



# & Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## Our workmates, our friends, our neighbours



# DEFEND THEIR RIGHT TO STAY!

The House of Lords has voted by a large margin of 102 in favour of guaranteeing the rights of EU citizens in the UK after Brexit.

With 358 in favour to 256 against, the Lords backed an amendment to the Article 50 bill, the bill giving the Prime Minister the power to trigger the Brexit process. The amendment said that when the UK leaves the EU, EU citizens should keep all the rights they currently have, regardless of what happens during the Brexit negotiations.

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#### Starving our schools



The government's Budget gives money to free schools while existing schools face £3 billion cuts.

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#### What is the "social strike"?



Daniel Randall discusses the idea of the social strike.

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#### Real soldiers do feel sad



Carrie Evans discusses Stormzy's album and the stigma around mental health and young black men.

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#### Join Labour!

Momentum grassroots discuss what next

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# Grim picture in French elections

By Martin Thomas

On the website of the French daily *Le Monde*, Matthieu Goar writes: “If the MPs [of the main right-wing party, LR, The Republicans], Sarkozy [right-wing president 2007-2012], Juppé [prime minister 1995-7, and candidate to be LR nominee for president] and the others give the impression that they are ‘killing off’ Fillon by replacing him, the risk of some of Fillon’s voters going off to the National Front is not negligible.”

“At the Place du Trocadéro [in Paris, where Fillon held a defiant rally] I talked with many people who said that they would vote for [National Front presidential candidate Marine] Le Pen if Fillon is blocked”.

Seven weeks from the presidential election to be held on 23 April, with a second round on 7 May, and followed by legislative assembly elections on 11-18 June, the risk that far-rightist Marine Le Pen will win

is not disappearing.

Francois Fillon was voted in as LR nominee by an LR “primary”. He has pitched himself as a French Thatcher, intent on chopping 500,000 public-sector jobs, cutting immigration, revising Schengen free-movement rules, lopping off union strength via resort to under-the-gun plebiscites of workforces, etc.

Now he faces a financial scandal: LR leaders want him to back down, but so far he refuses. His ratings have slumped from a high of 26% to 17% (polling on 2-4 March). Marine Le Pen faces a similar scandal, but her voters don’t care. She remains ahead in polls for the first round.

On current polls, Le Pen will clearly lose in the second round run-off, where she will probably face Emmanuel Macron. Macron was the (right-wing) economy minister for a while in the Socialist Party government, and was a Socialist Party member (as a civil service high-flier) in 2006-9, before



Far-right danger: Marine Le Pen

working as a banker, returning to politics as an adviser to Socialist Party president Francois Hollande, then in 2016 forming his own little political party for his presidential bid.

Macron’s poll score is much less stable than Le Pen’s: 76% of her voters say they’re “sure” to back her, and only 39% of his.

Sadly, the two candidates proposing a real (revolutionary socialist) alternative, Nathalie Arthaud of Lutte Ouvrière and Philippe Poutou of the NPA, get only 0.5% or 1% in the polls. Poutou may fail to get the 500 signatures of mayors or other elected officials required even to get on the ballot paper. In 2002 similar revolutionary socialist candidates scored 10%.

The Socialist Party has a soft-left candidate, Benoit Hamon. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a slightly-less-soft left former SP minister who quit in 2008 to form an alliance (Front de Gauche) with the Communist Party, and since then has declared the FdG dead and formed another new party of his own, is also standing. The members of the CP (much reduced from its heyday, but still something of a force), voted by a narrow majority in a November 2016 poll to back Mélenchon. Hamon and Mélenchon are both a few per cent behind Fillon in the polls.

Since becoming leader of the

Front National in 2011 Marine Le Pen has essayed an operation on it something like Tony Blair’s on the Labour Party in the late 1990s — branding it as “neither left nor right”, as modern-but-bland, etc. — except that Le Pen and FN tout themselves as “patriots” opposing “globalists”, where Blair was an enthusiast for capitalist globalisation.

Le Pen has succeeded in widening the FN’s electorate — in the regional elections of 2015, the FN got 43% of manual workers and 35% of under-24s — though the FN still scores lower among women, among those with more formal education, and in big cities.

How far the FN has moved from its street-fighting fascist roots remains a problem for analysis. In any case, an FN victory would mean a vicious offensive against France’s Muslim and immigrant population, and probably a break-up of the European Union.

**Le Pen has promised a referendum to take France out of the EU and re-erect high borders.**

## Underground tomb found at Irish “mother and baby” home



By Rosalind Robson

**A Commission appointed by the Irish government to look into the mass burial of infants at a former “mother and baby” home has confirmed “significant quantities of human remains” have been found in the grounds of the home.**

The Commission was appointed in 2015 after historian Catherine Corless found death certificates for babies born at a home in Tuam, County Galway, but no burial records. The commission will look at how these babies died, whether they can be identified, and how dead bodies were disposed of, at up to 70 other similar homes.

The statement from the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation said test excavations had uncovered a “long structure divided into 20 chambers”, and that human remains were found in “at least 17 of the 20 underground chambers which were examined”. The bodies found ranged in age from premature babies to children age three. None was considered worthy to be given a funeral or a

marked grave.

Radiocarbon tests carried out on the human remains suggest that they date from the period the home was operation (1925-1961).

Corless came across the graveyard at Tuam when she was researching a history of the Catholic-run home. She wanted to know why graves were not marked on a local map.

From local people Corless heard that young boys who were playing at the site in the 1970s discovered some skeletal remains, but the matter was not investigated at the time.

Corless fought long and hard to bring the situation at Tuam to the attention of the Irish government.

### FALLEN WOMEN

**The Tuam home and others like it took in unmarried mothers who were regarded as “fallen women”. Tuam was run the Bon Secours order of nuns.**

A child would have died nearly every two weeks between the mid-1920s and 1960s. It is thought these deaths would mostly likely have been due to malnutrition.

But the deaths are just one part of

the horror and injustice associated with these homes.

J P Rodgers, who was born in the Tuam home, and has written two books about his experiences, told the BBC in 2014:

“My mother was put into care for begging when she was less than three years old and spent most of her life in Catholic Church-run institutions until she ran away to England when she was 34.”

Rodgers were separated from his mother and fostered when he was five.

“The day we separated she cut off a lock of my hair as a keepsake and she vowed that no church or state would be able to claim her son as long as she kept his hair. Growing up I knew there was something radically wrong with Irish society. It was wrong for any church to separate a mother from her infant.”

[At the time] “One faith, Christianity and the Catholic Church in particular, dominated so many aspects of life. Sex outside marriage was more than just a sin. The domination of the church was one in which the state and the people at the time willingly colluded.

“The victims were not just women and young girls who got locked up because they were pregnant. We now know from recent state reports they included children — the victims of institutional and clerical child sex abuse.”

And so it seems child victims of starvation.

**More details about these crimes will follow. It will surely mean further damage to the Catholic Church’s authority in Ireland. Good!**

## Civilians caught in Mosul crossfire

By Simon Nelson

**The Iraqi Government has been attempting to recapture Mosul since October last year.**

By the start of March 206,000 people had been displaced from Mosul, but 5,000 Daesh fighters remain.

Many camps set up by aid agencies are almost full and will be unable to cope with higher numbers. 650,000 civilians are thought to remain in the city

Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has ordered his fighters to “wreak havoc” in Mosul as a prelude to a Daesh “victory”.

Mosul is a diverse city with a Sunni majority, so the recapture by the Shia-dominated Iraqi state will have to be heavily monitored.

After the US troop surge in 2005, Sunni militias and Sunni areas were promised greater political representation and positions in the military and civil society by the post-war Iraqi state. None of that happened, and the Shia sectarian Iraqi state allowed Al Qaeda in Iraq to gain a foothold.

When the group — renamed as the Islamic State in Iraq — and al-Sham took Mosul and other districts in Iraq in June 2014, many Sunni Iraqis who had suffered terribly under the state acquiesced, though evidence is that they were fast disillusioned.

Both Shia militias and the Kurdish peshmerga have said they will not enter the city boundary, leaving the official Iraqi army responsible

for operations in the city. But the army’s advance into the centre of the city is likely to see further displacement and the potential for sectarian reprisals.

The Iraqi Foreign Secretary’s statement that the governance of Mosul must be structured as something “that commands the support of the people of the city” will be of no reassurance given the history of the Iraqi government.

The Iraqi army plans to stop the remaining Daesh fighters from leaving the city, but they are by all accounts starting to prepare themselves to blend in with the local population. That operation could well be an excuse to round up Sunni men.

Those militias that will not enter the city are charged with cutting off the Daesh supply routes. These are led by the Badr Organisation, the largest of the Shia militias and loyal to the cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Daesh are continuing suicide attacks against Iraqi troops and according to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) used chemical weapons causing severe burns to civilians in east Mosul. They have continued to fire chlorine and other chemical weapons in shells at Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the north of the city

**While it is almost impossible for Daesh to defeat the Iraqi troops, the recapture is likely to stretch into the summer. As the weather gets hotter, conditions for civilians will only get worse.**



# Fighting school cuts in Lewisham

By a Lewisham teacher

On Wednesday 1 March over 100 people attended a meeting to defend Forest Hill School called by Lewisham National Union of Teachers (NUT).

Forest Hill has discovered an £800,000 hole in its budget. The council is insisting on a restructure with the aim of losing £1.3 million off the wage budget. NUT members voted by 97% for strikes to stop compulsory redundancies and any increase to workload.

The meeting displayed resolute opposition to the cuts and an eagerness to act. The message is clear — the community, the children and the staff are not responsible for this deficit, and we are unwilling to pay the price for it. The meeting demanded that the council open the books. We need to see how this deficit happened. We also need to see what the alternatives are to the school's restructure. It was raised that the school is still making very large PFI payments.

Parents are working closely with the NUT, with regular leafleting organised and a series demonstrations being planned. An emergency motion supporting the strike and calling for the council to defend the school was passed at West



Lewisham and Penge Constituency Labour Party, a similar one will go to Lewisham Deptford Constituency on 9 March.

Frighteningly, the restructuring at Forest Hill is due to an existing deficit and is separate to and on top of the cuts that all schools are facing. According to the schoolcuts.org.uk website, set up by six education trade unions, the London Borough of Lewisham is facing cuts of over £21 million to its school budget by 2020. This amounts to £600 per pupil and is equivalent to the loss of 582 teachers' jobs across the borough. Lewisham Deptford is 24th highest in the list of top 100 constituencies to be hit by the cuts, Lewisham East is 30th and Lewisham West and Penge is 38th.

Lewisham NUT is working on defending our schools, children, communities and members in this difficult climate. We are buoyed by our success in fighting off the attempts to academise several of our schools two years ago and by the fact we have managed to keep the vast majority of our schools as Local Government controlled schools. We also remember the lead our community gave to hospital campaigners when we won our fight to Save Lewisham Hospital. We believe we can fight the school cuts, save our schools and help build a model of resistance to defend our children's education.

**The fight to defend Forest Hill will be the first foray and hopefully a model for the fights to come.**

# Protests hit new Trump ban

By Colin Foster

**Demonstrators in London will denounce US president Donald Trump's new travel ban on people from six Muslim-majority countries at a protest on 18 March (noon from Portland Place, London), already planned to mark UN anti-racism day.**

Anti-Trump protests continue in the USA. A listing for New York City shows 11 of them due between 7 March and 22 April, though it seems this more carefully-drafted new ban (7 March) has not yet evoked the frantic rush of new protests which the 27 January version did.

The new ban has no more valid "security" rationale than the first one. It serves only to stigmatise people from certain mainly-Muslim countries, chosen to be weak enough in power politics that the ban will bring the USA few diplomatic kickbacks, and by implication all Muslims.

It will hit people opposing and fleeing Islamist terror in countries where it is most dangerous, rather than Islamist terrorists themselves.

No-one from the six affected countries has been implicated in a fatal terror attack in the US since 2001. Around 800,000 refugees have come to the US since then. Only three have been convicted on terrorism-related charges (two for plots against an overseas target, the third for a "barely credible" plot).

Generally migrants and refugees have lower crime rates than the locally-born. A recently-leaked official US security report finds that of 82 people the US government reckoned to have been inspired by a foreign terrorist group to carry out or try to carry out an attack in the USA, over half were US citizens born in the United States. Of the rest, the biggest group were from Pakistan (too powerful for Trump to ban it), and very few from the "banned" countries (<http://apne.ws/2ISKNU0>).

**The 18 March demonstration should also target the fact that Britain is meaner towards refugees than the USA even under Trump, and especially the Tory government's recent decision to ban child refugees from Syria beyond only a token few.**



**Many tens of thousands joined the Our NHS demonstration on Saturday 4 March in London. Coaches organised by unions and health campaigns brought people from across the country. The demonstration was younger than some recent anti-austerity demonstrations, and there was a good turn out of Labour Party branches. But despite large unions backing the march, there were few union delegations on the day. Speakers at the end of demonstration rally included Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. However the Labour Leader's office could have done more to mobilise Labour Party support for the demonstration at a time when the NHS is at breaking point.**

# Government to splash out on free schools

By Charlotte Zalens

**The government is expected to announce an extra £320 million funding for extra school places in the budget on Wednesday 8 March.**

Will this money be spent where it is desperately needed? Will it do anything to offset the looming cuts of up to 25% expected by some local authorities? Not a chance!

The government is assigning the extra funding solely to the expansion of the free schools program; they are also indicating that new free schools will be allowed to be selective.

In February the National Audit Office found that the Department for Education had spent £863 million on land acquisition for free

schools — not to mention extra money building them — but that most of these new schools were not built where they were needed.

They estimated that of the 113,500 places to be created between 2015 and 2021, 57,000 would be unnecessarily replacing places in existing schools. Many new free schools are undersubscribed and being subsidised by the government at the expense of existing local schools.

The National Audit Office report also highlighted the bad state of repair of many school buildings, estimating that £6.7 billion is needed to sort it out

60% of the current school estate was built before 1976 and the cost of repairs is expected to rise. Yet the government is expected to allocate

just £216 million in the budget for rebuilding and refurbishing existing schools.

All of this is without mentioning the £3 billion cuts to existing school funding expected by the new schools funding formula, and increasing running costs.

Local campaigns against the school cuts are getting set up, with involvement from NUT branches and some local Labour Parties.

**Campaigning against school cuts, for fair and increased funding, should be a priority for the labour movement before schools are pitted against each other, staff are cut, and students suffer.**

• [www.fairfunding-forallschools.org/](http://www.fairfunding-forallschools.org/)

# Government starts student loan sell-off

By Mike Zubrowski

**The government has begun the sale of the assets of the Student Loans Company.**

It claims this will save public money without making graduates pay back more, and without changing their terms and conditions. This seems unlikely.

The sale of the £4 billion of loans

which were first eligible for repayment in 2002-6, is planned as the start of a process which will sell off more.

A similar plan was abandoned in 2014 by Vince Cable, claiming that it would not achieve its stated aim of reducing government debt. Whilst this claim was true, it seems likely this was also in response to widescale protests against the planned sale.

To successfully sell them at the price desired — and reduce government debt — the loans have to be made more attractive to private buyers.

To prepare for the sale, the government had already frozen the income thresholds at which students have to start repaying, and at which their interest rate reaches its maximum level, for at least five years until April 2021, a move

which automatically increases the repayment burden as inflation proceeds.

A less likely option is that the government will simply use public money to guarantee private profit; not changing repayment conditions, but not reducing government debt.

The fear of being saddled with astronomical student debt already puts many working-class people

off going to university.

Making what many fear seem more likely — that those in debt will later be made to repay more than they initially agreed — can only exacerbate the barriers to education.

**The National Union of Students need to mount a forceful campaign to stop this sell-off.**



# Puddle-drinkers and a crossword puzzle

## SCOTLAND

By Dale Street

**Attacks on Scottish nationalism have been coming thick and fast recently, bringing the puddle-drinkers (self-righteous Scottish nationalists) out in force.**

It began with Sadiq Khan's speech to the Scottish Labour Party conference: "There's no difference between those who try to divide us on the basis of whether we're English or Scottish and those who try to divide us on the basis of our background, race or religion."

The statement had been preceded by references to "Brexit, the election of President Trump in the United States and the rise of right-wing populist and narrow nationalist parties around the world."

It was followed by criticisms of "some in Scotland who try to define London as your enemy ... They make out London is always working to undermine Scotland. That is not my London and it's not Labour's London."

All this touched a raw nerve. A lot of Khan's critics seemed not to have even understood (or wanted to understand) what he actually said: "SNP equals Nazis is Labour's new defence of Britain? Do you oppose all nation states then? ... He just called 50% of Scots racists. Some understanding!"

Instead of speaking in Scotland, Khan was advised to concentrate on the problems he had created in London: "I just don't know who the hell Sadiq Khan thinks he is. He has already got London into a Bengali slum. He needn't start on Scotland. He needs to go."

Needless to say, there was no sympathy for those who defended Khan's comments: "Load of nonsense. You're defending a libelling scumbag who has come to Scotland and lied, as did Corbyn."

The publication of an article defending Khan in the *Guardian* triggered a fresh round

of breast-beating indignation among nationalists who — when not engaged in unending attempts to gag critically minded journalists — excel in extolling their toleration of dissent.

"Sadiq Khan was not wrong to compare Scottish nationalism to racism or religious intolerance, at least not entirely. Someone has to say it: the parallels are clear," wrote Claire Heuchan. "As a black Scottish woman I too fear the politics of division. Zeal for national identity inevitably raises questions of who belongs and who is an outsider."

Within 24 hours Heuchan had been hounded off Twitter by cybernats abuse: She was an African who had no right to discuss Scotland, she was not really Scottish, and the University of Stirling should sack her (even though she was a student, not an employee, at the university).

Running true to form, Wings Over Scotland, the ultimate form of Scottish-nationalist low life, took the lead in abusing Heuchan: "What an absolute galactic-class cuntwit."

The news that Heuchan had quit Twitter was the signal for another round of abuse and denunciations — of Heuchan herself.

"More MSM Yoon propaganda. Unqualified nonsense... Her piece was sanctimonious self-regarding claptrap from a Unionist shill. It got the reaction you were hoping for. ... I'm sure some people did step over the mark, folk are angry, but this cry victim shit is unbelievable."

"Woman who linked racism with Scottish nationalism quits Twitter over severe case of embarrassment/shame There ya go, fixed.... Her accusations were disgusting and her views should not have been published... Someone writes an awful uninformed piece of clickbait, is asked questions, locks her account and runs away. Fake news."

Later it was being said that the publication of the piece by Heuchan was part of a sustained attack by the *Guardian* on the SNP and its leader. The proof was provided by that



day's cryptic crossword.

12 across: Ruling nationalist's way to encourage progress. And right next to that, 14 across: Carmen is close to perfect for discriminating fellow. Answers: "Sturgeon" and "Racist". This could not possibly be a coincidence!

"So the racist crossword is real. Let's be clear about this: the *Guardian* is pure British establishment. They are an attack dog for the UK... Why did you imply in your crossword that Nicola Sturgeon was a racist? Why are you stirring it up? Call yourselves liberal?"

Inevitably, the cryptic crossword was the trigger for yet another boycott campaign:

"I have cancelled my subscription today. Final straw: your outrageous clues in today's crossword. ... The *Guardian* never coming into this house again. ... That's the last donation to their news operation from me."

(By this point in the week the puddle-drinkers had become so obsessed with the non-existent accusation that the SNP equals racism or the Nazis — please, take your pick — that they failed to notice that the answer to 1 down, which ran into "Sturgeon", was "Prevent".)

The week was rounded off with the chance for yet another display of joyous, civic nationalism, occasioned by the Scottish Tories' conference in Glasgow. It was too good an opportunity to miss:

"Let's be clear. The Tory MSPs and Mundell lauded by Ruth Davidson are the English Tory fifth column in Scotland. 'Scottish' in name only. ... Oliver Mundell is the sort of public speaker

that makes you wish his father had embraced his homosexuality sooner."

"Ruth Davidson should be hanging her head in shame to call herself Scottish. She is working against Scotland. There is a word for that! ... Would be a lot better if Theresa May stayed in a nation that votes for her rather than come to lecture a nation that doesn't vote for her."

(Leaving aside the equating of voting patterns with nations, Theresa May has never actually stood for election in Scotland — a nation where the Tories are the second largest party in Parliament.)

**A week began with contrived self-righteous indignation at Sadiq Khan's argument that Scottish nationalism was a divisive political force. The rest of the week was one long vindication of what he said.**

# All risks and nuclear risks

## LETTERS

**The debate in *Solidarity* on nuclear power is in danger of missing three points.**

The first is that all forms of energy production carry risks; the second is that some risks are more visible than others; the third is that some risks are exaggerated while others are ignored or minimised.

Laker and Zubrowski (*Solidarity* 431) warn that the left should not support nuclear power because of "its radioactive byproduct, unique [but unspecified] risk" and contribution to carbon emissions.

Nuclear's carbon emissions (due to mining, its use of concrete and steel) are essentially one-off and minimal: they are lower than those of solar power and hydroelectric and comparable to those of wind and tidal power. They are far lower than those of any fossil fuel.

The problem of radioactive waste has been greatly exaggerated. Deep storage in geologically stable rocks is perfectly safe and radioactive matter does not leach into ground water, even if the containers deteriorate. It would not reach the surface anyway. Furthermore, thorium-fuelled nuclear power stations could "burn up" existing high-level

waste (and redundant bombs), reducing the volume of waste by at least an order of magnitude. Thorium power will probably not be developed by capitalist nuclear companies (without substantial state aid) but could be by socialist societies. It is difficult to comment on nuclear's "unique risk" without further explanation.

But surely alternative energy is safe? Not solar electricity. The silicon required for photovoltaic panels is obtained from quartz, the mining of which exposes workers to the risk of silicosis, a serious, debilitating, and ultimately fatal lung disease. Since silica, the compound that makes up quartz, is one of the most common compounds in the Earth's crust, silicosis can affect any miner and a range of other workers who breathe rock dust. In the last 21 years (i.e. since the Chernobyl disaster), silicosis has killed about a million people worldwide, while the total provable deaths from 60 years of nuclear power is less than 100. There is no evidence to support higher estimates of probable deaths from releases of radioactive matter from Chernobyl and the small number of other accidents. There have undoubtedly been many thousands of deaths among uranium miners from breathing radon but this figure pales into insignificance alongside the

deaths that occur from fossil fuel extraction, processing, and combustion. Even hydroelectric power has resulted in far more deaths than nuclear (more than, and possibly much more than, 27,000) through dam collapses and flooding.

I am not sure what Laker and Zubrowski mean by responding aggressively to the Tories' claim that they are reducing carbon emissions by expanding nuclear. We should certainly criticise their refusal to properly fund nuclear power (as with the Blair government), instead relying on sweetheart deals with French and Chinese state companies which look like going wrong anyway. There are several alternative approaches to nuclear power that socialists should support, not least thorium-powered reactors which can't melt down but which can reduce radioactive waste.

Of course, we can and must support all forms of alternative energy that do not have unacceptable consequences. Incidentally, I can find no support for the assertion that Morocco's solar power plants will supply all its energy needs by 2020.

**Current plans seem to suggest that only 1/7th would come from these.**

Les Hearn, north London

## No proof of the bias

**Besides the exaggerations about nuclear power's relative risks, on which I concur with Les Hearn, Neil Laker's and Mike Zubrowski's letter (*Solidarity* 431) relies on three unsubstantiated claims.**

One, that the government (or capitalists generally?) have a "bias in favour of new nuclear". But capitalist governments almost all across the world developed little new nuclear power for decades after oil and gas prices moderated in the 1980s, and are only tentatively restarting. They hesitate to make the big, long-term, planned investments which nuclear requires.

Two, that nuclear-power development cuts across renewables. Germany is the counter-example: its program of phasing out nuclear power by 2022 has, despite more official support for renewables there than here, led to more use of coal.

Three, that biomass is a sufficient and superior "baseload" alternative.

**I do not presume to prescribe nuclear expansion; only to favour continued production of electricity, including "baseload" provision, and to see no socialist reason to exclude nuclear from the mix.**

Martin Thomas, north London



# Defend EU migrants' right to stay!



One Day Without Us national day of action (20 February) in defence of migrants and refugees

The House of Lords has voted by a large margin of 102 in favour of guaranteeing the rights of EU citizens in the UK after Brexit.

With 358 in favour to 256 against, the Lords backed an amendment to the Article 50 bill, the bill giving the Prime Minister the power to trigger the Brexit process. The amendment said that when the UK leaves the EU, EU citizens should keep all the rights they currently have, regardless of what happens during the

Brexit negotiations.

The debate on 1 March came down on the correct side, but we can't and shouldn't pin our hopes on the unelected second chamber. The matter will be decided in the House of Commons, which has already rejected a similar demand. And time is short: the government wants to invoke Article 50 by the end of March. Before that happens — and beyond — we must build the largest possible campaign to defend the rights of EU migrants —

including UK migrants in other EU states.

Nearly three million citizens of other EU member states live in the UK, and the government is arguing that their rights should not be guaranteed until the UK receives similar guarantees from the EU about the 1.2 million UK citizens living in other member states. In short, the Tories are using EU citizens living in the UK as a bargaining chip.

That is wrong, said the Lords, and they were right. The arguments they made were moral, and also practical: for example, 55,000 EU nationals work as doctors and nurses in the NHS.

EU migrants are now living in fear, unable to make plans about their homes, their children's schools, their futures. This insecurity also strengthens the hands of unscrupulous employers who can use it to ratchet up exploitation.

Trade unions should campaign for employers to provide legal advice and pay costs for migrant workers to strengthen their legal status.

We must build a movement ready to resist any expulsions, and fight the rise in xenophobia that is an inevitable consequence of the Brexit process. Unison helped to organise a "Right to Remain" day of action on 20 February. That is a good start — now we must build living campaigns in every workplace and every town to make that policy effective.

**We must argue for the rights of all people to travel, work and live freely where they choose.**

## Biggest EU national populations living in the UK

Poland — 853,000  
Republic of Ireland — 331,000  
Romania — 175,000  
Portugal — 175,000  
Source: Office of National Statistics

**Biggest populations of UK citizens in other EU member states**  
Spain — 310,000  
Republic of Ireland — 255,000  
France — 185,000  
Source: United Nations



## The cuts get worse

The cuts get worse. That's Philip Hammond's 8 March Budget in a nutshell.

As we go to press on 7 March, Hammond may dispense some sops for local authority social care. It is conceivable the government will row back on its pre-programmed denial of Housing Benefit to 18-21 year old. The income tax threshold will probably be raised, reducing tax bills a little for many and more for the rich.

But the Tories' rolling, cumulative cuts will continue. The freeze (in nominal terms: i.e., real-terms cut) in working-age benefits will continue. Government departments are being asked to outline further spending cuts of 3% and 6%. Schools are due to lose £3 billion a year by 2020.

The government is introducing emergency legislation to override a court decision limiting its cuts in Personal Independent Payments to disabled people. The disabled have suffered worse from the cuts than anyone else. Another large group which has suffered exceptionally is lone parents: according to the Women's Budget Group, the cumulative impact of changes in taxes, benefits and spending on public services between 2010 and 2020 will be a 19% cut in living standards for lone mothers, and 15% for lone fathers.

Real incomes after housing costs look like falling between 2014-15 and 2021-22 for the poorest 15% of households on average, so the government is planning for an increase in income inequality over the coming years. The official rate of poverty after housing costs is on track to rise from 21.3% in 2014-15 to 23.6% in 2021-22.

Pensioners have suffered from the cuts, too. But less. The Tories look like increasing the state pension again, while working-age benefits are frozen.

Incomes for households headed by 25-44 year olds are still not back to their level before the 2008 crisis, while average pensioner household incomes have grown by 9 per cent in the same period. Average pensioner incomes after housing costs are now higher than those of average working-age households.

A fundamental reason is that pensioners are active and influential in political parties, and they vote. Young people are as generous and lively in activism as ever, but in sporadic, intermittent, scattered ways: they are less active in consistent week-by-week political movement-building, and they vote less.

**The Corbyn surge gave the Labour Party an opening to change that imbalance and bring a fresh generation into week-by-week political activism. As yet, that opportunity is largely being wasted. Turning that round is central to building a movement to push back the cuts.**

**Solidarity 433 will go to press on 21 March.**

## Help us raise £20,000

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

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

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

But to make our archive of real use we need professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date and subject and optimised for mobile reading. We need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our news coverage is up to the minute and shared on social media. We want to raise £20,000 by our conference in November 2017. Any amount will help.



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# The paradox of February

## TROTSKY'S RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



Continuing a series of extracts from Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. On 2 March 1917 a Provisional Government is formed; it has the support of the Petrograd soviet. Trotsky explains why the February revolution ended with a transfer of power to the liberal bourgeoisie.

If you look only backward to past ages, the transfer of power to the bourgeoisie seems sufficiently regular: in all past revolutions who fought on the barricades were workers, apprentices, in part students, and the soldiers came over to their side. But afterwards the solid bourgeoisie, having cautiously watched the barricades through their windows, gathered up the power.

But the February revolution of 1917 was distinguished from former revolutions by the incomparably higher social character and political level of the revolutionary class, by the hostile distrust of the insurrectionists toward the liberal bourgeoisie, and the consequent formation at the very moment of victory of a new organ of revolutionary power, Soviet, based upon the armed strength of the masses. In these circumstances the transfer of power to a politically isolated and unarmed bourgeoisie demands explanation.

Was not the Soviet democracy compelled by the objective situation to renounce the power in favour of the big bourgeoisie? The bourgeoisie itself did not think so. We have already seen that it not only did not expect power from the revolution, but on the contrary foresaw in it a mortal danger to its whole social situation. The experience of 1905 had too significantly hinted to the liberals that a victory of the workers and peasants might prove no less dangerous to the bourgeoisie than to the monarchy.

It would seem that the course of the February insurrection had only confirmed this foresight. However formless in many respects may have been the political ideas of the revolutionary masses in those days, the dividing line between the toilers and the bourgeoisie was at any rate implacably drawn.

Stankevich who was close to liberal circles — a friend, not an enemy of the Progressive Bloc — characterises in the following way the mood of those circles on the second day after the overturn which they had not succeeded in preventing: "Officially they celebrated, eulogised the revolution, cried 'Hurrah!' to the fighters for freedom, decorated themselves with red ribbons and marched under red banners... But in their souls, their conversations tête-à-tête, they were horrified..."

The power was from the very first moment in the hands of the soviet — upon that question the Duma members less than anybody else could cherish that illusion. The Octobrist deputy Shidlovsky, one of the leaders of the Progressive Bloc, relates how, "The Soviet seized all the Post and Telegraph bureaux, the wireless, all the Petro-

grad railroad stations, all the printing establishments, so that without its permission it was impossible to send a telegram, to leave Petrograd, or to print an appeal."

How did it happen then that in such a situation the liberals turned out to be in power?

A minority of the revolutionary class actually participates in the insurrection, but the strength of that minority lies in the support, or at least sympathy, of the majority. The active and militant minority inevitably puts forward under fire from the enemy its more revolutionary and self-sacrificing element.

It is thus natural that in the February fights the worker-Bolshevik occupied the leading place. But the situation changes the moment the victory is won and its political fortification begins. The elections to the organs and institutions of the victorious revolution attract and challenge infinitely broader masses than those who battled with arms in their hands.

This is true not only of general democratic institutions like the city dumas and zemstvos, or later on, the Constituent Assembly, but also of class institutions, like the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. An overwhelming majority of the workers, Menshevik, Social Revolutionary and non-party, supported the Bolsheviks at the moment of direct grapple with Tsarism. But only a small minority of the workers understood that the Bolsheviks were different from other socialist parties.

At the same time, however, all the workers drew a sharp line between themselves and the bourgeoisie. This fact determined the political situation after the victory. The workers elected socialists, that is, those who were not only against the monarchy, but against the bourgeoisie. In doing this they made almost no distinction between the three socialist parties. And since the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries comprised infinitely larger ranks of the intelligentsia — who came pouring in from all sides — and thus got into their hands immediately an immense staff of agitators, the elections, even in shops and factories, gave them an enormous majority.

Meanwhile the socialists, having so easily arrived at the head of the soviets, were worrying about only one question: will the bourgeoisie, politically isolated, hated by the masses and hostile through and through to the revolution, consent to accept the power from our hands? Its consent must be won at any cost.

And since obviously a bourgeoisie cannot renounce its bourgeois programme, we, the "socialists," will have to renounce ours: we will have to keep still about the monarchy, the war, the land, if only the bourgeoisie will accept the gift of power. In carrying out this operation, the "socialists," as though to ridicule themselves, continued to designate the bourgeoisie no otherwise than as their class enemy. In the ceremonial forms of their worship was thus introduced an act of arrant blasphemy.

**The fundamental character of a revolution lies in its carrying the class struggle to its conclusion. A revolution is a direct struggle for power. Nevertheless, our "socialists" are not worried about getting the power away from the class enemy who does not possess it, and could not with his own forces seize it, but, just the opposite, with forcing this power upon him at any cost.**

# What is the "social strike"?

By Daniel Randall

**Recent strikes by "gig economy" workers (e.g. Deliveroo) are profoundly significant. They explode the myth, peddled by some on both left and right, that so-called precarious workers can't organise, and that the proliferation of those types of work is in the process of rendering labour organising historically redundant.**

Some on the radical left confer a particular significance on these sort of strikes and have coupled them with the notion of "the social strike". This idea, for instance by the group Plan C, has been put forward as a way to overcome the current weakness of organised labour as a social force. I struggle to understand exactly what the "social strike" is.

Part of my difficulty stems from the fact that Plan C and their co-thinkers deploy the term in a variety of not-always-consistent ways. Sometimes it seems to be used to describe a "strike" that does not actually involve a withdrawal of labour by salaried workers, but a more amorphous social stoppage or disruption, perhaps by unpaid caregivers or paperless migrants.

This is the model described by the Roberta Ferrari from the Transnational Social Strike project, in which Plan C is involved, in an interview she gave to *Solidarity* in October 2015: "What we want is to go beyond these forms of organisation [unions], to really attack precarity in its several faces, connecting different figures of labour inside and outside the workplaces, in the sphere of reproduction, both formal and informal."

Alternatively it is used to describe a more "traditional" strike that seeks to "socialise" itself by taking action beyond the boundaries of the economic relationship between boss and worker — for example, "revenue strikes" by transport workers in which they open ticket turnstiles at train stations, allowing the public free transport (something that was experimented with on the Tube, largely at the urging of Workers' Liberty comrades, in 2014; it had mixed results at the time, but I feel it should be experimented with again).

As Al Mikey puts it in an interview with Callum Cant on the topic, published on the Plan C website, the social strike is a "generalising process of antagonisms that goes beyond the initial conflict between labour and capital in production and into society."

Or, as in the case of the Deliveroo and UberEats strikes\*, it appears one can just slap the label "social strike" on anything that isn't an "official" strike by an established union, involving a ballot mandate, formal notification to the employer, and so on, and say it's not only a "social strike" but a "new kind of strike action".

The concept might have some value. But that value will be hard to unlock and apply if the term continues to be employed to mean essentially whatever one likes.

When Callum says of the Deliveroo and UberEats strikes that "we're witnessing the birth of new kinds of strike action", he is just wrong. The "kinds of strike action" the Deliveroo and UberEats drivers have taken — basic, stop-the-job wildcats — could hardly be less "new". They are the oldest and most rudimentary strike forms of all, and, as Cal-

lum rightly notes, often the most effective. A fetishisation of novelty can sometimes blind us to the fact that what's required is not "new kinds of strike action", or new forms of organisation, but rather a rediscovery and re-learning of old lessons, ideas, and strategies, now forgotten or lost.

We need, if you like, to get back to "the old new"; I'd emphasise in particular the period of "New Unionism" in the 1880s as providing models for how workers in so-called "new" industries, working with "new" kinds of employment arrangements (in fact, neither are truly "new") might organise.

There's something of a tendency amongst some on the left to both misidentify and overstate what's "new" in all of this. Read some of the analysis on the "gig economy" or the "precariat" you'd be forgiven for thinking that, very shortly, no-one in Britain will have a salaried job anymore, and no large workplaces will exist, but rather we'll all be, to use Nathan Barley's prophetic phrase, "self-facilitating media nodes".

To some that might even be a good thing, something to welcome; others argue it will render us incapable of organising against our auto-exploitation at a workplace level and in a collective way, because we don't have a workplace and aren't part of a collective.

But Callum is right to say that the Deliveroo and UberEats strikes should put paid to the idea that "gig economy" workers can't organise. And, beyond this, there are still plenty of mass workplaces around, and they are still essential to capitalist economic functioning. A university, a hospital, or a supermarket distribution centre has more in common with an old-style industrial combine or factory complex than it does with the "gig economy". The notorious warehouses of Sports Direct and Amazon are more like 19th century mills than anything "new".

## STRATEGIC

**In industries and sections of the economy that have the most strategic importance to capital, such as telecommunications, transport and energy, workers retain a high degree of what one might call "old-fashioned" industrial leverage.**

Certainly, precarious forms of work exist in these industries too (outsourcing and hyper-exploitative, bogus self-employment is rife on the railways, particularly amongst cleaners and track workers), but the extent to which these phenomena are entirely new is arguable: the dock workers in the 1880s, integral to "New Unionism", had acutely precarious forms of employment, but also immense leverage and power.

The issue in these industries and in other hugely strategic sectors like education and logistics, is not that an objective process of "recomposition" (another term beloved of Plan C) has taken place which has rendered workers powerless. The missing elements are *subjective*: levels of organisation, and fundamentally, consciousness.

In the aforementioned interview, Al discusses how he and his comrades related to the 2011 public sector strikes. "Only people already in unions could go on strike", he says. This is straightforwardly untrue: anyone in a workplace where a strike is taking





place can participate in that strike, whether they're a member of the union organising it or not. It's not clear what the critique here actually is; perhaps it is that the mass public sector unions had failed to also organise strikes in the workplaces and industries where Al and his comrades worked.

Al describes the work the proto-Plan C group, then an "ad hoc collective", did around the 2011 strike: "Following that we had multiple assemblies leading up to both strike days, and then on the days themselves we organised two blockades, one in north London, one in south London. The idea was that we would basically march from picket to picket. In the end it involved 200-300 people in each blockade, with sound systems and stuff. There was already this idea of opening up strike participation, trying to find our way towards a general strike."

This is all admirable, useful, and necessary. But the implied relationship between proto-Plan C and the strike itself is one of intervention from the outside. There's no sense that any of the comrades involved might have been strikers, or union reps, themselves (even though some of them probably were), intervening directly in their unions to attempt to build rank-and-file organisation and an alternative direction for the strike.

Indeed, at one point, Al even asks of the strike "who is allowed in, who's allowed to utilise the strike weapon?", as if the strikers were somehow acting in an exclusionary way by striking. There's a potentially very problematic logic to some of this; if we're aiming to make a given strike the property of the whole class, so to speak, and to generalise participation, we have to be careful we don't

act in such a way as to undermine the impact of the strike.

These potential problems become more acute in other Plan C comrades' writing. In his article "On Social Strikes and Directional Demands", Plan C's Keir Milburn writes, of a 1995 transport workers' strike in Paris, "the disruption of transport revealed a key point of leverage but also because the strike seemed to have made Paris more sociable in some ways. In order to deal with the strike people had to cooperate more, perhaps by car pooling or walking together and therefore getting a different perspective on the city. It was this increased sociability that provoked the title 'social' strike but this dimension seems to have been lost a bit in recent discussions."

This treads an extremely fine line. It's worryingly close to the "how Londoners beat the Tube strike"-type rhetoric one regularly encounters in the *Evening Standard* or on LBC during our strikes, which happily sneers that our strike wasn't that disruptive after all, as people took the bus, or rode a scooter, or... car pooled, even, to get to work. It also has echoes of the Green Party's community clean-ups during Brighton bin workers' strikes. If "socialising a strike" means "finding ways for people not involved in it to minimise its impact", count me out.

Back to 2011, and Al critiques the mechanistic calls from the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party for the TUC to "call a general strike", but, despite identifying "the problem of power and counterpower", the strategy he describes appears like a more-left-wing version of the same thing — an attempt to find a shortcut to "generalise the strike"

without the existence of the subjective element necessary to do that: a consciously and independently-organised rank-and-file, acting as a counterweight to the power of the bureaucracy. That element cannot be conjured into being from outside, but must be developed within workplaces and within the existing unions.

Al says: "Traditionally power came from mass collective action at the point of production, but we couldn't replicate that, because we ourselves weren't involved in it." It's not quite clear who the "we" in this sentence is, but it seems rather solipsistic. It's hard to read this as saying anything other than "me and my comrades didn't work in workplaces that were involved in the strike".

Fine; when workers from a workplace in which we have no comrades go on strike, Workers' Liberty necessarily relates to the strike "from the outside", seeking to support it and help amplify it, and, if we can, to engage the workers in discussions about the strategy and direction of the strike. But we are still relating to it from within the broad labour movement, and we don't extrapolate from our external position that "mass collective action at the point of production" might in some way be old hat because we happened not to be directly involved in it at that moment.

The way Al seems to conceive of "the social strike" implies a permanently external, rather than integral, relationship between a strike and those trying to "socialise" it. But the agency most fundamentally capable of "socialising" a strike is surely the group of striking workers themselves.

What is lacking from any of this is any perspective for transforming the existing labour movement. I'm well aware that for many in Plan C, this is not the starting point, and perhaps not a concern at all; I've met comrades in Plan C who reject the idea that the existing unions can be transformed; or that the workplace is structurally privileged as a site of struggle; or that the exploitative relationship between boss and worker is the fundamentally defining relation within capitalism.

But a mass labour movement in the UK still exists. It comprises seven million members, and represents the accumulated experience, for better and worse, of 200 years of struggle. It is the organically-generated expression of class conflict, given organisational form. It is profoundly, abjectly inadequate, but it has to be gone through, not around; it is not possible, even if it were desirable, to build a new, better, labour movement from scratch. Even independent and minority-union projects like the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain and the United Voices of the World, are in some sense defined by their relationship to the mass labour movement.

And in the current moment, when an immense political upheaval is taking place inside Labour, the political party founded by and structurally linked to the trade union movement, one might imagine that one way to explore the "socialisation" of strikes, to generalise the antagonisms expressed in them, might be to join that party, which provides an existing network of social organisation (certainly still moribund in some places, but in other revitalised and invigorated by the Corbyn surge). But any orientation towards the Labour Party seems absent from Plan C's perspective.

Undoubtedly, in a high pitch of struggle the labour movement itself will be "recomposed". But to achieve that requires the development of a consciously transformative project within the existing movement — an insurgent rank-and-file which aims to radically democratise unions, make them more combative and militant, and expand them into currently unorganised sections of the economy.

## ITALY

**Plan C's key historical reference point often seems to be the Italian workers' movement of the 1960s and 70s.**

I would urge the comrades to look at experiences such as the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation in the 1970s, and the work of Farrell Dobbs, Carl Skoglund, the Dunne brothers, and others in Local 574 of the Teamsters' union in Minneapolis (whose story is told in the book *Teamster Rebellion*) for other examples of how a coherently organised group of revolutionary workers within a particular industry and union can act as a lever to affect substantial transformation, catalyse struggles, and win victories.

Plan C comrades might even recognise an early conception of the "social strike", of the strike as "an accelerant", which poses "the question of power and counterpower" in society at large, in Leon Trotsky's *The Transitional Programme* (1938). Responding to the factory occupation of auto workers in Flint, Michigan, in 1936, Trotsky wrote: "Sit-down strikes [occupations] go beyond the limits of 'normal' capitalist procedure. Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary seizure of factories deals a blow to the idol, capitalist property. Every sit-down strike poses in a practical manner the question of who is the boss in the factory: the capitalist or the workers?"

If that is what Plan C mean by the "social strike" — taking a strike "beyond the limits of 'normal' capitalist procedure" — then that is an aim we wholeheartedly share. To amplify what those of us in the Trotskyist tradition might call the "transitional" logic of every strike should certainly be the aspiration of revolutionaries.

**But without an orientation to the existing labour movement, the mechanism through which the vast majority of strikes will still take place and the mass social expression of class conflict in organisational form, and a perspective for transforming it, bureaucratic control of our movement will persist, and the growth of class power will be stunted.**

\* Author note: Callum has since made it clear he does not regard the Deliveroo and UberEats strikes as "social strikes", and believes that my article misrepresents him. My apparent confusion arose from the fact that his Novara piece's comment about "new kinds of strike action" was hyperlinked to the interview about social strikes; I therefore assumed that this is partially what he meant when he referred to their "novelty". But this was merely a jumping off point for a wider discussion of the "social strike" concept.

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# The Jewish Question and universalism

**Dale Street reviews *Antisemitism and the Left: On the Return of the Jewish Question* by Robert Fine and Philip Spencer.**

**Central to *Antisemitism and the Left* is the concept of universalism as “an equivocal principle” which “shows two faces to the world”.**

There is the “emancipatory face”, which looks to embrace all humankind in a shared civil, political and social inclusiveness. And there is the “repressive face”, which marks out and excludes “the other” who is deemed not to meet the criteria for membership of humanity.

The Jewish experience of universalism has been as equivocal as the principle itself. The emancipatory face of universalism has been a stimulus for Jewish emancipation. But its repressive face has been a source of anti-Jewish prejudice through to the present.

This is an expression of the duality inherent in universalism: Jewish emancipation (in the name of the universal values which it proclaims) and “the Jewish question” (which defines Jews as harmful to humanity, and proffers a variety of “solutions”).

*Antisemitism and the Left* is an historical analysis of the tension between these two faces of universalism. It begins with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. It moves on to Marx and later classic Marxist thinkers. And it concludes with the contemporary orthodox-left approach to Zionism and Israel.

The universalism articulated by the Enlightenment and realised (however imperfectly) by the French Revolution liberated Jews from the repression they faced in the old order: “It set in motion processes that allowed the Jews of Europe to enter the modern world.”

## ESSENCE

**But Jewish emancipation went hand-in-hand with the concept of “the Jewish question”, rooted in the perceived essential nature of Jewishness. According to *The Civic Improvement of Jews*, by pro-Jewish-emancipation pamphleteer Christian von Dohm:**

“It would be better if the Jews, along with their prejudices, did not exist — but since they do exist, do we really still have a choice from among the following: wipe them off the face of the earth; let them remain in perpetuity the same unwholesome members of society they have been thus far; or make them better citizens of the world?”

The same tension between Jewish emancipation and the Jewish question manifested itself in public debates in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Firstly, in the debate between Hegel (pro-emancipation) and the radical populist Jacob Fries (pro-expulsion: Jews were a hostile and alien entity in the emergent German nation). Secondly, in the more famous debate between Marx and the Young Hegelian Bruno Bauer.

Bauer championed universalism in the form of “the cause of humanity” and the progressive development embodied by human history.

Jews, he argued, were incapable of growing spiritually as human beings. As “the chosen people”, they stood outside of history and the cause of humanity. Emancipation was therefore not only to be opposed but was positively dangerous.

Marx defended Jewish emancipation. He did so using language and arguments which

continue to provoke controversy. But Fine and Spencer are not only defensive of Marx’s overall approach. They also highlight the unqualified nature of Marx’s support for Jewish emancipation:

“Marx supported Jewish emancipation unequivocally and without conditions. ... In defending Jewish emancipation against the restoration of the Jewish question, Marx reaffirmed the subjective right of Jews to be citizens, to be Jews, and to deal creatively, singularly, in their own way, with their Jewish origins.”

Fine and Spencer move on from Marx himself to post-Marx Marxism and its commitment to the universalism of international class solidarity — where the same duality manifested itself.

In the late nineteenth century Marxists generally rejected the politics of antisemitism, and yet many of them shared the starting point of the Jewish question:

“They were still tempted to explain antisemitism in terms of the harm Jews continued to inflict on society and to look to improvement in the behaviour of Jews as at least the first step to do away with antisemitism.”

(As the book’s authors point out, the universalistic principles espoused by Marxists also generated “a self-confidence” that Marxism was “incompatible with antisemitism” and that “the idea of a ‘left antisemitism’ was an impossible oxymoron.”)

After a brief overview of the positions taken by Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky in the opening decades of the twentieth century and a sustained attack on Stalinism, Fine and Spencer turn their attention to the writings of Horkheimer and Adorno.

Nazi antisemitism posed fundamental questions for Horkheimer and Adorno about civilisation and the prospects for humanity itself: “Whoever accuses the Jews today aims straight at humanity itself.”

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* they subsequently argued that neither liberalism nor Christianity had been capable of providing an effective response to Nazi antisemitism. Both had conceded ground by counterposing universalism to the other, and by accepting the existence of a Jewish question.

Liberalism had demanded that Jews give up elements of their Jewishness as a condition of entering civilised society, while Christianity saw Judaism as an obstacle to human progress. But, Horkheimer and Adorno concluded, there could be no truly human society as long as antisemitism existed:

“... The long absent idea is likely to develop that Jews too are human beings. This



**Hannah Arendt: redefining universalism**

development would represent the step out of an antisemitic society and into the human society. The Jewish question would then be the turning point of history.”

In the following two chapters Hannah Arendt’s views of assimilation, Zionism and cosmopolitanism are given a sympathetic hearing, and Jurgen Habermas’s concept of a post-national political community a much less sympathetic one.

Arendt attempted to overcome the tensions between the universalism of assimilation (based on a denial of Jewish otherness) and the particularism of Zionism (based on a denial of the principle of universalism), and to replace “abstract cosmopolitanism” with a “real cosmopolitanism”.

## HABERMAS

**Habermas’s concepts of the post-national political community and constitutional patriotism, on the other hand, are criticised for opening the door to counterposing (good, post-nationalist) universalism to the (bad, non-constitutional-patriotic) other.**

Habermas had intended otherwise. In fact, overcoming and eradicating the conditions which gave rise to antisemitism were central to his concept of post-nationalism: it would supersede the nationalistic forms of political community which had given rise to genocidal antisemitism.

But for other writers the concept of the post-national political community has provided a new form of the Jewish question: “It turns the Jewish nation into the ‘other’ of the post-national. The Jewish nation becomes the personification of radical alterity.”

This new “left” universalism relegates antisemitism to the past, divorces contemporary antisemitism from other forms of racism, dismisses allegations of antisemitism as a cynical ploy to discredit critics of Israel, and alleges that the universal significance of the Holocaust has been abandoned in favour of Jewish particularism.

As Fine and Spencer put it: “We are confronted here by a discourse that subverts the universalism it espouses by turning the signifier ‘Jew’ into the other.” It is a discourse which “assumes the forms of enlightenment, progressiveness, antiracism and cosmopolitanism.”

But that does not make it any the less antisemitic.

The final chapter of the book deals with the most contemporary and most pervasive refiguring of the Jewish question: the unremittingly negative portrayals of Israel and Zionism as the antithesis of universal values.

In the name of (supposedly) universally accepted human rights, Israel is damned for committing genocide, for its institutionalisation of an apartheid regime, and for representing a major threat to world peace. In the name of the same universalism, Zionism is damned as inherently racist.

The inaccuracy of such claims goes with the representation of Israel as the alterity of universalism: Israel is the “unwholesome member” of the international community and must therefore be excluded from it, if not destroyed completely.

On one level, this new form of the Jewish question is no different in substance from the Jewish question in the past: “A distortion of universalism that see Jews as the problem and demands a solution to this problem.”

On another level the contemporary form of the Jewish question illustrates the regression of the universalism of the Enlightenment at the hands of sections of the liberal intelligentsia and soi-disant Marxists.

Dohm saw Jews as “unwholesome members of society”. But his response was not to “wipe them off the face of the earth.” It was to advocate Jewish emancipation and to “raise” them to a status equal to those with whom they lived.

That is not the “solution” to the Jewish problem which “absolute anti-Zionists” push today. On the contrary. Israel is not to enjoy the same status as other state. Instead, to borrow Dohm’s expression, Israel should be “wiped off the face of the earth.”

**The sub-title of *Antisemitism and the Left* is *On the Return of the Jewish Question*. One reading of the book is that it never went away.**

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# Real soldiers do feel sad

By Carrie Evans

**Last week saw the drop of Stormzy's debut album 'Gang Signs and Prayer'. Whilst the whole album is beautiful, brave and ambitious, it's a bit of a grower and maybe not what most grime fans were expecting.**

It deals with themes of black identity, love and spirituality in a way mostly unheard in grime before. One track, the final one, above all others, has been causing waves. 'Lay me down' is a heartbreaking, complexed ode to depression.

The track is not just about Stormzy's experience with mental illness, but also the underlying pain of being from a working-class background in London; of growing up missing at least one parent and where life is cheap. Of expecting to see friends and loved ones die young from violence, addiction and mental health issues. And also, of never dealing with it or talking about it because above all else, what you are taught to valorise is *hardness*.

Stormzy fleshed this idea out further in an interview with Channel Four when he spoke about his decision to make the track. "This was something so alien to me. I always believe if something gets you down you pick yourself up and carry on". But he goes on, "Then I had another complex. Okay, I went through this but do I really want to let the whole world know what I went through?"

Eventually he made the decision that depression is too important and prevalent not to talk about. "What convinced me to talk about it in the end, was thinking if anyone else is feeling like this — knowing I did too might help. Because for a long time I believed real soldiers don't feel like this. Anyone who is brave, anyone I admire couldn't feel this way."

Stormzy isn't wrong about the importance of breaking the stigma around mental health issues. Especially for young black men, who are more likely than any other demographic to suffer from poor mental health and commit suicide. But this is also the same group for whom the subject is most taboo.

I really felt touched by what Stormzy said

in 'Lay me down' and on Channel Four. I am as guilty as anyone else of believing in the myth of the soldier.

For years I took pride in believing that there is no such thing as sad or tired. There is only dead or dying. However, that is a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the last two years alone my brother (from another mother) and a close friend of mine have both committed suicide. Another close friend of mine has been institutionalised for the foreseeable future, deemed a threat to himself. These are just the "highlights".

Silence on mental health, coupled with the increasing scarcity of mental health provision is literally killing us. Talking about it alone will not solve the problem but it will begin to shed some light on the scale of the issue. What we really need however is publicly-owned and funded, easily-accessible, life-long and holistic mental health services. Only then will we have a shot at tackling the problem.

I very much respect Stormzy for making the conscious decision to speak out. One of the scariest things in the world is talking honestly about your feelings and showing your vulnerability. I can only imagine what that must be like for a working-class black man. In a society where almost everything is stacked against him and he is constantly told he has to be hard to survive.

This isn't the first time Stormzy has used his platform to talk on real issues. As much as he claims he "hates to go on like a role model", he also understands that his position as the UK's grime ambassador comes with responsibilities. Whether he's chucking his weight behind the Corbyn campaign and the Black Lives Matter movement, or talking passionately about the love and respect he has for female artists, his mother and his girlfriend. Or calling out the institutionalised racism of the Brits and the police or simply "singing his lungs out" to Adele and "bussin two twos jokes" in videos.

Stormzy is always three-dimensionalising the "angry black man" and striving to subvert our ideas of what a grime Emcee is supposed to be.

**So all hail Michael Omari, the south London lad we've all been waiting for.**

# A soundtrack for the movement against Trump

**Bas Hardy reviews 'Freedom Highway' by Rhiannon Giddens.**

*Found dead people in the forest  
Tallahatchie River and lakes  
The whole wide world is wonderin'  
What's wrong with the United States*

**What's wrong indeed! Lyrics from the Staples Singer's 'Freedom Highway' recorded twenty five years ago still resonate. It's now the closing track on the second solo album of Rhiannon Giddens.**

Her latest collection of songs lay bare the condition of Afro-Americans from slavery days to the Black Lives Matter Movement. Although the thoroughly reactionary Trump regime trumpets the "threat of terrorism", the black population of North America has lived in a state of terror for 400 years.

Giddens gives a poignant rendering of Richard Farina's 'Birmingham Sunday', about the cowardly murder of four black children by the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama in 1963. Racist psychopaths continue to massacre black people in churches — witness Dylann Roof's attack in Charleston which left nine people dead.

Slavery is very much a root cause of racist poison in the USA. Some of Giddens' self-penned songs on this album are inspired by slave narratives gleaned from 'The Slaves War' by Andrew Ward. Ward's book drew from hundreds of primary and secondary sources which recounted the Civil War from the point of view of the slaves.

'Julie' tells the story of a female slave's conversation with her mistress as Union soldiers approach the plantation mansion house. The white slaveowner begs her maid to stay in what she deludes herself as being one big happy family, but for the slave ... "in leaving her, I'm leaving hell". A homage to 'Gone With The Wind' it ain't!

The album opener is 'At The Purchaser's Option' — an account of a 22 year old 'negro wench' up for sale with her nine-month old baby. The buyer has the "option" of taking the child or not. "Fingers nimble, fingers quick, My fingers bleed

to make you rich" is how this ballad perceptively ends.

Bringing this up to the modern day, 'Better Get It Right The First Time' concerns the plight of young black men in danger of being assassinated by trigger-happy cops and racist vigilantes for the crime of walking on the street.

*Young man was a good man  
Or did you run that day  
Young man was a good man  
Baby, they shot you anyway*

Giddens was a leading members of the folk roots group 'Carolina Chocolate Drops'. Her first solo venture 'Tomorrow Is My Time' showed off her wonderful voice ability to perform songs in a numbers of different genres. This latest album represents more of a return to her roots. Blues and jazz styles predominate, with the occasional foray into rap.

**For those wanting a soundtrack for the resistance to Trump and his cronies, this is the place to start.**



## Lukács legacy suppressed

By John Cunningham

**On 25 January the Metropolitan Council of Budapest decided (by 19 votes to 3) to remove the statue of the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács from the 13th District and replace it with a statue of King Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian nation.**

The proposal was put by a member of the neo-fascist Jobbik Party, Marcell Tokody. Last year, despite opposition, Lukács's house, which has served as an open archive since his death in 1971, was closed by the authorities. The fate of the documents in the archive, many of which have yet to be translated in languages other than their original

Hungarian or German, is unclear.

In the history of 20th century Marxism Lukács is a central figure. He is certainly not without his critics, but some of his writings, particularly *History and Class Consciousness*, are seminal works of Marxism and have stood the test of time.

We should not standby and allow the barbarians of the Hungarian right, and their odious leader Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, to destroy his legacy.

**Please sign the petition:**  
[bit.ly/2mAMEap](http://bit.ly/2mAMEap)

• The author lived in Hungary from 1991 to 2000 and is currently working on a full length study of Lukács and his legacy.



# 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

### 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](http://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](http://bit.ly/2ISfyGy)

### 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](http://bit.ly/2IPw6Rq)

### Saturday 1 April

Protest Against Housing Benefit Cuts For 18-21 Year Olds  
12 noon, Parliament Square  
[bit.ly/2mi4R1Q](http://bit.ly/2mi4R1Q)

### Saturday 1 April

Leeds march for the NHS  
11am, Victoria Gardens, Leeds LS1 2LH  
[bit.ly/2naCINn](http://bit.ly/2naCINn)

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

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

# What's happening on 11 March

## LABOUR

By Simon Nelson

**The Momentum Grassroots conference on Saturday 11 March (10am to 5pm at Conway Hall, London, WC1R 4RL) presents an important opportunity to shape and coordinate the work of local groups after the 10 January coup in the organisation.**

We hope for a large turnout, with delegates representing groups from around the country.

Workers' Liberty have backed this meeting as a means to give local groups, for the first time, an opportunity to get together and discuss the way forward.

While we do not want to see a rival organisation to Momentum, the election of a new coordinating group at the conference could help organise campaigning and develop groups; this is crucial for the event to be a success. This conference has been organised by the Momentum steering committee and the Conference Arrangements Committee, delegated to do so by the December Momentum National Committee. But for the groups co-ordination to have any legitimacy going forward, a new body will need to be elected by the meeting.

We want this conference to be a positive event. The conference will begin with speakers from the Picturehouse dispute and the Derby Teaching Assistants, and that will set the tone. Momentum should be oriented to workers in struggle so that it can fight for a labour movement that stands foursquare behind these struggles. The conference should also hear about the left's recent wins in elections in all three CLPs after Brighton Labour was shut down by head office.

However, the agenda is packed, so practical conclusions and elections could be tricky. Delegates should ensure that we get to debate the way forward and do not get too bogged down in discussions that local groups have already had.

The lack of any motions in advance is likely to make fuller debate

and direction harder. In the run up to the conference we have argued to allow for some motions and more specific agenda items to be discussed. We did not win that argument, but we still hope to persuade people of the need to have clear campaigning priorities that will have the support of the conference.

A point of controversy is likely to be over the newly elected National Coordinating Group for Momentum. We were in favour of a left-wing, anti-coup slate being elected across all the regions. The three successful candidates from these efforts — Sahaya James, Yannis Gourtsoyannis and Rida Vaquas — should have the conference's support; they will be backing the conference and the grassroots initiative although the NCG meets on the same day.

## MISGUIDED

**Those who believe that the NCG elections should have been boycotted and now believe that a complete break with Momentum is necessary are acting in a misguided and sectarian manner.**

The new constitution for Momentum is wildly undemocratic and has been engineered to try and marginalise the hard left, including Workers' Liberty supporters; to cut out or neutralise those who want to push Momentum beyond an electoral machine for use in further leadership elections.

Momentum still has a huge pool of resources and a membership of over 20,000. To walk away and squander the biggest opportunity the left has had in a generation to transform the Labour Party is wrong and should be resisted. Hiving ourselves off from the majority of the membership might make some feel powerful or even important, but it is a recipe for ignoring the struggle we need to be involved in — transforming the labour movement.

That is why we will vote against any attempts to split from Momentum and form a separate organisation. The anti-coup members on the NCG should do everything they



can to push for democracy in Momentum and to expose any moves to further limit democracy.

We support Momentum continuing to campaign on the issues it has previously agreed to support — against expulsions and suspensions of socialists, for migrants' rights and a plan for eco house building. Momentum groups working with Stop the Labour Purge, with campaigns on migrants works and fighting schools cuts, would also be important steps forward.

It has been said that Stop the Labour Purge has not taken up the cases of those suspended or expelled for alleged antisemitism. This is false. Stop the Labour Purge has been clear that all suspensions and expulsions should be overturned and a proper process should be in place to review all the allegations with the individuals concerned given a proper hearing.

However allegations of antisemitism on the left are not just inventions, inspired by a plot against Corbyn. A failure to take this issue seriously is a sign of an unhealthy culture within the left.

Workers' Liberty supports the election of a sizeable committee of around 15-20 people, 50% women, elected by STV. Those standing should be elected on the day and given an opportunity to present why they wish to stand.

The conference will hear three distinct proposals on the committee. Two of them are hugely inadequate and could damage the viability of ongoing organisation.

**We will argue against any proposal that keeps the existing conference arrangements committee and National Committee in place, or sets up a system that delays votes to an online poll after 11 March.**

# Guardian invents "exclusion"

By Keith Road

**The Guardian article 'Momentum plans relaunch to end factional infighting' (by Ewen MacAskill and Alex Hacillo, 4 March) was highly misleading.**

"The group became a magnet for many leftwing groups, and individuals well to the left of either Lansman or McDonnell, such as the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, a Trotskyist group. The AWL is one of the groups excluded from the new-look Momentum."

But that statement contradicts previous assurances by one of the

directors of Momentum Ltd, Christine Shawcroft.

Shawcroft wrote in the February 2017 edition of *Labour Briefing*, "A lot of misinformation has been put around... with wild claims that people would be expelled from Momentum. Section Five does say that someone expelled from the Party may be deemed to have resigned from Momentum but that was on lawyers' advice so that there is a mean of taking action against members expelled from the Party for sexual harassment or racist or homophobic behaviour."

"Even if we do take action against someone, they have a right

of appeal. Summary executions will not be taking place."

We have written to advise the *Guardian* that a correction is due. We would hope also to see a correction issued by the Momentum office that dispels the rumour that the AWL or other organisations have been excluded from participation in Momentum.

It may be that many in the Momentum leadership would prefer we were not involved, but that's another matter.

**As it stands, the "official" Momentum line is that we still have a democratic right to continue to play an active role.**



# Biggest DOO strike yet

By a Northern railworker

**Monday 13 March will see the biggest and most widespread action yet in the fight to maintain the job of guard (conductor) in the UK rail industry.**

As well as another day of action on Southern Rail, the RMT union is calling its guard and driver members out on the Northern and Merseyrail franchises.

This is a very significant in the development of this dispute, as the disruption this is likely to cause at Northern and Merseyrail should be bigger in comparison to that at Southern, where many services already operated under Driver Only Operation (DOO) when the dispute there began.

It will become clear on the day how effective the Train Operating Companies' contingency planning has been.

Meanwhile the other union involved, drivers' union Aslef, continues in talks with GTR/Southern after its members rejected the proposed sell-out settlement that was brokered by TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady and recommended to them by Aslef leadership. As with the TUC talks, no information is being released as these talks go on, raising concerns that whatever new proposal comes out of the talks will just be a "tweaked" version of the same sell-out. At Merseyrail and Northern, Aslef is at the moment sitting out the fight when they could play a decisive role in the defeat of DOO by ensuring that no trains can run



Merseyrail workers campaigning to keep the guard on the train

at all, even with managers and scabs available to operate the doors.

Despite the statement released by the leaderships of both unions at the back end of 2015, it is clear that the two unions are not currently working together to fight on the issue of DOO. To have the best chance of winning this fight, and winning it comprehensively, this needs to change. The Aslef leadership has clearly done immense damage to the prospects for genuine unity by its recent actions on Southern, but RMT must share blame for the lack of proper communication and co-ordination before and since.

In the absence of a single industrial union for the rail industry, the two unions should act as one on this issue, for the sake of rail work-

ers and passengers alike, and look to build and spread the fight against DOO.

The push to introduce this method of operation comes primarily from the Tory government and is really about smashing organised labour in the rail industry, one of the last strongholds of trade unionism in the UK. Attempts to introduce driver-only trains are at various stages across huge parts of the network. Plans are afoot to introduce it at London Midland, Great Western Railway and Virgin East Coast, for example.

**A near-national rail strike could and should be built in response, with the potential to inflict a huge defeat on the government and take a major step forward for the whole labour movement.**

## Outsourced cleaners demand parity

By Peggy Carter

**Cleaners at the London School of Economics have voted by 100% to strike for parity of pay and conditions with other LSE workers.**

Workers, organised by the United Voices of the World, will strike on 15 and 16 March.

LSE outsources its cleaning contract to Noonan, who employ cleaners on inferior terms and conditions to those that directly-employed LSE staff receive. Cleaners receive only statutory sick pay, statutory maternity/paternity/adoption pay, and 28 days paid annual leave compared to 40 for in-house staff, 1% pension contribution from their employer compared to 16% for in-house staff.

The cleaners are also demanding a reduction in excessive workloads, and an end to harsh and discriminatory disciplinary procedures.

On Friday 24 February UVW called a protest in support of a Noonan worker who had been the victim of homophobic bullying at work which was dismissed by bosses. Noonan bosses dismissed the claims

by saying that "it's in their culture" — managing both to dismiss homophobia and to be racist!

**Picket lines will be organised for the strikes on 15 and 16 March and workers welcome supporters to join them.**

• To donate to the strike fund and find out more: [www.uvwunion.org.uk](http://www.uvwunion.org.uk)



/justiceforlsecleaners

## King's cleaners win concessions

**Unison members at King's College London, employed by outsourcer Servest, have agreed to suspend their dispute after an offer from the company.**

Servest agreed to employ at least 10 new workers to deal with workload issues, as well as review after four weeks to see if more staff are needed in consultation

with Unison. Unison remains opposed to restructuring and redundancy and will restart the dispute if Servest does not hold to its agreement in the four week period.

**Students at King's have set up a petition to make support of the cleaners' struggle official student union policy.**

## Fifth cinema joins strike



By Gemma Short

**Workers at the Duke of York cinema in Brighton run by Picturehouse have voted by 100% to join strikes already involving workers at four Picturehouse cinemas.**

Workers at the five sites will strike on Saturday 18 March, with workers from Brighton striking for the first time. Workers from the four London sites (Ritzy in Brixton, Hackney, Crouch End and Central) will travel down to Brighton to join Duke of York workers for a protest on the day.

Workers at the four London sites had originally agreed to call a strike for Wednesday 8 March, to

coincide with International Women's Day and highlight the demand for company maternity pay. However the BECTU section of Prospect, the workers' union, called off the strike.

An Early Day Motion has been tabled in Parliament by Helen Hayes, MP for Dulwich and West Norwood. The Ritzy cinema in Brixton is in Hayes' constituency. The EDM condemns Picturehouse, and its parent company Cineworld, for not paying the living wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation. It has so far been signed by 25 MPs.

**A boycott has now been called for Picturehouse and Cineworld cinemas.**

## Cabin crew strike again

By Charlotte Zalens

**British Airways Mixed Fleet cabin crew based at Heathrow airport struck from Friday 3 March to Thursday 9 March.**

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, Mixed Fleet cabin crew are fighting low wages which Unite their union describes as being poverty wages. Unite estimates that on average mixed fleet cabin crew earn £16,000 a year, including allowances. During the dispute British Airways have lived up to their reputation for bullying and have threatened to strip striking cabin crew of their 2016 and 2017

bonuses, incentive payments, and staff travel.

On Friday 3 March strikers travelled to Brighton to protest at the i360 seafront tourist attraction, which is sponsored by British Airways. Workers on the i360 are paid at least the independent living wage and have a starting salary which is nearly £5,500 more than that of mixed fleet cabin crew.

**Unite members from across the country have started a food bank to support the striking mixed fleet crew.**

• To donate to the strike fund and send messages of support: [bit.ly/2lY4xmu](http://bit.ly/2lY4xmu)

## Fujitsu job cuts strike

By Gemma Short

**Workers at Fujitsu sites across the country struck on Friday 28 February in an ongoing dispute over job cuts, union recognition, pay and pensions.**

Workers struck at sites in Warrington, Basingstoke, Belfast, Birmingham, Blackpool, Bracknell, Crewe, London, Manchester, Stevenage and Wakefield. The London picket coincided with senior management holding a meeting about the job cuts.

**A further strike will happen on Friday 17 March, the last working day before bosses propose to make the first redundancy dismissals on Monday 20 March.**

• Send a message of support to [support@ourunion.org.uk](mailto:support@ourunion.org.uk) or Unite the Union, Fujitsu MAN34, Central Park, Northampton Road, Manchester, M40 5BP

• Donations payable to "Manchester IT Workers Group" can be sent c/o John Wood, 50 Brooklyn Street, Crewe, CW2 7JF. Or transfer online to Account: 00980539, Sort Code: 30-91-48 and email [support@ourunion.org.uk](mailto:support@ourunion.org.uk) with details.

• Follow and promote the campaign on social media using #FujitsuFightback. [www.facebook.com/uniteatfujitsu](http://www.facebook.com/uniteatfujitsu). [www.twitter.com/unitefujitsu](http://www.twitter.com/unitefujitsu).





# Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 432 8 March 2017 50p/£1

## Labour should back Derby teaching assistants

By Ralph Peters

**Derby Teaching Assistant strikers, Unison members, started another ten days on strike from 6 March in response to a recently imposed 25% pay cut. This will bring the number of days they have been on strike to over 70!**

Unison have continued to make clear their desire for a moderate and "amicable" settlement. But it was the Labour Council that pulled out of talks in June 2016. The pay cuts makes such a settlement even less likely.

Talks with ACAS are currently being held. Council Leader Ranjait Banwait walked out of these, claiming another appointment. The appointment turned out to be an interview with the local TV. Before the ACAS talks were even a fraction through their business, Banwait publicly and provocatively accused Unison of playing games.

The Derby TAs' own leaders have maintained a vigorous, positive but uncompromising stance to the local council.

One positive development is the Labour Party's candidate in a city council by-election in Derwent ward has come out in support of the strikers. Derby TA members met Nadine Peatfield and offered to support her election campaign with both people on the ground and leaflets.

But they knew their members

would not engage with any council election campaign whilst the Council Leader was denouncing them unless Peatfield supported them, which she subsequently did.

Whether Unison will be able to make a sufficient intervention in the election campaign to win the seat is uncertain. But if Labour don't win the election — it is presently a UKIP seat — the blame for that outcome will lie with the Labour Council leaders.

Support in this difficult stage of the dispute remains strong among parents. The parents of children with special needs attended the council meeting on Wednesday 1 March. From the public gallery they booed the Council Leader and continued their protest at the Council's confrontational stance. The Mayor then closed the meeting and called in the police to clear the gallery.

### SOLIDARITY

**Political action and union solidarity remains crucial.**

There are further moves to get action from within the Labour Party in Derby. A delegation of Labour councillors and party officers came from Stoke on 2 March. The issue is being raised amongst some council Labour groups around the country. The Unison branch is sending delegates to meetings around the region and country.

The issue still needs to be raised at Labour's National Executive.



**Above: Derby teaching assistants protesting at the city hall. Below: A Labour by-election candidate's tweet supporting the teaching assistants.**



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