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Protestors in Wokingham highlighting the area's potential £4158 cut per pupil by 2020

WORSE SCHOOL CUTS THAN THATCHER

Between now and 2020 98% of schools will see a real terms cut in their funding, whereas the NUT initially thought it would be 92%.

The average primary school will see a reduction of £87,117 (£339 per pupil). The average secondary school will have its budget reduced by £405,611 (£477 per pupil) whereas the NUT had originally predicted £290,228 (£365 per pupil). (Currently £4,900 is allotted to each primary school pupil and £6,300 per secondary school pupil.)

These cuts come with budgets already shrinking.

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Cinema workers strike again



Workers at four Picturehouse cinemas in London struck on Saturday 25 February.

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Labour at a crossroads



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On the eve of revolution



Paul Hampton reviews *Trotsky in New York 1917: A Radical on the Eve of Revolution* by Kenneth Ackerman.

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Join Labour!

The dangers of Stalinism in the Labour Party

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Spain: Podemos split on strategy

Last month Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias won an internal leadership contest against faction opponent Íñigo Errejón. A temporary truce has now been declared.

The following extract from an article by Eoghan Gilmartin, written before the vote, explains the background and is reproduced from Jacobin online magazine.

At the core of the dispute [was] the question of how Podemos, a party that traces its origins back to the indignados movement, should approach its new role as a force in the country's political institutions.

The divisions are particularly pointed on the subject of relations with the center-left Socialist Party (PSOE).

Errejón prioritises "constructive" engagement in the hope of reaching out to a wider range of voters than

their young, urban base. He views the party's failure to achieve a sorpasso [overtaking] of PSOE in the second elections last June as proof that the idea of Podemos as an "iconoclastic party," railing against the establishment, has reached its limit.

If the party is to grow, Errejón argues, it has to demonstrate that it can operate as an effective institutional force capable of "governing a different Spain." As he put it: "the powerful already fear us — this is not the challenge. It is to seduce those who are suffering but don't trust us."

In contrast, Iglesias believes that the last year of political deadlock has revealed a Socialist leadership incapable of breaking from the "extreme centre."

Both are in agreement that Podemos should continue to be a "transversal" force, capable of appealing to a wide social spectrum, but Iglesias cautions against this becoming a rationale for Podemos to abandon its opposition to the

Spanish regime.

Differences between the two leaders first flared in early 2016. December's elections had swept away Spain's old two-party system, with the combined vote of the Socialists and the conservative PP collapsing from 84 percent in 2008 to 41 percent seven years later.

Podemos's post-electoral stance was that it would only accept a coalition agreement of the left. This would have included a firm break with austerity and the Spanish state's subordination to EU budget rules as well as providing a form of popular consultation on Catalan independence.

However, faced with strong internal opposition, as well as explicit threats from his party's corporate allies, then-Socialist leader Pedro Sánchez rejected the left option. After reaching a surprise coalition agreement with the smaller center-right party Ciudadanos, Sánchez insisted that negotiations with Podemos would be limited to a centrist pact.

PRESSURE

As pressure mounted from the mainstream media for Podemos to find some agreement to end the ongoing political stasis, differences within the party's leadership began to emerge.

Iglesias defended the party's original line but Errejón emphasized the threat of blame being attributed to Podemos for the unprecedented political deadlock — he supported a more minimal agreement being reached to allow PSOE to govern alone but with Podemos's support.

Iglesias rejected his deputy's compromise, arguing that any accord for minority government would leave Podemos with little leverage. The party's recent experience in Extremadura, where the Socialists sidelined Podemos and pushed through their proposals with the abstention of the Popular Party, was cited as an example.

Errejón and his allies, frustrated at Iglesias's inflexibility, were infuriated at the antagonistic stance he took in the parliamentary debate on a PSOE government. This display, they argued, had allowed the media to present Iglesias as a demagogue uninterested in serious institutional engagement.



Winner: Pablo Iglesias

Errejón views Iglesias's recent turn to the left, with its confrontational stance towards PSOE and renewed focus on social resistance, as further alienating moderate voters.

His supporters fear that the party will become a "noisy minority" which forcefully opposes austerity but cannot actually earn the trust of the Spanish people to govern. He reminded Iglesias in a recent open letter that Podemos's stated ambition since its foundation has been to win power.

It was also a project posited on a particular moment. With the political mainstream mired in corruption scandals and unable to offer a credible response to the social crisis, its initial cadre believed there was a historic opportunity to build a progressive electoral majority.

In Errejón's view this committed the party to a pragmatic strategy: navigating the narrow path between "conformism and marginality."

This was the thinking behind Podemos's much-discussed move away from the traditional language of the radical left. Instead of talking in class terms, the party followed the indignados by framing their discourse around a series of populist oppositions: the defence of the people against the political class (la casta), of democracy against the oligarchy, and of the rights of the social majority against the privileged.

The idea was to turn electoral politics into a clear choice between a continuation of the old regime and a new, insurgent politics representing the spirit and energy of 15-M.

Errejón believes Podemos needs a softer image, to focus less on attacking its opponents and much more "on setting out its constructive position." Podemos under Errejón would talk not only about how it governs differently to the established parties but how it governs more effectively.

At a national level, Errejón views the new minority PP government propped up by PSOE as providing Podemos with an opportunity to set the agenda... he wants the party to take the initiative, proposing a series of concrete progressive measures that the Socialists would find it difficult not to support. Together they have already passed Podemos-drafted legislation on extending parental leave and raising the minimum wage.

PABLISMO

Pablo Iglesias and his supporters argue that this institutional route is, to a large degree, blocked for Podemos at the moment.

Having abstained in the vote on Rajoy's investiture in October, PSOE reached an agreement with PP on further reducing the limit on government spending in 2017 by €5 billion. They are expected to at least abstain on a full austerity budget in May. For Iglesias, this is not a weak minority government but a grand coalition in disguise.

Furthermore, he believes that this arrangement will allow the current government to see out most of its term. Within this context it makes little sense to centre the party's activity on the institutional sphere.

Referencing Gramsci, Iglesias claims Podemos's priority has to be to construct trenches and fortifications in civil society so as to become a militant organisation capable of confronting the power of elites through mass social resistance.

The party's grassroots campaign Vamos! has brought thousands onto the streets in recent months on the issue of energy poverty, gaining media attention for an issue no other party wants to touch.

Vamos! also allows for a reorientation of public debate back to the polarizing social issues that gave Podemos's populism its original emotional force.

• www.jacobinmag.com

"Blair's babies"

By Charlotte Zalens

Is the right-wing surge represented by Trump, Brexit, and various right-wing movements across Europe part of a trend?

It's usual to presume that the young are to the left of their elders, and in some ways this is still true. But recent studies of social attitudes appear to show that those who came of age during the period that Tony Blair was in power (people now aged between 27-40) are more right-wing than those who came of age under Thatcher (now aged between 41-58), who themselves are further to the right than the preceding generation.

A recent overview of data from social attitudes surveys from 1985-2012 reveals that it is not a "uniform right-wingness" (Grasso et al, 2017). "Blair's babies" are more socially liberal (pro-LGBT+ rights, women's equality, etc.) but more "consumerist and individualistic".

In short, people became more Thatcherite well after Thatcher left power, with a sharp increase in negative attitudes towards the benefits system, the unemployed, and the welfare state. (The fact that younger people tend to be more socially liberal may explain why the Brexit vote correlates overwhelmingly with age — younger people are just not convinced about placing borders between people, but it doesn't necessarily mean they think a borderless Europe should be more socialistic.)

When a poll was conducted in 1989 asking participants if they preferred a "mostly socialist or

mostly capitalist" country, socialism won 47% to 39%. When asked if they would prefer a society that "emphasises the social and collective provision of welfare" or one "where the individual is encouraged to look after himself", the former won by an even bigger margin of 54% to 40%.

Thatcher hadn't taken people with her. Blairism did the job of cementing her ideology. When the question on the provision of welfare was asked again in 2009, welfare lost narrowly to individualism, 47% to 49%.

The Grasso researchers call the change "political socialisation"; ideas on what is acceptable are shaped by the political context. If you cut welfare and target those using benefits, people are more likely to have negative attitudes to benefit recipients.

But the key thing is that right-wing views are not inevitable. People's ideas can be challenged and changed. The same study posits the idea that periods of higher political "contestation" results in a less homogenised shift in ideas. They argue that neoliberalism became normalised, accepted as the "rules of the game", and when there was less contest of these ideas there was a decisive right-ward shift.

So when you hear Labour right-wingers argue that we have to appeal to what people think, remember that people weren't largely sold on attacking the welfare state until Blair carried through what Thatcher had started!

• Grasso et al study can be found here: bit.ly/2m92gYX

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Worse school cuts than Thatcher

By Patrick Murphy, NUT Executive (p.c.) and Richard Driver (north London teacher)

The Government's claim that there is no school funding crisis seems, finally, to be losing all credibility.

In December the NUT launched a website (www.schoolcuts.org.uk) which allows anyone in England or Wales to enter their postcode and identify instantly the likely funding losses faced by their local schools in the next three years and how many teachers would need to be removed to meet those cuts. The Tories tried to dismiss the NUT's figures, claiming that they planned to increase spending on education and that it was higher than under any other government.

They also slammed the union for publishing estimates of school spending before details of a new national funding formula had been announced. All of this, however, was a smokescreen. The NUT's calculation of the extra costs faced by schools was not, and could not be, effectively challenged as it was based on government figures for inflation amongst other costs. Their claims about the impact of the new funding formula turned out to have underestimated rather than exaggerated the problem.

The reality is that, between now and 2020, 98% of schools will see a real terms cut in their funding, whereas the NUT initially thought it would be 92%. The average primary school will see a reduction of £87,117 (£339 per pupil). The average secondary school will have their budget reduced by £405,611 (£477 per pupil) whereas the NUT had originally predicted £290,228 (£365 per pupil). (Currently £4,900 is allotted to each primary school pupil and £6,300 per secondary school pupil.)

These cuts come with budgets already shrinking. Though the Conservative party claimed in 2015 that education funding would be protected, this promise only referred to the dedicated schools grant (the per-pupil funding which is now being cut). Schools have seen cuts to support like the Education Services Grant, which funded school development through local authorities.

The reduction in per-pupil funding will be compounded by the Tories' new national funding formula, which will re-distribute the smaller pot of money away from inner-city schools towards underfunded rural schools. In London schools will lose up to £500 per pupil, yet rural schools will not receive enough money to make up for cuts to the dedicated schools grant.

The cuts will have an even worse impact in Further Education. Whereas per-pupil funding rose for primary and secondary schools in the last 20 years, per-pupil funding for FE students fell and is no higher than it was almost 30 years ago. Further cuts to FE budgets will seriously damage 16-18 education.

There a number of reasons for the huge scale of this problem. The government want the public to focus only on one figure, which is the cash spent per pupil. Under their spending plans they promise that per pupil funding will be maintained in cash terms during this Parliament. That's a cut in real terms, however, as there is no inflation-proofing. The Institute for Fiscal Studies say inflation will be 8% over the lifetime of this Parliament. That 8% real terms cut is, however, only one aspect of the problem. To understand the scale of underfunding it is essential to look also at the increased costs all schools will face too.

FUNDING

Employers' NI contributions have increased with no additional funding.

Under the new pensions arrangements employers' pension contributions increased also with no additional funding. Just as all of these pressures kick in, a new National Funding Formula will be introduced in April 2018 (changed from 2017). The model favoured by the Tories has been promoted by a group of shire counties (the f40 group) which would redistribute the existing funding away from areas of greatest need and deprivation and towards areas of affluence. Depending on whether there is a minimum funding guarantee, this will mean cuts of between 15-25% from April 2018.

With the headteacher organisations, the National Governors Association and, recently, the National Audit Office joining the ranks of those warning of a crisis, the government's claim that things have never been better lies in tatters. The NAO warned that schools would have to find £3 billion in savings by 2019-20. The Institute for Fiscal Studies warned this week that per pupil spending would by that time have fallen by 6.5% in real terms.

These will be the first real term cuts in school funding in over 20 years. The fact that there is a funding crisis looming is no longer in serious doubt. What isn't clear is how effective the response will be.

The last time we saw cuts like that, also under a Conservative government, they provoked a mass anti-cuts campaign led by parents. The Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE) put the issue at the heart of community politics across



Labour Party campaigners in Lewisham

the country and helped end 18 years of Tory rule. In proportion, the planned cuts now are bigger than they were then or in the 1980s. It is good that there is a growing awareness of the funding crisis that lies ahead but it is only a start. The revival of a campaign like FACE backed up by trade union action to defend jobs and a clear Labour commitment to invest in education is the least that we need if we are to defend and improve education funding.

The far-reaching reform that is needed in UK schools, to move away from a data-driven state of permanent testing towards teaching and learning with the personal growth and self-fulfilment of students at its heart, demands good levels of funding, paid for by society's richest.

Lewisham schools fight

By a Lewisham teacher

Teachers at Forest Hill School in Lewisham are balloting for strikes after management proposed huge job cuts as the solution to a hole in the school's budget.

After the sudden and seemingly out of the blue appearance of a £1 million shortfall, Lewisham council proposed a so-called "rescue package" which includes a £1.3 million reduction in the wages bill!

The plan for strikes is part of a push by Lewisham NUT to build a community campaign around the school involving parents, students and the local Labour Party, and part of a wider fight by Lewisham teachers against massive education cuts which look likely across the borough. Lewisham Momentum is actively involved in building these campaigns.

As school cuts loom across the country, we hope Lewisham will provide some inspiration to other campaigns, as we did during the successful anti-academisation strikes and community campaign in 2015.

Government attack PiP ruling

By Rosalind Robson

The government wants to reverse the effects of a court ruling which expands the number of people who can claim Personal Independence Payments (PiP).

PiP is a non-means tested benefit, meant to provide extra money to people living with serious illnesses, disability or a mental health condition.

A recent tribunal ruling had said that claimants with psychological problems who cannot travel without help must be treated like those who are blind.

Announcing the government's plan, No. 10 aide George Freeman said benefits should go to the "really disabled people". Clearly Freeman doesn't know what PiP is — a benefit for people with serious conditions who need help with a variety of daily tasks. It is not targeted only at disabled.

Referring to the court ruling that has annoyed the government, George Freeman had said those "taking pills at home, who suffer from anxiety" should not receive Personal Independence Payments. Who is he to know whether someone's anxiety is severe enough to need help for everyday tasks? Is he a doctor?

No, but in case you are in any doubt that the man lacks empathy, Forman tweeted: "Having experi-

enced myself traumatic anxiety as a child carer living w alcohol I know all too well the pain anxiety + depression causes..."

Fair enough the man has direct experience of living with a panic disorder (agoraphobia, PTSD, panic attacks) which may stop you from travelling on public transport or going out of the house. So why object to people with these sorts of conditions getting PiP?

Could it be that these conditions are very common? — around 2% of the population will be affected by a panic disorder at some point in their lives.

And could it be that the government is trying to cut the amount spent on PiP and other benefits and don't want to spend a potential £3.6 billion on people with any such condition, no matter how serious it might be?

Could it be that the government thinks that those with mental health problems are particularly vulnerable, less likely to object to cuts, and less likely to see through the tortuous and often unjust process of claiming benefits?

Could it be that the government wants to reduce the numbers claiming benefits to the lowest possible numbers, or as they like to put it "those who face the greatest barrier to living independent lives?"

Labour has rightly committed to reverse these changes.

Business as usual at Met

By Gemma Short

The new head of the Met Police, Cressida Dick, is no departure from tradition for the police.

Dick was the designated senior officer in the control room in charge of deciding if a special shoot-to-kill policy was needed on the day that Jean Charles de Menezes was shot and killed in 2005.

De Menezes was an innocent man who was shot six times when trying to board a train at Stockwell tube station in south London. A 2007 inquiry found that Dick was

not personally responsible but found a catalogue of failings. Yet Dick shows her own colours when in the inquest she stated "if you ask me whether I think anybody did anything wrong or unreasonable on the operation, I don't think they did."

In a letter opposing the appointment of Dick the de Menezes family said "We have serious concerns about such an appointment and the signal it sends to the people of London."

Clearly it is business as usual for the Met Police.

Harsh immigration income rule

By Charlotte Zalens

On Wednesday 22 February the Supreme Court ruled that the government can impose a £18,600 income limit for UK citizens to bring their non-EU spouses into Britain.

Though the Court branded the income limit "particularly harsh", chastised the Home Office for not taking its legal duties in regards to children, and recognised that the limit had caused hardship for thousands it found that "the minimum income threshold is accepted in

principle".

41% of the British working population, rising to 55% of working women, would be excluded from bringing a non-EU spouse to Britain under the income limit by income levels in 2015. The threshold rises to £22,400 if there is one or more non-EU born children in the family. Yet the non-EU spouse's potential income is not allowed to be taken into account, nor the income of the extended family.

Essentially if you are rich you can keep your family together, if you are poor you can't.

The dangers of Stalinism in Labour

24 September 2016 gave me a condensed snapshot of the problems which are now generating unease among Jeremy Corbyn's supporters in the Labour Party.

It was the opening day of Labour Party conference. A fringe event sponsored by the pro-Corbyn movement Momentum was just setting up. I knew already that the organisers of the event, The World Transformed, had banned stalls inside the meeting place for left-Labour newspapers and groups.

We set up a stall for *Solidarity* and Workers' Liberty on the pavement outside the event. We were asked by stewards to move across the road. They were worried about it "looking bad" that there were Trotskyists nearby.

Eventually they backed down. But inside, the Communist Party of Britain's paper, the *Morning Star*, was featured on the event's publicity as a sponsor, and the *Morning Star* was officially promoted inside the event.

At the Labour Party conference itself, just down the road, neither Corbyn's office nor the Momentum office were trying to use the political "capital" gained by Corbyn's second Labour-leader election victory to help the great influx of left-minded new Labour members get left-wing policies through the 2016 conference. They made no effort to get Trident renewal onto the conference floor. Where that conference did pass left-wing policies — on the NHS — the Corbyn office has not taken them up.

Jeremy Corbyn had been re-elected leader with an increased majority, 313,209 votes or 61.8%, from a Labour Party membership which has grown now to 540,000 from a demoralised and mostly inactive rump of 150,000 before the 2010 election. Yet a raft of anti-democratic rule changes had been bounced through Labour's National Execu-

tive by the right wing and were then bounced through a conference which was more right-dominated than any since 2009.

Labour's affiliated unions had officially agreed to support some timid but useful democratic changes to Labour Party structures. The Corbyn leadership never took them up on it.

The Corbyn office has done nothing to help integrate the hundreds of thousands of new Labour Party members into activity. Some 618 Labour Party members, many of them people who had remained active without reprisals in the Blair or Brown years, were "auto-excluded" (no hearing, no appeal) during the second leadership campaign, on suspicion of left-wing connections, and thousands suspended.

Neither the Corbyn office nor (despite Momentum mandates) the Momentum office opposed the purge. Instead, in January, the Momentum office panicked about the danger of Momentum itself being purged, and respond by attacking the left.

The Labour Party has called no national demonstrations. It has not even mobilised seriously for the NHS demonstration on 4 March.

POLLS

According to the polls now, the Tories now have a 48% to 10% lead over Labour among over-65s; but Corbyn's Labour still has two-and-a-half times more support than the Tories among 18-24 year olds.

Even without changing Blair-era rules, the Corbyn leadership could do a lot to organise and consolidate that support by building up real local Young Labour groups. It has done nothing.

Corbyn and McDonnell were forced to



The *Morning Star* recently described the near-total destruction of Aleppo by the Assad regime as a "liberation".

tread with care when Corbyn was first elected. The Parliamentary Labour Party was, and is, right-wing; so is the Labour Party office machine. Established Labour conference policies gave them a little, but not much, to go on. The trouble now is that, increasingly, they are not pushing the envelope, but letting the envelope push them.

The Corbyn Leader's Office talks of socialism less than did the feeble Ed Miliband, who in 2013 claimed he was "bringing back socialism". The "ten pledges" it drafted for Corbyn in his second leadership contest, and the "re-launch" policies briefly splashed in January, go little beyond what Miliband said, and increasingly are mumbled rather than shouted.

The political root of this drift is what was symbolised by the promotion of the *Morning Star* at the September 2016 event: Stalinism.

In July 2015 we wrote of Corbyn: "He has been a consistent rebel in Parliament against the Labour leadership. His local record of support for workers' and community struggles, including against local Labour council administrations, is excellent.

"But Jeremy Corbyn's broader politics have changed. Today he writes regularly for the *Morning Star*, the paper linked to the Communist Party of Britain, which bills him as 'a friend of the Star'.

"People voting for Corbyn for Labour leader will be voting to support battles against cuts, to solidarise with immigrants, and to uphold the right to strike.

"That's good. But to build something solid out of it, we also need broader political ideas. And, there, the ideas and the spirit of the *Morning Star* will undermine us..." (*Solidarity* 370, 3 July 2015).

Corbyn's Leader's Office is dominated by the former *Guardian* journalist Seumas Milne and by people close to Andrew Murray, chief of staff of the Unite union. Milne's political formation was in the Stalinist sect "Straight Left".

"Another Straight Lifter was Andrew Murray... Milne, like Murray, is still a Stalinist. Writing for the *Guardian*, as he has done for many years, he puts his views in urbane double-negative form, but he is still a Stalinist... Operators used to snuggling into the established political and media machines, ideologically imbued with and trained over decades in 'top-down' politics, will not serve

Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell, and us well in opening up and revitalising the Labour Party" (*Solidarity* 382, 28 October 2015).

In December 2016 Momentum voted to call a democratic conference. In preparation for a 10 January coup in which they would annul the conference and all Momentum's elected structures, Momentum officials engineered a media storm. We commented: "In the media storm... the great warehouse of Stalinist slurs against Trotskyists has been called into use..." (*Solidarity* 425, 9 December 2016).

DECADES

Stalinist ideas were drilled into swathes of labour movements and the left in decades when activists could see the USSR (or Cuba, China, Albania) as practical examples of the alternative to capitalism.

Today we have a more demoralised Stalinists and Stalinoids: while sometimes loud in denunciation of Tory misdeeds, they generally see no further in positive policy than what were only stepping stones for Stalinism in its heyday: economic nationalism, bureaucratic state-directed economic development...

The Article 50 fiasco, and the Labour leaders' waffle about a "People's Brexit", cannot but have been shaped by nationalist anti-EU prejudices in the Stalinist-influenced left.

Stalinist bureaucratic manipulation fits with the Blairite heritage: "policy development" means not debate in the rank and file leading up to conference decisions, but formulas handed down by clever people in the Leader's Office. The office's response to the Copeland by-election has been to get another "Straight Left" old-timer, Steve Howell, seconded from the PR company he now owns.

Articles by Christine Shawcroft and Jon Lansman have shown that the motive for the 10 January coup in Momentum was nothing to do with the virtues of online plebiscites (which the post-coup Momentum office will use little). It was about blocking the "hard left", the "Trotskyists".

The pressures and blockages on the left-wing Labour leadership cannot be defeated by panic-stricken manipulations, but only by helping the new left-wing members to organise, mobilise, debate, learn, and win democratic control. To do that we must combat the influence of Stalinism and semi-Stalinism.

Nuclear holds back renewables

LETTER

Martin Thomas (*Solidarity* 230) is right to contribute further nuance to our thinking on the nuclear question.

Yet he seems to miss our basic point: we are unconvinced that the left should positively advocate a "solution" which is known to cause further problems through its radioactive byproduct, carries unique risks, and still contributes to carbon emissions. Yes, as Luke Hardy states, risks can be minimised — but they are still risks which we could choose to avoid altogether. We are not in favour of blanket opposition; we are in favour of testing and developing a diversity of technologies. We are also for the rights and livelihoods of those at Sellafeld and elsewhere at the same time as acknowledging and opposing the government's bias in favour of new nuclear, which comes alongside continuing support for fossil fuel (predominantly gas) production and underfunding of renewables.

We understand that renewables in their present form are equally "capitalist" as nuclear. What is decisive is the government's bias against them. Indeed its heavily pro-gas and fracking agenda is tantamount to climate change denial. Their plans for nuclear power do not change this. (And surely Martin must see the difference between capitalism as a system of production, and the current Tory state administration, which mediates between different interests of frac-

tions of capital). As a movement we need to respond aggressively to the government's claim that it is reducing emissions through a planned expansion of nuclear. The only way we can coherently do so is by understanding that this initiative is not only both unnecessary and totally insufficient, but that it actually holds back the development of genuinely sustainable and ecologically balanced energy systems. In other words we should neither advocate nuclear expansion (the case made by Luke and backed up by Martin) nor solely oppose it, but counterpose it with a demand for serious investment in renewable research and deployment.

We should remember too that the left and labour movement's ability to resolve the question is constrained by the nation state. The UK has huge capacity for generation through hydroelectric and wind power, and less so for solar. But international, collectively owned renewables have the capabilities to meet the growing energy demand across the globe. For example the Noor 1 solar farm in Morocco, which is scheduled for completion in 2020, is predicted to meet the needs of its host state entirely.

The rest of Africa and continental Europe could be connected to further large scale solar projects in the Sahara — but such co-operation requires a politics beyond that of competing national economies and energy for profit.

Neil Laker and Mike Zubrowski

A socialist Labour Party can win!



Labour needs to fight on clear, unapologetic, socialist policies

What does victory for Labour in the Stoke by-election mean for the Party's strategy after Brexit?

Is defeat in the Copeland by-election down to Corbyn's "weak" leadership and he should consider standing down? Those are the discussions dominating the media and occupying Labour's right wing. They should also, in a different way, be our concerns.

In the first place we should resist the idea that Labour's fortunes, respectable (as in Stoke) or poor (as in Copeland), are down to Corbyn's personality. Such views do not deal with the political situation. Sadiq Khan has probably articulated the Labour right's current position — that there is no appetite for a leadership election. But that does not mean they are not on the look out for potential challengers and successors for the future. Any plan, from the left, to replace Corbyn with a more "media friendly" Angela Rayner, Rebecca Long Bailey or Clive Lewis is not a solution. There is no guarantee that any of those people would seek to uphold promises made by the Corbyn leadership on for example, nationalisation and capping high pay.

The major failing of the Corbyn leadership is a lack of clarity over Labour's direction. Corbyn may well have been drowned out by right-wing MPs and right-wing papers, fudging his actual views on nuclear power, but Corbyn should have been clearer in Copeland that, regardless of his views on nu-

clear power, he will fight to keep jobs in the constituency. He need to call for a labour movement response to the pension deficit and other threats of jobs cuts.

Of course the press — from the *Guardian* to the *Sun* — are lined up against a Corbyn-led Labour Party. Any radical and left-wing Labour leader will be vilified by the press. If Corbyn were to become Prime Minister the furore would be even worse. That's why Corbyn needs to be much clearer, sharper and more militant on policy.

Is it right to criticise Corbyn's performance from this point of view? Absolutely. It is essential if we are to build a labour movement that is capable of achieving even some of Corbyn's more modest goals, and certainly if we are to go beyond them.

If Corbyn resigns tomorrow, Labour's membership would remain four times the size it was before Corbyn was elected. It will remain much more left-wing. But the Labour Party's functioning has not changed significantly since the days of Miliband, or even Blair.

The current leadership, like their predecessors, conceive of policy as something issued by clever people in an office. Take for instance the supposed "red lines" on Brexit. Those "red lines" might have meant something if there had been a local, street-level campaign around these issues; a call to members — new or old — to organise street stalls

and public meetings and other activity around these issues.

Or to take another example. Labour Party conference passed policy on the NHS which included calling for an NHS which is "publicly funded, owned, accountable", which is free "including prescriptions, dentistry, optical care" and "an end to NHS privatisation".

Throughout the recent crisis in social care none of these policies were drawn on or used to sharpen Labour's stance against the Tories. A weak call for more investment was all that we heard.

TOP-DOWN

Yet for many years MPs like Corbyn and McDonnell rightly argued that the Labour leadership must take conference delegate decision-making as sovereign, as it is in most other areas of the labour movement.

Now we see a continuance of a top-down bureaucratic approach both to policy-making and the limited campaigns Labour has run. If Labour's political machine is being obstructive on these issues, then both Corbyn and McDonnell should be prepared to go over its head. Perfunctory, top-down approaches are redolent of other political traditions as well as for right-wing social democracy; it is the norm for Stalinism. Unfortunately, increasingly, that is becoming too evident in the politics of Corbyn's office and Corbyn himself.

The Labour left must push forward a positive democratic organisational agenda and rapidly. Both McDonnell and Corbyn have privately made supportive noise for members who have been expelled, auto-excluded and suspended with no right of appeal. Those comments need to be made publicly and they should be at the forefront of supporting the left and the newly engaged activists in winning over the party at a rank-and-file level.

The left needs to redouble efforts to turn local Labour Parties into active campaigning organisations that discuss and debate politics, going beyond either routinism or blandly supporting the leadership. The right have successfully maintained or gained control of London Young Labour and LGBT Labour, with the left, including our supporters and friends, just not well enough organised.

For some of the new activists, and within the Momentum leadership and office, there is an attitude of giving up when the situation becomes more difficult or when you encounter resistance from the right. There is also a hard faction of Stalinists in Momentum who focus on promoting themselves and witch-hunting Trotskyists and the hard left. A lack of experience among many of the younger activists breeds disbelief in the idea that people will commit to anything other than what is made easy for them. We need to counter the idea that passive clicktivism is the best we can hope for.

There are many issues that left need to urgently mobilise around in our local Labour parties and Momentum groups: from the NHS crisis to solidarity with migrants, but the drastic cuts to school budgets is a campaign that the Labour left could take up in every ward across the country. Every primary school and every secondary school face cuts.

A vibrant energetic campaign, linking up with teachers and parents, would help to revive local labour movements. It has the potential to win and to make Labour's fortunes depend, not on the vicissitudes of the media, but on the strength of its politics.

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The revolution begins

TROTSKY'S RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



Continuing a series of extracts from Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. Here Trotsky describes how the revolution begins.

The 23rd of February was International Woman's Day. The social-democratic circles had intended to mark this day in a general manner: by meetings, speeches, leaflets. It had not occurred to anyone that it might become the first day of the revolution.

Not a single organisation called for strikes on that day. What is more, even a Bolshevik organisation, and a most militant one — the Vyborg borough committee, all workers — was opposing strikes. The committee thought... the time [was] unripe for militant action.

On the following morning, however... women textile workers in several factories went on strike, and sent delegates to the metal workers with an appeal for support.

It was taken for granted that in case of a demonstration the soldiers would be brought out into the streets against the workers. What would that lead to? This was wartime; the authorities were in no mood for joking. On the other hand, a "reserve" soldier in wartime is nothing like an old soldier of the regular army. Is he really so formidable? In revolutionary circles they had discussed this much, but rather abstractly. For no one, positively no one — we can assert this categorically upon the basis of all the data — then thought that February 23 was to mark the beginning of a decisive drive against absolutism.

Thus the fact is that the February revolution was begun from below, overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organisations, the initiative being taken of their own accord by the most oppressed and downtrodden part of the proletariat — the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers' wives.

The overgrown breadlines had provided the last stimulus. About 90,000 workers, men and women, were on strike that day. The fighting mood expressed itself in demonstrations, meetings, encounters with the police. On that day detachments of troops were called in to assist the police — evidently not many of them — but there were no encounters with them.

A mass of women, not all of them workers, flocked to the municipal дума demanding bread. It was like demanding milk from a he-goat. Red banners appeared in different parts of the city, and inscriptions on them showed that the workers wanted bread, but neither autocracy nor war. Woman's Day passed successfully, with enthusiasm and without victims. But what it concealed in itself, no one had guessed even by nightfall.

On the following day the movement not only fails to diminish, but doubles. About one-half of the industrial workers of Petrograd are on strike on the 24th of February. The workers come to the factories in the morning; instead of going to work they hold meetings; then begin processions toward the centre. New districts and new groups of the population are drawn into the movement. The slogan "Bread!" is crowded out or obscured by louder slogans: "Down with autocracy!" "Down with the war!" Continuous demonstrations on the Nevsky — first compact masses of workmen singing revolutionary songs, later a motley crowd of city folk interspersed with the blue caps of students. "The promenading crowd was sympathetically disposed toward us, and soldiers in some of the war-hospitals greeted us by waving whatever was at hand."

Around the barracks, sentinels, patrols and lines of soldiers stood groups of working men and women exchanging friendly words with the army men. This was a new stage, due to the growth of the strike and the personal meeting of the worker with the army. Such a stage is inevitable in every revolution.

But it always seems new, and does in fact occur differently every time: those who have read and written about it do not recognise the thing when they see it.

Learning from imperfect processes

By Steve Bloom

I would not expect to see birds splashing in a fountain on this cold autumn day. But there they are. And they are more than one.
Steve Bloom, "Meditations"

First let me thank Ed Maltby and others who have offered critical comments regarding my review of *The Two Trotskyisms* for their seriousness and honest attempt to investigate real questions.

The first part of Maltby's contribution (see *Solidarity* 427) is a defence of *The Two Trotskyisms* as an antidote to the previous hegemony of "orthodox Trotskyist" history. I can understand why those who identify with the "heterodox" tradition might want to take this view. They, in turn, should be able to understand why I felt the book went too far in diminishing what the "orthodox" wing of the movement really did contribute. This question of balance shouldn't be decisive, however, and we ought to be able to tolerate some level of difference between us.

But let me take up an issue that I do not feel can be treated in this way. It's one where our differences have to be investigated deeply, and probably resolved if we are going to make significant progress. It is also, I would say, the most important subject Maltby raises: the question of method. He calls mine "wretched" (which I will take as an attempt at a scientific characterisation rather than as a personal attack). He tells us: "Also wretched is the attitude to socialist theory that Bloom betrays. Bloom seems to be suggesting that the long-worked-at body of socialist theory surrounding how we define socialism is simply abstractions picked from the air — rather than a distillation of and extrapolation from the experience of workers' struggle and capitalist development going back over a century — and should not be allowed to get in the way of his 'reality-based' approach."

[But] we are, actually, in complete agreement: "the long-worked-at body of socialist theory" on any and all questions has nothing in common with "abstractions picked from the air." It is indeed "a distillation of and extrapolation from the experience of workers' struggle and capitalist development going back over a century." (Please note, however... I use the term "abstraction" and Maltby, all on his own, adds "picked from the air." No, that is not inherent in the concept of "abstraction." I use this term in its scientific sense, not as a pejorative or as a synonym for "myth" or "mystification." Our theories emerge based on our experience, yes. But they are not our experience. They are abstract statements about that experience.)

We then have to ask: What is the nature of this distillation? To be precise (and dialectical — I will insist on my right to be dialectical) we must add: "Our theory is an incomplete and — inevitably — at least a partially inaccurate distillation." Adding these extra words makes some considerable difference as we consider what method we should apply in relation to our own theories.

Why?

Human theories about reality are inevitably incomplete because no matter how deep our theory goes, reality always has another layer of complexity which goes deeper still.

Our theories about reality are inevitably inaccurate, at least in part, for the same reason: because reality has layers of complexity that our theories do not touch. Revolutionary theory is also inaccurate, however, because we are always describing reality as it was a moment ago, when we last observed it... The further we travel in time after elaborating our theory the more profoundly the process of change will have affected reality, and the more inaccurate our elaborated theory becomes.

This is the primary reason we need a new and different theory to make revolution in the 21st century than was needed in the early to mid-20th century. It's not the fault of the theory of revolution as developed by people like Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky (based on their experiences). It's because the passage of time has changed the social reality we live in, transforming it into something qualitatively different from

the social reality they lived in. Some (many) elements of our previous theory remain useful, even essential in my view, such as our theory of the state, because the reality of the state has not changed much. But other elements of our previous theory need to change a great deal... Let me suggest that the role of the industrial working class as the primary revolutionary subject is one of the most obvious...

It should be obvious that our theories cannot be determined once and, thereby, established immutably for all time — no matter how good and true they might seem to be at the moment we formulate them. Theories have to be constantly tested, reconsidered, reaffirmed or changed as needed. So yes, there is indeed something we should not let our previous distillations and extrapolations from experience get in the way of: they should never be allowed to get in the way of their own growth and development.

If the only mammals I had ever seen were zebras, elephants, and gazelles I might reasonably conclude, based on a distillation and extrapolation from my experience, that "mammals are, universally, creatures that walk on four legs and eat plants." Introduce me subsequently to lions and leopards and, if I follow Ed Maltby's method — of believing that my previous distillations from experience are sacred and not to be challenged — I am likely to have some trouble understanding what I am seeing. Don't even ask what will happen when I discover bats and dolphins and kangaroos. This analogy is not frivolous. The base of actual revolutions that our movement in the 1940s could use as it attempted to distill and extrapolate from its experience was very much like a knowledge of mammals that is limited to zebras, elephants, and gazelles. The experience in the 1930s and 40s of actual anti-capitalist revolutions that took power consisted of the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, and a very brief experiment in Hungary. That's hardly an adequate basis for drawing theoretical conclusions which we then enshrine as immortal.

The Marxist method, we should remember, is to "doubt everything." That includes doubting our own "distillation and extrapolation from experience." Doubting something in this way doesn't mean negating it. It means being open to discovering its limitations, thereby adding new elements as the need for those new elements reveals itself based on new experience. This is the heart of my "reality-based" method. I believe it was also Marx's "reality-based" method...

COLD WAR

I have chosen, up to now, in this particular conversation, not to consider whether the Soviet bureaucracy was a parasitic caste or a new ruling class simply because the question has little or no practical impact on our actions today.

I reject Maltby's contention that the outcome of the Cold War renders me unable to make a credible argument. Indeed, as you will see below, I believe the outcome of the Cold War actually strengthens the argument I'm inclined to make.

I would, on the other hand, agree with Maltby that the "orthodox" focus on this issue as the key dividing line between revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries in the workers' movement was at least exaggerated, and probably misplaced. But whatever we might say about that, Cannon was certainly correct to believe that in the 1940s and 50s this was a central question on which everyone was required by life itself to express a judgment. Today that is, simply, no longer true.

I do not base my viewpoint on some pragmatic need of the moment, as he asserts Trotsky did at the outset of World War Two. I base it on what I consider to be the clear analytical advantages of maintaining the theory of a bureaucratic caste. Let me list the three most important of these advantages:

- Historical materialism posits that new ruling classes come to power because they resolve contradictions that emerge within the previously-existing society — between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production. In other words, ruling classes arise because they fulfil a historical necessity. I reject elevating the Soviet bureaucracy to the level of historical necessity. (And here is where, I believe, the outcome of the Cold War strengthens my position.



The Hungarian revolution of 1956. What do workers' uprisings against Stalinism tell us about Stalinist nationalised property?

In the end the Soviet bureaucracy exited from the historical stage with barely a whimper. It melted away to nothing in an instant, because in reality it was based on nothing and represented nothing—if we measure in terms of social necessities. To me this confirms the fact that it was never correct to identify it as a ruling class.)

- Ruling classes universally work to promote the maximum possible social surplus in order to also maximise their own ability to expropriate the lion's share of that surplus. In the USSR the state consistently imposed economic choices—based primarily on political needs — that significantly hampered the production of a social surplus. This is best explained as the behaviour of a parasitic bureaucracy, not of a ruling class.

- In all societies historically dominated by ruling classes, the exchange values of different commodities have had some meaningful relationship to each other based on the law of value. This is, I would say, a necessary condition for a ruling class as it attempts to measure the social surplus product in order to maximise it. The Soviet rulers, however, were able to arbitrarily set prices without regard to the law of value.

I therefore continue to believe that the “parasitic bureaucracy” characterisation is analytically superior to any of the other theories that have been suggested over the years.

At the same time I will acknowledge that there is an argument to be made for an alternative point of view—based on different criteria than the three I cite. I will acknowledge that what I think is not the only possible way to think, even within a generally revolutionary paradigm, though to my way of thinking it remains the best way to think. It would, I suggest, be a step forward both for Maltby and for our discussion if he is able to acknowledge the same truth in reverse, trying to understand why I still maintain the assessment I do even if he may continue to disagree with me.

“Ultimately, a custom and culture in which the ‘economy of prestige’ within the organisation conditioned and limited the opportunities for political debate and collective self-correction paved the way for further degeneration. . . . This part of [the orthodox] legacy is surely fatal.”

Maltby and I share this general critique of the Cannon tradition. Where we part company is in his last statement. I see the reality he describes as a substantial distortion, but not “surely fatal.” It did turn out to be fatal under a particular set of circumstances. Under different, and quite conceivable circumstances it might well have been overcome in my judgment — especially by a new generation of party leaders.

Once again we are confronted with a difference of historical assessment which we probably cannot, and also don't actually need to, resolve. In terms of practical action we can simply agree that as we proceed to develop our revolutionary organisations in the future that we will avoid this destructive practice. This should be sufficient.

Maltby acknowledges my distinction between a party (the SWP under Cannon) which was able to correct its erroneous assessments and projections in the 1940s and 50s, and another party (the SWP under Jack Barnes) which justified and deepened its errors instead. In this context he raises an additional distinction which I want to acknowledge, then reflect on a bit: “This was a correction, to be sure: but it was an ‘office correction’: there was never any open admission of an error, much less an accounting for the change made clearly in the course

of open debate. The correction involved, the pulling-back from a frankly mystical and pro-Stalinist position, was a matter of members of a restricted circle coming to their political senses.” We do not need “deft adjustments by licensed experts,” he explains further, but “political struggle and clear public accounting within the organisation at large.”

What Maltby says regarding the process of correction in the SWP during the 1940s and 50s is incontrovertible. I also think it is, probably, a natural part of revolutionary organization-building (perhaps any kind of organisation-building) that we are going to have to learn to tolerate, even though it is far from an optimal process. We can try to recognise it when it happens, and to struggle against it. But we should not expect to overcome it.

APRIL THESES

To bolster this statement let me cite as an example ... Lenin's return to Russia in the spring of 1917 and his famous “April Theses.” True, this was not an “office correction” of the kind Maltby describes.

But I suggest that's so only because Lenin got resistance from everyone else in the office. He was therefore compelled to engage in an open struggle among the ranks of the Bolshevik Party. This historical event nevertheless shares with the SWP experience a certain common thread: “there was never any open admission of an error, much less an accounting for the change.”

When confronted with the reality that he was, essentially, overturning the entire program of the Bolshevik Party Lenin failed to admit/recognise that the old program had been mistaken. He said, essentially: that was then; this is now. And the revolutionary movement subsequently paid an extremely high price for this default by Lenin, because it allowed Stalin to drape himself in a convenient ideological cloak of “old Bolshevism” during the 1930s and 40s, using a lack of clarity about what April 1917 actually represented in order to both attack Trotsky (the theory of permanent revolution) and obscure the fact that he was strangling revolutions in Europe and elsewhere...

I don't know if there's a name for the general psychological phenomenon which is reflected in this kind of process. But it is obvious to me that there is a general psychological phenomenon at work: People will much more readily change their behaviour than they will admit that there was anything wrong with their previous behaviour. We see this constantly in the revolutionary movement, and not only in the revolutionary movement. Changes occur, often just pragmatically in response to reality. It is only after a period of months, or years, or even decades that the actors involved are able to look back and say: Our previous approach was based on a funda-

mental mistake, which we really do need to acknowledge and correct. I myself have experienced the same dynamic in my own thinking, even though I like to consider myself to be reasonably objective and self-aware. I will change my approach to a subject on the fly based on immediate and obvious necessities, developing an ad-hoc rationale to justify what I am doing. It is only some time later (sometimes much later) that I can seriously contemplate the more fundamental reasons why a specific adjustment was needed.

Yes, the process Maltby calls for is far better. But I believe it is probably unrealistic for us to expect it from flawed human beings, at least most of the time. We will have to learn to do the best we can with an imperfect process.

Maltby challenges my assertion that nationalised property clearly had a progressive content in Eastern Europe, revealed to us by the anti-Stalinist uprisings in Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland: “Revolutionary workers' movements developed both East and West of the iron curtain in the post-war period. Capitalist Portugal, France, Chile and Turkey to name but a few all saw post-war workers' movements which shook their ruling classes to the marrow. Nationalised property was not a necessary factor in their development.”

What makes the Eastern European experience an illustration of the progressive nature of nationalised property, however, is not merely the fact that uprisings took place, but the role that nationalised property played in those uprisings. In each of these cases, if we had to work out a program for the coming revolution after the insurgent forces took power from the Stalinist bureaucrats, it would surely have included maintaining the nationalised property while creating democratic structures to control it. Indeed, with the exception of Poland—where the question of subjective intent is far from clear — this was, in fact, the actual program embraced by those involved in the uprisings. If that's true, then it surely tells us something about the nature of the property forms in question: The nationalisations, despite their bureaucratic origin, had already accomplished a task that the next revolution would otherwise have been required to carry out. What can that be called if not “progressive”?

There is no parallel whatever with the tasks of the revolutionary movements in Portugal, France, Chile, and Turkey.

I doubt whether Maltby and I have a serious disagreement regarding the theoretical relationship between our commitment to struggling for our ideas (“our” meaning those of us who continue to identify with the Trotskyist tradition in its broadest sense) and the process of listening and relating to ideas proposed to us by others. We do seem to have some difference in terms of applying that abstract theoretical understanding to the real world—which is probably worth a bit of further exploration. But I am going to leave that process of exploration for another time.

As far as my personal commitment to struggling for the Trotskyist (Marxist) ideas I learned in the SWP and which I still believe to be essential, I can refer Maltby to an extensive series of writings both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It is interesting that in the US socialist organisation I belong to, Solidarity, I am labelled by some as a sectarian throwback at the same time that Maltby denounces me for abandoning the faith. I would like to think that means I'm getting it about right, but only time and more experience can tell us for sure.

• Abridged. Full text bit.ly/2moYTh5

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On the eve of revolution: Trotsky in New York

Paul Hampton reviews *Trotsky in New York 1917: A Radical on the Eve of Revolution* by Kenneth Ackerman.

In October 1917 Leon Trotsky was a principal leader of the Russian revolution, leading workers to power and the establishment of their own state. Trotsky would become the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, responsible for taking Russia out of the First World War.

Yet his year had begun in very different circumstances. For ten weeks Trotsky lived in exile in New York. His time there is retold by Kenneth Ackerman. Although the book is flawed in its political assessments and littered with silly mistakes, it nevertheless manages to capture more clearly than previous accounts the historical context of Trotsky's time in New York and his political impact on the US socialist movement.

On a cold, rainy Sunday morning on 13 January 1917, Trotsky, his partner Natalia Sedova, and his two sons Sergei and Lyova, disembarked from the steamship Montserrat in New York. They had endured the "wretched little boat" and conditions they dubbed "transport barbarism" following expulsion from Spain. They had to lie about their real identities and record. The journey was perilous because German submarines had been sinking ships to enforce their blockade of Britain during the war.

Trotsky had opposed the First World War from the beginning, living in exile in Paris and producing the paper *Nashe Slovo* (*Our Word*). He attended the Zimmerwald anti-war conference in 1915 and drafted its manifesto. He was deported from France to Spain in October 1916 after attempting to reach the war front to report on conditions there. Jailed in Spain, he sought to remain in Europe but was forced into transatlantic exile by the Spanish state.

Ackerman records the warmth with which Trotsky was greeted in New York: "within two days, at least six New York newspapers with more than half a million readers would announce Trotsky's arrival in the city. Three put the story on the front page, and two, the *Forward* and the *New York Call*, included front-page photos". Trotsky had landed in a city with nearly half a million Russians and almost a million Jewish people from Eastern Europe, many refugees from the Tsarist regime. As a revolutionary of two decades standing and the chair of the Petrograd soviet in 1905, his reputation as "a resolute fighter for the revolutionary international" preceded him.

Trotsky was greeted in New York by an array of socialists. In 1917 the Socialist Party was a formidable force in America. Two Socialists had sat in the US Congress. Socialists held mayor's offices in 56 towns and cities. The party had more than 110,000 dues-paying members and about 150 affiliated publications. Its main magazine, *Appeal to Reason*, reached almost 700,000 readers each month. The Socialist Party's presidential candidate Eugene Debs won over 900,000 votes in 1912, about 6% of the total, running against Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. But the party was also packed with reformists and machine-politicians such as Victor Berger and notably in New York, the lawyer Morris Hillquit.

On his first full day in New York, Trotsky went to the offices of *Novy Mir* (*New World*), where he would work during his time in the city. The journal had a circulation of 8,000 and according to Ackerman, was "arguably the

most impactful Russian journal in the western hemisphere, easily overshadowing the city's three larger-circulation Russian dailies". He joined a team of Russian socialists, including editor Gregory Weinstein, the left-Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin and a protégé from Paris, Grigori Chudnovsky.

On his first night in New York Trotsky, Bukharin and Chudnovsky were invited to dinner with Ludwig Lore, the associate editor of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* (*New York People's Paper*) in Brooklyn. Other guests included the Bolshevik feminist Aleksandra Kollontai and Moisei Volodarsky, who came up from Philadelphia.

All these Russians would play leading roles in the revolution when they returned home in 1917. Other guests included the veteran Japanese socialist Sen Katayama, socialist lawyer Louis Boudin and the young socialist cultural critic Louis Fraina. The meal witnessed an epic but comradely debate between Bukharin, who advocated splitting the Socialist Party, versus Trotsky who advocated the left organise within the party.

On 25 January 1917, these socialists organised a big welcoming party for Trotsky in the Great Hall of Cooper Union, holding around 900 people. It was here that Trotsky gave his first public speech in the USA. He told the audience "the socialist revolution is coming in Europe and America must be ready when it comes".

Ackerman paints these few months of Trotsky's life in bright colours and brings to light much that has previously been ignored. The book is laced with vignettes of the personalities Trotsky met, as well as the flavour of his life in exile.

FIRST WORLD WAR

The political context Trotsky found himself in was dominated by the impending decision of the US government to enter the First World War on the side of Britain and France.

On 3 February, President Woodrow Wilson broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. Trotsky became one of New York's leading voices opposing US entry into the war. In early February, Trotsky addressed packed crowds at the Brooklyn Lyceum, Manhattan's Beethoven Hall, the Labor Temple near Union Square and other venues. On 1 March, the Zimmermann telegram was published, in which the German foreign minister offered Mexico an alliance and the recovery of lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona if it joined the German side. The telegram sparked outrage, which was refracted through the socialist movement.

The Jewish daily *Forward* carried an editorial by Baruch Vladeck, stating that "every inhabitant of the country would fight to the last drop of blood to protect the great American republic against the monarchies of Europe and Asia and their allies".

Trotsky promptly had a face-to-face row with the *Forward's* editor Abraham Cahan. Morris Hillquit convened a Socialist Party meeting in New York to determine what they should do if the US entered the war. This "Resolution Committee" of seven included both Fraina and Trotsky as representatives of the left wing. There are no records or minutes, no newspaper accounts or even letters and memoirs about the three meetings of the committee.

However Ackerman explains that although they agreed about denounce patriotism and pacifism, the reformists were not prepared to sanction Trotsky and Fraina's calls for mass working-class action to oppose US entry into

the war. Unable to settle the matter, they resolved to hold a public debate. This was held on 4 March 1917 at the Lenox Casino, now the Malcolm Shabazz Mosque, and featured Fraina against Hillquit and his cabal. The latter won by 101 votes to 79. Trotsky and Fraina would not lie down, joining Eugene Debs for a mass rally against the war on 8 March at Cooper Union, vowing to carry on the class struggle during wartime.

That same day Russian workers spurred by international women's day had risen for bread, peace and the end of the Tsarist autocracy. For five days hundreds of thousands took strike action and demonstrated in Petrograd, until they toppled the hated regime. The news reached New York on 15 March. Ackerman described how "celebrations were erupting all across New York's vast immigrant neighbourhoods: Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, especially the Lower East Side. Spontaneous parades, rounds of drinks, songs and dancing spread like wildfire with the news..."

The book does not cover *Novy Mir's* extensive commentary on the situation in Russia in much depth. This is disappointing, as much of Trotsky's journalism has been available in English in Moisei Olgin's collection *Our Revolution* (1918) and the *Journal of Trotsky Studies* (1993). Days after the overthrow of the Tsar, Trotsky predicted that "an open conflict between the forces of the revolution, led by the urban proletariat, and the anti-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie which has temporarily come to power, is completely inevitable". He articulated his permanent revolution perspective. He wrote:

"In this struggle the proletariat, uniting around itself the insurgent popular masses, must set as its direct objective the conquest of power. Only a revolutionary workers' government will have the volition and ability, even during the preparation for the Constituent Assembly, to conduct a radical democratic purge in the country, reconstruct the army from top to bottom. Turn it into a revolutionary militia, and in fact demonstrate to the peasant masses that their salvation lies only in support for a revolutionary workers' regime" (Trotsky, [19 March 1917], 'The Growing Conflict: The Internal Forces of the Russian revolution', *Journal of Trotsky Studies*).

Once they heard about events in Russia, the revolutionaries immediately made plans to return to join the struggle there. They approached the Russian consulate following the amnesty of exiles to obtain the necessary papers. They found passage on a Norwegian-American steamship Kristianiafjord and discovering that it would have to call in Canada, obtained further permission from the British colonial authorities. More than three hundred people saw them off at the South Brooklyn pier on 27 March.

However when the ship docked in Halifax, Nova Scotia a few days later, British naval officers removed Trotsky and five other Russians, acting on a panicked report of spooks operating out of New York. They were illegally detained in a British makeshift prisoner-of-war camp for German sailors in an abandoned factory at Amhurst. Trotsky wasted no time.

As Ackerman describes it, "he soon found himself giving talks to small ad hoc circles [telling them] about the Russian revolution, about Lenin, about America's intention to join the war, and about how, once the war ended, they could go home and overthrow the government in Germany, just as Russian soldiers would help topple the tsar. They could get rid of the Kaiser and the whole capitalist crowd in Berlin who had started this



pointless bloodshed in the first place". The camp commander colonel Morris complained: "After only a few days here [Trotsky] was by far the most popular man in the whole camp with the German prisoners-of-war, two thirds of whom are socialists".

While Trotsky was interned, the political situation shifted. Lenin arrived back in Russia on the night of 3 April. His 'April Theses' spelt out the orientation the Bolsheviks would take, refusing to support the provisional government and campaigning to take power. The US government announced on 6 April that it would enter the war.

The Russian provisional government including Aleksandr Kerensky and Paul Mil-iukov at first tried to keep Trotsky's arrest a secret, then asked he be released, only to cancel the request. A petition in the camp signed by 500 prisoners protested at Trotsky's confinement. Socialists in New York and in Russia campaigned for their release. Trotsky would eventually be freed on 3 May, reaching Norway and then onto Russia by 17 May.

Kenneth Ackerman's lack of understanding of Trotsky's Marxist ideas means the book is littered with mistakes and poor judgments. At one point he laughably equates the present day legacy of Trotskyism in the USA with the post-Healyite Socialist Equality Party of David North, ignoring the myriad of other far healthier political groups within the American left. But Ackerman does succeed in capturing the continued vitality of Trotsky as a symbol of working class socialism.

He concludes the book with the astute observation on why he was never rehabilitated in the USSR even as it fell to pieces. Ackerman rightly states: "Trotsky still appeared too dangerous. He still represented the historical alternative, the possibility that things can always be different, that socialism could have worked, that ruling powers any place and any time can be overthrown by the conscious, organised will of the people."

"All this made Trotsky dangerous to the Russian tsar in 1905, to Kerensky in 1917, to Hillquit in New York, to Stalin in the 1920s, even to Gorbachev in the 1980s. For all his faults, he remains the eternal agent of change".

The Russian Revolution: when workers took power

This book by Paul Vernadsky brings together original Marxist perspectives with a wide range of scholarship.



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Trump and neoliberalism

By Martin Thomas

"Neoliberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history", declared the left-wing historian Perry Anderson in 2000.

With Trump, we see both a strand of neoliberalism, pushed on a scale which threatens to break up neoliberalism "from the inside", but in a reactionary way; and a strand of real revolt against neoliberalism, expressed again in a reactionary way.

Large sections of the neoliberal bourgeoisie are genuinely alarmed by Trump. Yet we have already seen many orthodox neoliberals adapt to Trump's power. Theresa May is only one example.

The neoliberal 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 they pride themselves. Having already let so many civil rights be swallowed by the "war on terror" and the drive for "labour flexibility", they will be no bulwark for the rest.

They will try to restrain Trump's moves to disrupt world markets, but they cannot be relied on even for that.

Trump can and may make things worse. The only answer is a mobilisation of the labour movement and the left for a democratic and socialist alternative both to neoliberalism and to Trump's "economic nationalism".

MARKETS

Neoliberalism has been the reshaping of every country's policy so as best to attune it to world markets and make it an attractive site for footloose global capital.

It includes marketising, privatising, and outsourcing. It does not mean a minimal "night-watchman" state, like classic capitalist liberalism. It is heavy on regulation, but of its own sort.

Margaret Thatcher, pioneering neoliberalism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, talked of sweeping away regulatory bodies ("quangos"). In fact, as historians write: "The mid-1980s [brought] rapid growth in quangos, though many [were] disguised".

Globally, neoliberalism has been the heyday of regulatory institutions. The World Trade Organisation, the IMF, the European Union, the G8, the Bank for International Set-

tlements, have keystoneed "globalisation". The great triumph for the leading capitalist powers in the 1990s was not just that Stalinism collapsed in the USSR and Eastern Europe, but that those territories were drawn smoothly into an expansion of the web of institutions and regulations established by the West over previous decades.

Markets do not make themselves. They have to be organised. To global capital, individual governments do not offer local "Wild West". They offer organised and regulated infrastructures of energy supply, transport, education, public services, financial regulation, and regimentation of labour.

Trump pushes, in extreme form, one strand in neoliberalism: market rivalry as the model for human affairs.

He champions bullying and blustering in politics because he has found it has worked in business, giving him sharp elbows to thrust in others' faces as he has negotiated a series of misconceived adventures, business defaults and failures, shady alliances, and legal censures and still come out making profits.

He claims that this "art of the deal", turbocharged by extravagant threats and stagey provocations to throw rivals off balance, can also produce "better deals" in public policy.

But international institutions, and individual states' networks of regulation, must by their nature be more stable, more settled long-term compromises, than the welter of deals, consortia, joint ventures, and contracts through which businesses operate.

Trump's approach, if he persists with it, will blow up neoliberalism "from the inside". It will disrupt the frameworks on which market competition depends, and push the world backwards into an era of trade wars (and more shooting wars).

Neoliberalism has been resilient. Out of the discrediting and disruptive crash of 2008, for example, it emerged more aggressive, not less so. Partly it has been resilient because for each country's government, neoliberalism is not just an ideology, but in large part a matter of accommodating to world-market norms and priorities defined outside its control. The government knows that exclusion from or marginalisation in the world markets would crash its capitalist economy, so it adapts.

Trump could have emerged as he did only in the USA, because since 1945, or even since 1919, the USA has been simultaneously the chief architect of international capitalist institutions and regulations, and the big capitalist power most likely to stretch or flout the in-



ternational regulations.

The USA is more dependent on trade now than it used to be. Exports are now 13.5% of its GDP. But that compares with 28% for the UK, or 46% for Germany.

The USA is alone in the world with Burma and Liberia in not using the metric system. The size and wealth of its financial sector and its consumer markets guarantees it will attract global capitalist investment even when it flouts world-market norms. As an expert writes: "The United States has not historically worried much about how to make itself an attractive location for investment geared towards exports".

Trump can build on a tradition of American exceptionalism. Push that beyond limits, though, and he can plunge the world back into something like the 1930s.

SNOWBALLING

He is already producing snowball effects. If Marine Le Pen wins the French presidential election in May 2017 — unlikely at present, but then Trump's victory looked unlikely in early 2016 — a substantial social regression, and restoration of barriers to trade and the movement of people, will follow in Europe.

Partly, also, Trump bases himself on people who rebel against neoliberalism, but in a reactionary way, and on advisers who spell out reactionary alternatives.

On 23 February Trump's Chief Strategist, Stephen Bannon, spoke to a Conservative Po-

litical Action Conference. He said:

"The centre core of what we believe [is] that we're a nation with an economy. Not an economy just in some global marketplace with open borders, but we are a nation with a culture and a reason for being."

Explaining Trump's bluster against the media (he has excluded many reporters from White House briefings), Bannon said: "They're corporatist, globalist media who are adamantly opposed to an economic nationalist agenda like Donald Trump has".

He also promised: "deconstruction of the administrative state... The way the progressive left runs, is if they can't get it passed, they're just going to put in some sort of regulation in an agency".

Thatcher and others talked about scrapping regulations, and in fact brought in more regulations (of a different sort and purpose).

Bannon, however, is a genuine anti-neoliberal. He wants a Wild West, and one in which he has a bigger gun than anyone else.

The anti-neoliberal thread in Trump's politics builds on a strand with a long history in conservatism, and, sadly, some recent history in parts of the left too: "identity politics". Against neoliberalism's worship of world market rules, they offer "America First".

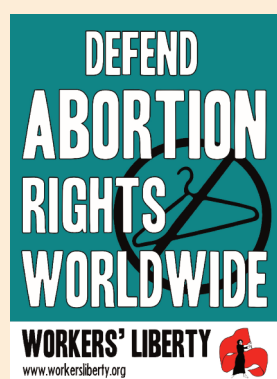
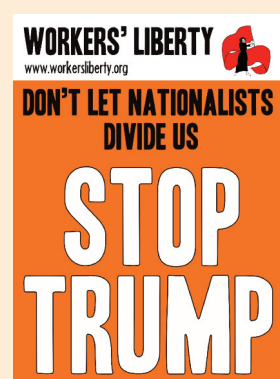
Workers will still be exploited, abused, made insecure, but they can think their "American" identity is being upheld against the soulless world markets.

Anti-neoliberalism, and sometimes even anti-capitalism, can be reactionary as well as progressive. Here it is reactionary. To rally workers, under cover of suspicion of world markets, to hostility to "un-American" migrants, or workers in other countries, is a divisive snare which will end up biting even the most "American" of workers: their strikes, their rights, their legal protections, will all be called "un-American".

Trump's hostility to world market rules is not support for workers establishing protections. His first (failed) nominee for Labor Secretary, Andrew Puzder, was a rapacious fast-food billionaire who sometimes sounds off against "big corporate interests" and "globalist companies", but also opposes unions, minimum-wage rises, and regulations mandating overtime pay and sick leave.

Neither Trump, nor neoliberalism, but labour-movement mobilisation for democracy, workers' rights, open borders, internationalism, and socialism!

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Workers' Liberty has done a new print run of A6 stickers, some new designs plus reprinting some of our existing designs by popular demand.

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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

Wednesday 8 March

Strike! A celebration for International Womens' Day hosted by *The Clarion*
6.30pm, Effra Social, 89 Effra Road, London, SW2 1DF
bit.ly/2IS3pBv

Monday 13 March

Make some noise for Orgreave — protest at the Home Office
2pm, Home Office, 2 Marsham St, London, SW1P 4DF
<http://bit.ly/2m8j2Y8>

Wednesday 15 March

Open forum: Fair Funding for all schools — Lambeth
7pm, SunnyHill Primary School, London, SW16 2UW
bit.ly/2mGHb15

Thursday 16 March

Nationalise the Big Six: campaign launch meeting
7pm, The Lucas Arms, 245a Grays Inn Rd, London, WC1X 8QY
bit.ly/2ISfyGy

Saturday 6 May

New Unionism 2017
11-5 pm, Lift, 45 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PW

Saturday 18 March

Stand up to racism National Demonstration
12pm, Portland Place, London, W1A 1AA
Details and for coaches from other parts of the country:
bit.ly/2IPw6Rq

Have an event you want listing?
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Momentum vote: only 42% pro-coup

LABOUR

By Simon Nelson

Last month's elections to Momentum National Co-ordinating Group saw 75% of the 12 seats elected by Momentum members (out of 32 NCG places) go to candidates endorsing the constitution imposed in January.

In the North and Scotland region, the pro-constitution slate won all four seats. In the Midlands, Wales, East and West region they took three, and in the South East Region two. Yet only 42% voted for pro-coup people.

Their over-representation was due to this being a first-past-the-post election, so the biggest minority could sweep the board.

The total vote for the candidates explicitly opposing the imposed constitution was 29%, with Rida Vaquas topping the poll in the Midlands and Yannis Gourtsoyannis only 32 votes behind Christine Shawcroft in the South East (Shawcroft received the most votes of any

single candidate).

Just 34% of those eligible to vote chose to, despite text and email reminders. We can't say why more people did not vote, but the view put forward in Momentum HQ — that those who now back the constitution have championed a form of "online democracy" over supposedly inaccessible meeting-democracy — is not at all convincing. It is also notable that fewer people have voted in this election than are required to amend the constitution or even to successfully trigger the use of online voting!

In the other areas that make up the NCG the following positions have been filled: Huda Elmi, Labour Briefing; Barry Gray, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy; Jon Lansman, Left Futures; Carol Turner, Labour CND. The elected officials are Councillors Joseph Ejiofor, Helen McDonald, Emine Ibrahim, Leigh Drennan.

We can only presume that the affiliated organisations chose their own delegates to the NCG using whatever methods they chose to. Both the LRC and Red Labour

chose not to recognise the NCG's status and will not send representatives. Once again Left Futures, which is just a blog run by Jon Lansman, is again represented by... Jon Lansman.

The elected officials are made up of one councillor for the North West — vocal coup supporter Leigh Drennan — and three from the south east, with two from the same London borough! It is as yet unclear what the trade union representation will be.

Following the vote the Grassroots Momentum South East Region slate and Rida Vaquas from the Midlands circulated a statement outlining their plans going forward.

"Momentum should be committed to its grassroots. We need to strengthen the local groups, build new ones, coordinate between them and develop a vibrant culture of campaigning and political debate. Only such a network and culture can allow us to tackle our key task of organising and mobilising people to transform Labour, as part of the wider task of reviving and transforming the labour movement. There has been much fractious debate recently within Momentum, as a result of bureaucratic manoeuvring. We urge members not to resign or drift out in disgust. Instead we must link up to organise for democracy, active campaigning and socialist policies both locally and nationally.

"We support the calling of a grassroots networking conference for local groups."

Scottish Labour Party: mixed picture

By Dale Street

Scottish Labour Party conference (SLP) on 25-26 February unanimously passed policy in favour of "a progressive federal structure for the UK" and the convening of a "People's Constitutional Convention" by the Labour Party at UK level in order to "deliberate on these issues".

The conference also agreed to launch a campaign against a second referendum on Scottish independence.

What was meant by "a progressive federal structure" or "People's Constitutional Convention" was not spelled out. And the campaign against a second referendum is an online petition rather than a "proper" campaign. Even so these policies mark out a distinct Labour position, in opposition to the Tories (status quo) and the SNP (independence at quite literally any price).

Since the 2014 referendum Scottish politics has polarised around national-identity politics, with Labour losing opponents of independence to the Tories and supporters of independence to the SNP. The SLP is currently on 14% in opinion polls (far lower than support for Labour in national polls,

but neither the Labour right nor the media argue for SLP leader Kezia Dugdale to go.)

The adoption of those policies may win back support, but a focus on constitutional issues may backfire when the SLP's revival depends very much on putting social and economic issues back at the political centre stage.

BLAND

Those motions which made it onto the floor of the conference (many were ruled out) tended to be worthy but bland, except for motions on local government submitted by Unison and the GMB, unanimously adopted by the conference.

These called on Labour-controlled councils to cease to be "the administrators of austerity" and to "meaningfully resist austerity" in alliance with community groups and trade unions.

Even the Brexit debate failed to stir conference into life — partly because it was a succession of set-piece speeches, partly because a robustly anti-Brexit motion was kept off the agenda.

The Executive Committee had drawn up a series of "Challenge" papers on different policy areas.

None made any mention of existing SLP policy (e.g. against Trident renewal, against the Tories' anti-union laws): it was as if SLP policies had to be devised from scratch. And the supposed mechanism for drawing up SLP policy — the Scottish Policy Forum — does not even exist at the moment.

Momentum had no presence at the conference at all. Campaign for Socialism members leafleted for two fringe meetings and a social event — and helped out in distributing the *Morning Star* to conference attendees.

The low-key nature of the conference was a reflection of the SLP's current weakness. In 2015 the number of Labour MPs in Scotland collapsed from 41 to one. In 2016 the number of Labour MSPs slumped from 38 to 24, leaving Labour behind the Tories. Despite the SNP's abysmal record at Holyrood Labour councillors could meet a similar fate in May's local elections.

The Labour left in Scotland badly needs to take the lead in rebuilding CLPs as campaigning organisations and ensuring implementation of the Unison and GMB motions passed by conference.

Labour: support Derby TAs!

By Ralph Peters

Teaching assistants in Derby struck again from 27 February to 3 March in their fight against contract changes leading to pay cuts by Derby's Labour council.

There has been 62 strike days so far in the dispute. The previous strikes have been up to two days at a time, and this latest week was an escalation. Support for the strikes among the 600 organised school support workers remains as strong as ever.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has openly supported them and this is used to some effect by the strikers. An icon of Jeremy Corbyn is usually carried at the front of their marches: primarily to goad the Council Leader, who at the time of Corbyn's election as leader nominally supported him.

Local Constituency Labour Party have started registering their support. Nearby Erewash CLP in Derbyshire, as well as Broxtowe CLP in Nottinghamshire, have registered support for the Derby workers. But so far there appears to be silence from all of the visible elements of the Labour Party in Derby.

Derbyshire Momentum is attempting to organise Labour support in Derby for the striking council workers. However, despite having a number of activists with national profiles, Derby Momentum has little actual existence on the ground and no known intervention in Derby Labour Party.

Pauline Latham, MP for Mid-Derbyshire, has expressed "absolute sympathy for the teaching assistants striking on this matter" and urged Council leader Ranjit Banwait to "resolve the dispute". But there has been nothing from Derby South MP Margaret Beckett



A Derby teaching assistants with a Jeremy Corbyn cut out

other than an ambiguous expression of "sympathy with everyone", presumably including the Council, and "encouraging both sides to reach a settlement".

There have been calls made by Broxtowe CLP as well as the Derby strikers for Labour's NEC to discuss the issue and give explicit support. Unison organisers hope and expect that their NEC delegates will raise it there.

This is exactly the sort of situation where Unison's national links with the Labour Party should come into play. But the left in Unison, influenced by traditions of the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party, has unfortunately never given the Labour Link the importance it deserves, leaving it dominated by the right wing of the union.

Council elections will take place next year in 2018. Candidate selections are coming up. A condemnation of the council's provocative stance could encourage passive left-wing Labour members to get involved as well as recruit TAs and reshape the face of Labour's candidates before that election.

A Derby council by-election is

taking place on Thursday 2 March after the death of a UKIP councillor. The Labour candidate, Nadine Peatfield, is thought to be on the left. So far, she has not ventured out to support the teaching assistants. Unison will be meeting with her the day before the election. They are hopeful that she will support them and, if she does, it may reduce the likelihood that voters will think that the only Party supporting the school workers is UKIP!

The confidence of the Unison school workers remains high. Conducting an imaginative campaign of vigils, encircling the Council building, as well as strikes. But they need solidarity: nationally within Unison and from other local government workers but also importantly from across the Labour Party.

This battle also raises questions about how cuts are opposed strategically. Bluntly there is no strategy by any local government union to oppose these cuts.

Unless a strategy is found, Labour councils will find themselves increasingly involved in confrontations with their own workers and communities, while claiming they have "no choice".



Cinema strikers protest

By Gemma Short

Workers from four Picturehouse cinemas in London struck again on Saturday 25 February.

The workers from the Ritzy in Brixton and Hackney, Crouch End and Central Picturehouses gathered outside the Empire Cinema in Leicester Square for a demonstration. Picturehouse has just bought the Empire for £94 million, yet claim they can't afford to pay their workers a living wage.

The strikers were joined by supporters from other trade union branches and from the Labour Party. The protest was addressed by Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell who said: "At the moment large numbers of people who are in work cannot survive on the wages they get, especially in London. Two thirds of children in poverty are living in families

who are in work. Wages are too low, and profits are too high. We have a simple message for the government and employers — we will not go away we will continue this campaign until we achieve the living wage, trade union recognition, and respect for workers' in our society.

"There are individuals here who have courageously stood up and recruited others into this campaign. There is a secret we discovered a century and a half ago at the beginning of the industrial revolution, we inscribed it on our banners, unity is strength, an injury to one is an injury to all, the workers united will never be defeated."

Picturehouse is still refusing to negotiate with the workers' union, the Bectu section of Prospect, and workers will strike again on Wednesday 8 March.

Aslef drivers reject Southern sell-out

By Ollie Moore

Members of rail workers' union RMT at three train companies will strike on 13 March, as the fight against "Driver Only Operation" (DOO) spreads.

The spreading of strikes to new companies and the coordination of action creates further potential for a national rail strike against DOO.

Workers at MerseyRail and Northern, who voted for strikes by 81.8% and 83.6% majorities respectively, will strike, along with guards and RMT drivers on Southern, from whom the 13 March strike represents a month of cumulative action.

Southern workers took their 29th day of strike action on 22 March. Some Aslef drivers, who recently voted by a 54.1% majority to reject a deal drawn up by their leaders in conjunction with Southern bosses which aimed to resolve the dispute, respected RMT picket lines.

The rank-and-file rail workers' blog *Off The Rails* said: "The big question now is: 'what next?' The Aslef leaders who carved up this shoddy deal will surely be hoping to merely use the rejection to lever-



age further negotiations, tweak the settlement somewhat, and put a new deal out to referendum without taking any further action.

"That cannot be allowed to happen [...] Aslef should coordinate with RMT to name more joint strikes as soon as possible. The only way Southern can be forced into making an acceptable offer is through further, sustained strikes.

"That's bound to provoke some frustration from passengers, but our unions can work with commuter groups to mobilise and direct passenger anger where it belongs: at the bosses."

Tube news round-up

By Ollie Moore

Night Tube drivers balloted

RMT and Aslef are balloting drivers on the "Night Tube" services for strikes, in a dispute over career progression.

Unions argue that a block on Night Tube drivers, who work 16 hours per week, transferring into full-time roles is unfair. They also want the system of overtime payments, which currently only kick in if a driver works past 35 hours per week due to delays or late running, overhauled, as Night Tube drivers are effectively excluded from it.

The rank-and-file bulletin *Tube-worker* commented: "Tube-worker welcomes the move into dispute over this clear discrimination. Now, RMT (the only union to organise on both trains and stations) must press for a clear and fair promotion path for ALL London Underground workers. Night Tube station staff are asking, 'What

about us? Many Night Tube station workers, like their driver colleagues, took the job as a stepping stone to full-time work for the underground. Others, like numerous other station staff, hoped to become drivers.

"It must be made clear to London Underground that station staff must be prioritised to fill part-time driver vacancies created by Night Tube drivers moving into full time roles."

London Bridge staff to ballot

Station staff at London Bridge will be balloted for strikes, after one colleague was sacked, and two others disciplined, after they, and another member of staff (who is pregnant) were assaulted by a fare evader.

An RMT statement said: "The three members, Lee Cornell, Saeed Souissi, and Dave Sharp have been subject to disciplinary sanctions including summary dismissal, sus-

pended dismissal and a 52-week final warning after having to deal with an abusive, violent, fare-evading passenger at the station.

"London Underground showed complete disregard for its own Staff Assault Policy and Procedures, and these members have been wrongly punished and treated deplorably by the Company."

Central Line drivers strike

Drivers on London Underground's Central Line struck again on 21-22 February, as they attempt to resist the forced displacement of drivers from depots in Essex to depots in West London.

The strike severely disrupted Central Line services through the capital. Both RMT and Aslef members were involved.

Many driver activists are now arguing for the dispute to escalate to involve drivers across the Tube, at other affected depots.



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The NHS is at breaking point

By Claudia Raven

The NHS is at breaking point. The planned destruction of the service, through cuts, closures, privatisation and poor treatment of staff is coming to a head.

The UK has one of the lowest provisions of beds per head in Europe, and it is falling. BMA figures have shown that from 2010 to 2016 we lost 13,681 beds, a fall of 9.5%, comparable to 24 hospitals being closed. Mental health bed provision has fallen 44% since 2001. This has meant doctors struggle to admit patients, and that more and more patients are stuck in A&E for long periods — more than 700 people stay in A&E more than 12 hours every day.

It also means staff are under pressure to discharge patients before they are ready, which results in increased emergency readmissions. High bed occupancy rates have led to several months of planned operations being cancelled, with no outrage comparable to that during the junior doctors' strikes.

The numbers hide a huge burden of human misery. They hide the woman with a brain haemorrhage turned away from three hospitals with no available ITU beds, dying without surgery that could have saved her. They hide the elderly confused man being moved between cubicles as we make space to assess newly arrived patients. They hide the woman house-bound and in pain awaiting a hip replacement. They hide the football player waiting in the cold for an ambulance that is queueing to handover at the local hospital.

Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) will see further bed, ward and hospital closures. Emergency departments will close, healthcare staff will be made redundant. This will be forced by cuts which mean that in 2021 the NHS will be underfunded to the tune of £30 billion.

But the STPs are not just about cuts. They are also about reconfiguration, privatisation, and aligning NHS structures with the health insurance formats preferred by large corporations like UnitedHealth and Virgin. These changes require capital investment of £9.5 billion, which will probably have to come out of already stretched NHS budget, as only £339 million has been allocated so far. Many of the STP "footprint" areas hope to make savings through increased prevention of ill-health, but Public Health budgets are also being slashed.

PRIVATISATION

We know that privatisation costs more to administer and delivers a worse service.

GMB recently released evidence showing MRSA infection is 50% higher in hospitals with outsourced cleaning services. Half a million medically sensitive documents were lost by a private contractor running internal NHS mail from 2001-2016. Circle pulled out of Hinchbrook Hospital just before a damning CQC report was released. Social care is in a shocking state, with 41% of community-based adult social care services, hospice services and residential social care services rated as inadequate or requiring improvement



The Labour Party should take up the fight for the NHS to be renationalised, as well as calling for more funding.

by the CQC. Staff sweated for the profit margin provide lower standards of care. The catalogue of failures is longer than the phone book. What's worse is that private companies and their owners walk away scot-free, pockets full of taxpayer money, with no responsibility for the suffering they cause.

Under the STPs, Accountable Care Organisations will be created. This is a concept from US Health Insurance: a group of healthcare firms take responsibility for providing care for a given population for a defined period under a contract with a commissioner, such as Medicare or the NHS. ACOs use market-based mechanisms to lower costs whilst achieving pre-agreed quality outcomes. One form of ACO, mentioned in many

leaked drafts, uses "capitated" or "global" payments which are fixed payments to providers for all or most of the care that their patients may require over a contract period. Once the payment is in place, it is open to providers to offer only as much care as required by the contract.

NEED

This is a direct transfer of resources from those who need them — the sick and others accessing healthcare — to the already rich.

It is socialism for the wealthy, and austerity for the poor. It is no solution to NHS crisis.

What is needed is the immediate renationalisation of the health and

social care system, without compensation. The NHS and social care should be publicly provided, publicly and properly funded, publicly accountable and well-staffed. Staff should be well paid and work under good terms and conditions — unpaid breaks and travel time must end, proper rest facilities must be provided and so on if we are to have safe, decent care. PFI, a never-ending debt owed largely to tax-payer owned banks, should be abolished. Our care systems are sustainable and effective in public hands.

The Labour Party should back the NHS Bill, and develop policy alongside health and social care workers and service users to restore the whole care system to the standard we deserve.

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