continuing freedom of movement, it came to much the same thing.

Then Labour's right-wing deputy leader Tom Watson intervened to say that Labour would put "single-market" amendments, but would vote for "Article 50" regardless.

### RIGHT

**Corbyn went quiet and evidently deferred to Watson and to the bulk of the Labour right.**

They argue that Labour must placate anti-immigrant sentiment by backing May on Article 50. They are ready to support May whatever version of Brexit she pushes.

The argument for voting for Article 50 in order to placate anti-immigrant-minded Labour voters is shameful and shoddy. Labour politics should be about establishing socialist and democratic principles and then convincing and mobilising people, not about triangulating.

In any case, about 70% of Labour's electorate voted Remain: support for May will push them away from Labour. Voters who are strongly anti-EU and strongly anti-immigrant will not be won over by the Labour support for Article 50.

The way to stop such voters going to Ukip or such is not to signal nervously that Labour is sort-of, partly, equivocally, queasily, in line with the Ukip-type ideas which they hold or play with, but to convince them on this and other issues with an internationalist and socialist message.

Some Labour right-wingers, especially in constituencies with strong Remain votes, have come out against Article 50. Some, like Meg Hillier, have used the issue to attack Corbyn.

Some of the left then argues that the opposition to Article 50, and the resignations from the Shadow Cabinet of Tulip Siddiq and Jo Stevens, are just (or mainly) a cooked-up right-wing plot.

This is false. Most of the Labour right wing is with Watson. Right-wingers like Dan Jarvis have supported Corbyn on the issue! Tulip Siddiq and Jo Stevens, are "soft-left", not hard-right Corbyn-haters.

In any case, there is a substantive issue here. Supporting the Tories on Article 50 is not left-wing, whoever does it.

Owen Jones wrote in the *Guardian* (19 January): "Jeremy



Corbyn has no choice but to back article 50". Paul Mason tweeted (also 19 January) that Labour should back Article 50: "Corbyn here is ahead of many metropolitan liberals/ left still in denial and hoping Brexit will not happen. Hard place to be but right".

### STALINIST

**It is a reasonable suspicion that backroom people such as Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray who (like Tom Watson) have a Stalinist background will have pushed in the same direction.**

This only proves that Stalinist politics, and concessions to Stalinist politics, are not left-wing.

Protests like the anti-Brexit demonstration planned for 25 March, however, are left-wing, by virtue of their basic stance for free movement and lower barriers between countries, even if many of the protesters go no further than liberal principles. (A few of them may also hold to the "pro-Europe because that's good for British business profits" line which dominated the Remain airwaves before 23 June. Not many, though: most of those who take that line have now settled in to get the best wriggle they can within Brexit).

**Constituency Labour Parties, unions, and Momentum groups should raise an outcry against support for May's Article 50.**

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## Contact us

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Write to us: The editor  
(Cathy Nugent), 20E Tower  
Workshops, Riley Road, London,  
SE1 3DG

Solidarity editorial:  
Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent  
(editor), Gemma Short, and  
Martin Thomas

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