

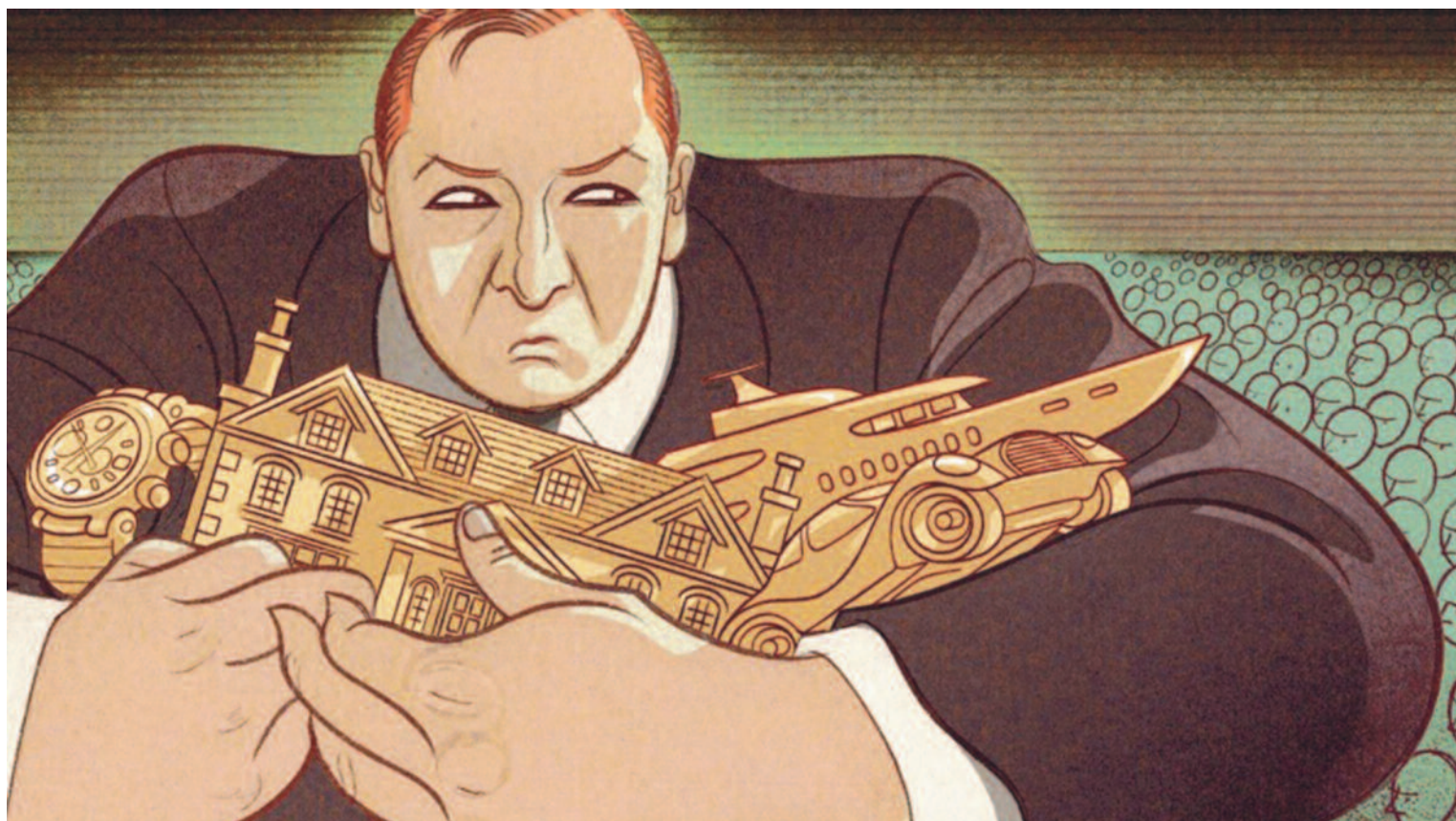


& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 433 22 March 2017 50p/£1

BIGGEST INEQUALITY SURGE SINCE 1980s



RICH AND POOR: THE GAP WIDENS

"If nothing is done to change [the] outlook, the current parliament [2015-20] will go down as being the worst on record for income growth in the bottom half of the income distribution.

"It will also represent the biggest rise in inequality since the end of the 1980s".

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Keep the
guard
on the
train!



Strikes against driver-only operation spread.

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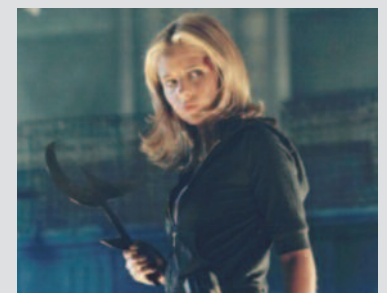
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Theodora Polenta discusses the current political situation in Greece.

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The art of Buffy



On the 20th anniversary of the TV series, Carrie Evans discusses its impact.

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Grassroots Momentum:
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From revolutionary to bourgeois minister



Martin McGuinness

By Gerry Bates

Martin McGuinness became a revolutionary, by his own lights, as a teenager, and ended his life as a bourgeois minister in a political system he had vowed to shun. He died on 21 March, only a couple of months after resigning as Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

He was a young commander of the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s. We wrote: "The Northern Ireland Catholics fight in isolation, in the most unfavourable conditions imaginable. The rearguard of the Irish fight for national freedom, they... are simultaneously cut off from the allies that would make an advance on a socialist basis possible — the Orange majority of the Northern Ireland working class" (*Workers' Fight*, 23 July 1972).

The Provisional IRA's campaign had already won a first victory — the abolition, in March 1972, of Protestant-majority home rule in Northern Ireland. Such were the realities, and the limits of the Provisionals' politics, that the further 22 years of their war could produce only deaths and deep communal division. No further political advance.

McGuinness became a big figure in the Provisionals' turn to politics, which followed the hunger strikes of 1981. In 1982 the Provisionals dropped their clumsy version of advocating a federal Ireland, and argued (as McGuinness put it in 1995): "Unionists will come to the negotiating table... but they will only do so when the British government actively encourages them to do so". "Encourage" meaning "coerce".

He became chief negotiator for the Provisionals up to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. It reinstated the political deal brought in by Britain in the aftermath of 1972, the Sunningdale power-sharing agreement of 1973-4, but in a more intricate institutionalised-sectarian form.

In 1974 a Protestant general strike had smashed the deal, but in 1998 the deal survived Protestant resistance. McGuinness became Minister of Education in a power-sharing regime in 1999, and Deputy First Minister from 2007 to 2017.

He refused to take his full minister's pay. He approved two new integrated schools when education

minister, and made a series of real and symbolic concessions to unionism — signing up to support Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and shaking the Queen's hand in June 2012, which he described as "in a symbolic way offering the hand of friendship to unionists".

We wrote in 1995: "The Provisionals will become a narrower communally-based Northern Ireland reproduction of Fianna Fail — which, from origins very like the Provos, became the main party of bourgeois rule in Ireland — or of the smaller, more left-wing, splinter of the 1940s and 50s, Clann na Poblachta".

Sinn Féin has made more political progress in the South than seemed likely then, or when it dropped abstention from the Dail in 1986. It scored 14% in the February 2016 general election, and is currently running in the polls at about 20%.

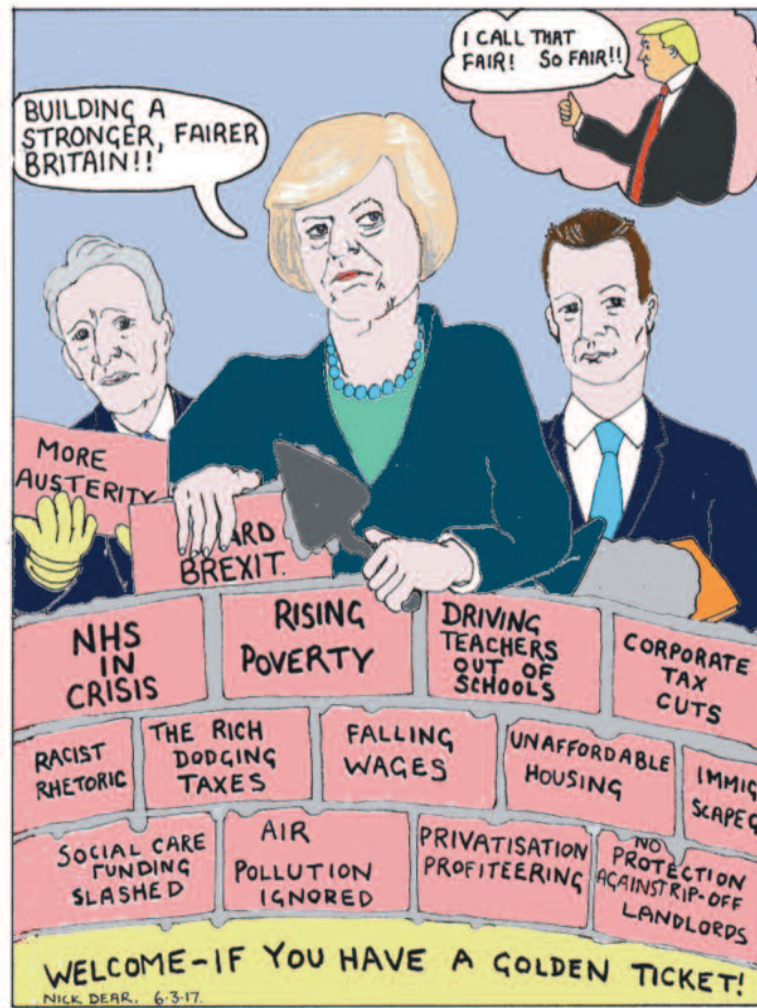
But the underpinnings, in national-communal division, of the poisonous Partition structures which McGuinness set out to fight remain entrenched. Only working-class and consistently democratic politics will change that.

By Hugh Edwards

At its recent conference Italy's governing party, il Partito Democratico (PD), split. This follows a massive defeat in the December 2016 referendum for party leader and head of government Matteo Renzi.

Defeat and a subsequent resignation as premier did not stop Renzi from deciding to remain as leader of the party. And at the party convention he gave no quarter to his opponents — representing a diffuse spectrum of left / liberal forces. He declared for a general election in June, reiterating the need for him to keep hold of the power of the party leader so as to control the selection of electoral lists and mandates.

A rupture has been developing ever since Renzi rose from relative anonymity and political obscurity



Spanish dockers win

Jordi Aragunde, coordinator of the International Dockworkers' Council, has reported a victory, at least a temporary victory, for the Spanish dockworkers.

They have been fighting the Spanish government's plan to abolish the "pools" through which they are employed.

"As of March 17, the Spanish Government was unable to pass the Royal Decree to reform the Spanish port system. The Spanish Parliament has rejected this Decree, therefore acting to protect Spanish

dockworkers.

"Action has been cancelled indefinitely. However, IDC will continue to watch over new developments closely.

"IDC would like to express gratitude for the great show of support to Spanish dockworkers these past weeks, which is a point of pride for the international docker community — and one victory among many yet to be achieved."

• www.idcdockworkers.org/en/

Italy: a shift in the political centre

By Hugh Edwards

At its recent conference Italy's governing party, il Partito Democratico (PD), split. This follows a massive defeat in the December 2016 referendum for party leader and head of government Matteo Renzi.

Defeat and a subsequent resignation as premier did not stop Renzi from deciding to remain as leader of the party. And at the party convention he gave no quarter to his opponents — representing a diffuse spectrum of left / liberal forces. He declared for a general election in June, reiterating the need for him to keep hold of the power of the party leader so as to control the selection of electoral lists and mandates.

A rupture has been developing ever since Renzi rose from relative anonymity and political obscurity

to the heights of party leader, then, after ruthlessly shafting the then incumbent, seized the office of premier. Renzi stamped on both government and party and centralised management and control, surrounding himself with young fanatic loyalists, openly and contemptuously humiliating and marginalising older leaders. The split is a vindictive retort of those usurped forces who considered Renzi as an abusive interloper in "their" party.

The split consists of 30 members of the Camera, 15 in the Senate. It seems unlikely to become a new party; its name, Democrats and Progressives Movement, suggests a profile as vague as it is tentative.

The principal political components come from the camp of the left / liberal bourgeoisie, associated with Massimo d'Alema and Pierluigi Bersani. Both are former Stal-

inist leaders in the Communist Party who, after 1989, were principal actors in the formation and progressive mutation of, first, the Social Democratic Party of the Left (PDL); then the Democrats, to finally to embrace in 1996 the Left / Liberal centre of the Democratic Party in the "Olive Tree" coalition government headed by Romano Prodi.

The former Stalinists' historic links to the Italian trade union movement served to help impose a program of ruthless fiscal, monetary and social counter-reform demanded as a condition of Italy's fitness to join the single currency.

Beneath the cant about Renzi's awful treatment of ordinary people, the splitters are more than eager — again in tandem with marginalised union bureaucrats — to rise to become trustworthy servants of capital.

There are a number of groups

G20 deletion signals danger

By Rhodri Evans

When 20 governments met for the G20 summit in late 2008, at the worst of the global credit crash, their agreed joint statement included just one hard commitment: to resist protectionism, to avoid new trade barriers.

Not perfectly, but on the whole, that commitment held, and helped the slump level out in late 2009 rather than continuing downwards for three or four years as in the 1930s, when states spiralled into competitive tariff-raising and world trade collapsed.

On 18 March, the statement from a meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors deleted the now-traditional pledge against protectionism. It also deleted commitments to action on climate change.

Steve Mnuchin, Donald Trump's US Treasury Secretary, blocked both pledges. Mnuchin is reckoned less nationalist than others in Trump's circle. He softened his stance by claiming: "It is not our desire to get into trade wars... The president does believe in free trade but he wants free and fair trade."

Coming with the Tories' desire to make Brexit "hard" by quitting the EU Single Market and Customs Union, and the rise of Marine Le Pen in France, the G20 deletion signals dangers of a rise of economic nationalism.

and figures more explicitly pointing to the need for a more social democratic orientation, even the notion of an explicitly working-class party. The details remain unclear. As to the "radical" left, Sinistra Italiana (SI), a group of them have abandoned their party in order to join up with D'Alema.

As events unfold in what has effectively been a shift in the centre of gravity of the Italian political system, the PD crisis will deepen further.

As the European bank prepares to raise interest rates and end Quantitative Easing, the vulnerability of the country to any systemic shock is apparent.

Meanwhile the Five Star Movement is ahead in the opinion polls and in spite, or because of, its congenital incoherence, it might just light a fuse in Italian politics.

Israel enters Syrian conflict

By Simon Nelson

A surprise rebel assault on the eastern suburbs of Damascus has been driven back by the Syrian Army.

Meanwhile a further round of peace talks in Geneva, between the government and major rebel factions, will soon begin. Since the so-called ceasefire began in December last year, both sides have, with justification, accused the other of breaching the agreement.

Israel has increased its involvement in the war, with a drone killing of an alleged pro-Assad fighter, part of a militia supported by the Lebanese Hezbollah. Exchanges of fire between the Syrian army and Israel have also intensified after anti-aircraft missiles were fired at Israeli jets.

The latest strike by Israel was judged to be too close to Russian troops and the Israeli ambassador to Moscow has now been summoned to the Russian government to explain what happened.

Rules of engagement agreed between Russia and Israel now appear to be fractured. Israel had been given the go-ahead to target Hezbollah weapons caches and



Distance from Mount Bental to Damascus

supplies. This is the first time that Syria has deployed anti-aircraft missiles in retaliation.

Increased tensions on the Israel's northern border are bad news. The far right Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman has said he would not hesitate to destroy the Syrian air defence system if it fired on Israeli jets a second time.

Israel's increased involvement reflects a potential obstacle to the now almost inevitable, if slow, victory of Assad. Israel had wanted

the Syrian regime to be undermined and a consequent undermining of regional influence for Iran, a vastly weakened Hezbollah. But Russian intervention has swung the conflict back Assad's way.

Rebel groups and Daesh are now under enormous pressure and Iran has been given almost free reign to supply weapons to pro-government militia.

Assad's forces and Hezbollah have clawed back territory, creating conditions more conducive for Iran to supply weapons to the Lebanese militants.

It seems both Russia and Israel are reluctant to step back from their respective positions and military offensives. Israel wants to cut off Hezbollah's access to high-powered weaponry.

A former defence chief Brig Gen Nitzan Nuriel put it starkly, "Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel... Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission."

Israel's intervention may have still more terrible costs for the civilian populations across the Middle East.

Abortion: denying women fundamental rights

By Honor Wilkinson-Bell and Beckie Walker, Darlington Young Labour (p.c.)

As young females, we both feel strongly about the liberation of women.

We believe it is abhorrent that women across the world are still denied their fundamental rights, especially in the 21st century. One significant example is how the issue of abortion, which is still stigmatised in the US, arguably even more so in the Trump era.

Despite the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, attacks on women's right to choose, have continued for years. Violent attacks have taken place in clinics and there have been campaigns to overturn and restrict Roe v. Wade.

Across the world women still face restrictions when making decisions regarding their own bodies, which reflects the gender inequality that still exists in society.

We recently visited the United States and saw how though abortion is legal, the restrictions placed upon women in many states lead them to feel that there is no other choice but to have their child.

Since 2013, the number of clinics in Texas has been reduced from 42 to 19. Legislation requiring the foetus/embryo/zygote to be issued with a death certificate and have a funeral was introduced in Texas despite public opposition. There was deliberate misinformation in state-level law and adds unnecessary pressure to women.

Women in the US already face an immense amount of societal pressure when faced with an unwanted pregnancy, which is only worsened by the increasing use of violence and intimidation. Many anti-choice groups have violently attacked Planned Parenthood (one of the main health providers in the US) centres and intimidated people in clinics, stigmatising the issue even more, forcing women to choose not to abort. Doctors and even families of those having abortions have been targeted.

There have been 54 bombings on abortion clinics since the 1980s; nine physicians who have been brutally murdered. We spoke with the US pressure group National Abortion Federation (NAF), which offers legal support for women making the difficult decision whether to have an abortion. They explained that hatred for women's choice has increased; since the 2016 United States election, there has been a 46% spike in online threats and negative rhetoric to-

wards abortion providers.

Trump has already signed an Executive Order withdrawing federal money from organisations, such as Planned Parenthood. It is clear that Trump's election win means support services for women are hanging by a thread. To make matters worse, Planned Parenthood disproportionately helps women of colour and those with a low-income and from a working-class background, making this an even larger issue of racial and class discrimination.

GORSUCH

The Supreme Court nomination, of anti-choice judge Neil Gorsuch, follows Trump's claims that he holds a "pro-life" stance on the matter.

Gorsuch's appointment means the courts are potentially able to overturn or restrict Roe v. Wade. Clearly, Trump and the Republicans do not understand how much women rely on these services, having very little compassion, respect for women's privacy and their constitutional right to access abortions. This disgusting attitude was clear in Trump's comments about "grabbing the pussy" of a woman.

More difficulties for women are occurring in Ireland — where abortion is illegal. Many women every year must make the journey to have an abortion in the UK, and there is very little support provided for them. Despite women being desperate, alone and terrified, they are treated as criminals, rather than human beings entitled to a fundamental right.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 21.6 million women worldwide experience an unsafe abortion each year; 18.5 million of these occur in developing countries; 47,000 women die from complications arising from unsafe abortion each year. Deaths due to unsafe abortion remain close to 13% of all maternal deaths.

We must stand in solidarity with women in the US and Ireland and all over the world who are denied their right to choose. We must oppose the likes of Trump. We must encourage those in power to end the unconstitutional denial of women's freedom.

We must educate men about reproductive rights, sexual health and other gender issues, in order to have an informed debate. We must recognise the problem in developing countries and provide safe and correct aid and information.

We must show that "pussy grabs back".

Marine A is no hero

By Will Sefton

Marine A: Right, get him closer in so PGSS can't see what we're doing to him...

Marine A: Where is the CAT, Ugly call sign? [Referring to the helicopter that is watching them pretending to apply a field dressing to an injured Afghan insurgent.]

Marine B: It's gone that way?

Marine A: Yeah

Marine B: Went south, mate? (Gunshot)

M: What was that?

Marine A: There you are, shuffle off this mortal coil you cunt. It's nothing you wouldn't do to us.

Marine B: I know.

M: Exactly.

Marine A: Obviously this doesn't go anywhere fellas.

Marine B: Yeah, roger, mate.

Marine A: I've just broke the Geneva convention.

After a campaign by former and current members of the military, the *Daily Mail* and his family, Marine A, Sergeant Alexander Blackman, has had his conviction for shooting a wounded member of the Taliban in 2011 quashed and he will now be tried for manslaughter.

If his defence team successfully argue that he has served his sentence, as he was imprisoned in 2013, Alexander is very likely to be freed.

The sight of the *Daily Mail* raising £900,000 to fund the court appeal and MPs and former heads of the armed forces taking up the case,



will rightly stick in the throat of all those who have been unable to hold the British army accountable for their actions in conflicts around the world.

The court has determined that Blackman was suffering from combat stress and that the atmosphere in the military in Afghanistan during the invasion put immense pressure on the army's lower ranks.

This is no doubt true. It is all too possible that when you train young men to be killing machines that they do not always differentiate between the definitions of what is lawful and unlawful. Such conditions no doubt contributed to many atrocities in Vietnam, Iraq, Northern Ireland and numerous other war zones.

Should we feel sorry for the Taliban insurgent? I don't think so. But the principle that if war happens, minimum rules must be followed, and that if these are broken there

are consequences, is extremely important.

Marine A is not a hero. Shooting someone who was no further threat to him or his comrades is not a heroic act. He knew he had broken the Geneva Convention. The agreement of those with him, to keep his secret, shows that this was probably not an isolated incident.

Alexander had previously served in both Northern Ireland and Iraq. He was not a newly recruited, inexperienced soldier.

It should be noted that Alexander was only caught because one of his comrades had filmed it on an unofficial helmet camera, and had the footage on a laptop which he sent for repair.

Meanwhile the army has never had to account for numerous bombings of civilians, destruction of medical facilities or improper detention of Afghan civilians.

Excluded from Labour for being a socialist!

By Keith Road

A Socialist Appeal member, expelled from the Labour Party, recently went court to contest the expulsion. Unsurprisingly the Party had their side upheld and he will not be reinstated, at least not through court procedures.

The submission to the court from the Labour Party is the first clear statement of the pretexts they use for suspending and expelling socialists from the Party, including supports of the AWL.

Labour's document quotes Chapter 2.4.1.B "A member of the Party who joins and/or supports a political organisation other than an official Labour group or other unit of the Party... shall automatically be ineligible to be or remain a Party member."

This clause has been used selectively. Members of groups on Labour's right and centre, Progress, Labour First, Open Labour, have not been excluded on these grounds.

Labour officials conceded that Socialist Appeal is not in fact a proscribed organisation. But they argued that Socialist Appeal's socialist views criminalise it! Its stated aim to put send the market economy, "into the dustbin of history" is in contravention of Labour's view that the "enterprise of the market" and the "rigour of competition" are important to a modern economy.

OPEN

The case shows the need to campaign to open up the Labour Party, end auto-exclusions and suspensions, and fight for natural justice against bureaucratic manoeuvres.

The campaign Stop the Labour Purge will be advocating useful rule changes at Labour Party conference: to stop membership eligibility being defined by conservative political standards. It should be based on supporting Labour in elections and helping the Party in its activity. There should be proper procedures for disciplinary action based on standards of natural justice.

In the run-up to the 2015 Labour Party leadership election hundreds of exclusions were made by the Compliance Unit, an unelected body with no clear status in the Party rules. Many were "automatic exclusions" under Chapter 2 Clause 4 (A); the excluded have no notice of the charges against them until after they are excluded; no hearing; and no right of appeal.

The possible grounds for these "automatic exclusions" are so broad that probably the big majority of Party members could, in theory be "automatically excluded" if a Compliance Unit official so wishes.

The grounds for exclusion need to be made much more precise and should be based on current, active hostility to Labour (such as being a Tory), or being shown to be (through evidence and investigation) guilty of such things as racist or sexist abuse.

• stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com

An opportunity almost missed

By Simon Nelson and Sacha Ismail

Two hundred Momentum members, including about 80-90 delegates from local groups, attended the 11 March national grassroots networking conference held by the organising committee appointed by the old, pre-coup Momentum National Committee.

The outcome of the conference was overall a positive one, but there were a number of problems that marred what could have been a much better event.

What formal discussion we did have on the political direction for Momentum and Labour was over in about an hour right at the beginning of the day! Future events must give more time for structured discussion.

This discussion revolved around the document circulated by email prior to the conference with ad-hoc amendments and additions being made solely from the floor. Some things like clarification on defence of migrants' rights and agreeing to campaign on the huge school cuts were positive additions. Another, to add to the existing statement of opposition to unjust exclusions a line about fighting an "anti-semitism witch-hunt", was not (see box).

No motions could be submitted in advance and it was unclear what passing the Where We Stand document would even mean. There were planned interventions from the top table for many of the sessions, that in our view would have been too long anyway, but they completely fell off the agenda. The conference was not informed why for example the morning session was changed and why two speakers were held over till the afternoon.

This was not a recipe for well-functioning democracy. Neither was the confused process for making and agreeing proposals, or the hostility to people attempting to raise things from the floor. This led to a sometimes fractious and needlessly confrontational atmosphere.

The options presented to conference about electing a committee was not very clearly differentiated.

Without accusing anyone of bad faith, the practical effect at least of the proposal that was narrowly defeated – a six-strong national coordinating group, with each position elected individually – would have been a narrow, tightly controlled but probably dysfunctional organisation.

Moreover, there seemed to be determination from some to prevent the conference from voting for both a broader committee and regular national meet ups of delegates from groups. That, however, is what the conference went for, electing a reasonably diverse, gender balanced committee of 20. (We proposed it be elected by STV, but were defeated on that, again in a fairly inadequate debate that did not allow for the case to be properly put).

The committee has its problems. There are only three people under 30 on it, and a big majority are from London and the South East. Nonetheless it represents a step forward and, if the committee starts functioning and working well, means there is a possibility of coordination of work by local groups and a push for Momentum to be an active campaigning force, not dictated to by an unaccountable national office.

Unfortunately, disagreements about how to relate to Momentum were not debated seriously. There were repeated comments to the effect that "Momentum has already split",

but nobody argued straightforwardly for founding a new organisation. There was some implication, though it wasn't clear, that the vote against a small committee was a vote against splitting from Momentum. Certainly the majority of those pushing this defeated proposal seemed more sympathetic to leaving Momentum, while the majority of those elected to the committee oppose a split.

We are pleased that, on the initiative of our comrade Jill Mountford on the organising committee, two striking school support workers from Derby and a Picturehouse striker spoke and lot of solidarity organising was done during the day.

Jill felt that she was not able to have much input into the shape of the conference, due to the way the organising committee functioned, so this was really the only part of the agenda she was responsible for, and that required some argument. That doesn't fit with the chair saying from the platform that, on the organising committee, there was agreement on all aspects of the conference. There is nothing wrong with admitting there were serious disagreements about the purpose and format of the conference!

ELECTED

Conference responded warmly to newly elected Momentum National Coordinating Group members Sahaya James and Rida Vaquas.

It is good that they were elected to the NCG (and now to the grassroots NC) and that they were there, using their position to strengthen our struggles. The argument for boycotting the NCG election now looks pretty threadbare, though not as threadbare as the idea that anyone who supported left



Matt Wrack, general secretary of the FBU

candidates must be "conciliating" Jon Lansman.

The new committee needs to push forward quickly on the proposals agreed, with some simple but properly carried out campaigning initiatives on issues like school cuts. It needs to work to solidify a grassroots Momentum network, including local groups. It also needs to find ways to kick-start the discussion not had on 11 March about how the left can push forward in its fight to transform the Labour Party and turn the labour movement's fortunes around.

We hope to work constructively with others in the new network on these things while continuing to debate our disagreements.

On the "anti-semitism witch-hunt"

An amendment was carried which was written down on a flipchart on the platform (illegibly to many) as "opposition to the antisemitism witch-hunt" and read out (inaudibly to some) as "opposition to the false antisemitism witch-hunt".

This was done without debate, and with a fair scattering of abstentions, votes against, and people just not voting.

Most people surely voted for the amendment because they oppose the Compliance Unit's arbitrary ways, know that some charges of antisemitism have been invented or inflated arbitrarily, and anyway believe that prejudice is best dealt with primarily by discussion and education.

However, the term "antisemitism witch-hunt" is ambiguous and slippery. In some of the arguments elsewhere of those backing the amendment, it is taken to mean that any charge of antisemitism against anyone on the left must automatically be assumed to be witch-hunting invention motivated by hostility to the Palestinian people.

That is not true. There have been streaks of antisemitism in the left throughout our history — and, where Stalinism has been influential in the left, more than a streak. The best sections of the left have sought to clean up that antisemitism and educate ourselves, rather than wave away all concerns as fabrications by the right wing.

We have called for an amnesty for all those summarily suspended or expelled by the Compliance Unit. We have opposed the suspension of Jackie Walker. Those stances

can and must be combined with a proper recognition that the left must put our own house in order on antisemitism.

A number of people have been suspended on charges to do with antisemitism. Mostly they will get a hearing with at least some rules and safeguards. Some have had their suspensions lifted.

SOCIALISTS

The far bigger section of the victims of the Compliance Unit are those excluded just for being left-wing, for allegedly sympathising with Workers' Liberty or Socialist Appeal or Left Unity.

Almost all of them have been denied a hearing, or an appeal, or even what would in any halfway fair system be considered definite charges.

An amendment which just said "opposition to the witch-hunt", reinforcing the already-included "opposition to unjust expulsions and suspensions", would have been much better.

Tony Greenstein and Gerry Downing — in their different ways, the most vocal advocates on the web of the view in which the core of politics is about the heroic resistance of "anti-Zionists" such as themselves to the supposedly all-powerful, all-pervading, ever-conspiring "Zionists", and the most strident denouncers of leftists such as Rhea Wolfson ("Zionist ally of Jon Lansman") — stood for election to the committee.

We are glad to report that they both failed, with Downing coming bottom.



Rich and poor: the gap widens

“If nothing is done to change [the] outlook, the current parliament [2015-20] will go down as being the worst on record for income growth in the bottom half of the income distribution. It will also represent the biggest rise in inequality since the end of the 1980s”.

So concludes an analysis on 16 March, by Adam Corlett of the Resolution Foundation, of the latest official figures on low incomes, published the same day.

The toxic mix comes from low wage growth — which the government’s own Office for Budgetary Responsibility predicts — and a great wave of pre-programmed cuts in working-age welfare benefits.

Where George Osborne proclaimed a squeeze on the poor with brassy confidence, and then in practice eased off here and there, the May government feigns concern for the worse-off but adds to Osborne’s legacy only such measures as ferocious planned cuts in school budgets.

The percentage of children living in poverty, which rocketed from 18% to 33% in the Thatcher 1980s, then decreased from 34% to 27% in the Blair-Brown years, has been rising steadily since 2010 and is set to rise further. Meanwhile profits are rocketing. The rift between the worse-off and the top 1% is increasing faster than the gap between us and the routinely-prosperous top 10%.

The grinding increase in inequality has cumulative effects.

Death rates have been falling for decades. But then about 30,000 more people died in 2015 than in 2014, a 5.6% increase. That is the biggest annual leap for 50 years. January 2017 saw another peak almost as high as that in 2015.

And no recent winters have been specially cold. Academic researchers collating the figures say they can’t be sure the rises are not blips, but they think they’re a trend caused by the cuts in health and social care.

The estimated number of homeless on the streets in England has increased each year since 2010. The autumn 2016 total was more than twice as high as 2010’s.

A recent wide-ranging study of inequality within countries across world history by the US researcher Walter Scheidel finds, bizarrely

at first sight, that inequality within countries is *almost always* either high or rising.

In class societies, including capitalism, political and economic power boost each other and pass down generations. Only some pe-

riods go against the grain, and chiefly not happy ones: great breakdowns of society, where the rich fall further than the poor.

The new strength of trade unions in the richer capitalist countries stopped inequality increasing for a generation after 1945, but did not really decrease it. Then, in the 1980s, the neoliberal, union-battering, market-worshipping assault of Thatcher and Reagan pushed inequality up again.

Inequality continued to rise under New Labour, only more slowly, and mostly be-



tween us and the very top incomes, with some modest relative improvements for the very worse-off.

Now the inbuilt dynamics of capitalism are being mobilised again, helped on by the government, and by a long period of world capitalist depression.

Unions must rebuild. And labour-movement political activists must set their sights, not on palliatives like New Labour’s, but on the replacement of the whole mechanism of class exploitation by a cooperative commonwealth.

Public sector pay slumps

By Simon Nelson

The Resolution Foundation, in research published on 15 March, finds that public sector pay is set to continue to fall.

Adjusted for inflation, the average salary in the public sector by 2019-20 will be no higher than it was in 2004-2005, and £1,700 lower than in 2009-10.

Average real earnings now stand at £23 a week less than at their pre-crisis peak. Both PCS and Unison have called for an end to the public sector pay freeze, but done little to mobilise in action. Recent ballots nationally in Unison have had turnouts that would see no action likely under the new Trade Union Act.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka

says: “There is now an overwhelming and unarguable case to end the public sector pay cap to prevent a further decline in living standards in the coming years. All the analysis shows wages across the economy are stagnating, but the government can kick-start the revival by lifting the 1% cap in the public sector.”

Some other sectors, notably “professional, scientific and technical”, also have slumping pay. The main exception is “finance” where — probably thanks to big pay-outs at the top end to exactly the same people who helped bring us the 2008 crisis — average real weekly earnings went up about £100 a week between 2014 and 2016.

We need to rebuild union strength from workplace level upwards.

• bit.ly/ps-pay

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

Take a look at
www.workersliberty.org

Help us raise £20,000 to improve our website



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

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

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

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

In the last two weeks *Solidarity* sellers have increased standing orders, bringing in £240.

Meet the Lords? Abolish the Lords!

By Simon Nelson

'Meet the Lords' was the BBC's three-part series on the inner workings of the House of Lords.

At its most critical it showed how few peers bother doing anything, although a large proportion still claim their full allowance. For the most part the programme was a tribute to the work of the £300-a-day "unsalaried" parliamentarians with no democratic mandate.

The programme maker's idea of a rebel is Baroness King (Labour) and Lord Bird (Crossbencher) — but not because they condemn this relic of Britain's feudalism. Lord Bird says "bugger" in his maiden speech and tells the kitchen staff he too used to work in a kitchen and he was a member of the WRP. Baroness King believes things move very slowly, most peers do nothing, but she's different — she wears trainers.

Mild critics like Lord Tyler (Lib Dem) praise the oversight and expertise that can be garnered from the debates in and lobbying of the second chamber. Much of the legislation passed to them from the House of Commons is poor. The only way it gets improved is by passing it through the Lords — a hodge podge of former Cabinet Ministers, "experts", friends of previous Prime Ministers, bishops and the landed gentry.

POWERFUL

Lord Strathclyde, the Tory leader in the House, aka Thomas Galloway Dunlop du Roy de Blicquy Galbraith, is very worried that the House has become too powerful and sometimes attempts to overturn the government's wishes.

This is a particular problem for the current government because crossbenchers and other parties outnumber Tory peers — the result of Blair, Brown and Cameron avoiding reform of the Lords by expanding it with life peers.

Elsewhere we are treated to the spectacle of Lord Palmer, one of, as the programme continually repeats, "only 92 hereditary peers" Lord Palmer lives in a house that cost £400 million to build in today's money. He is a real grown-up, though; when watching a Labour MP call for an end to hereditary peers, he says you have to take this sort of thing on the chin and just get on with your work — that is eating subsidised meals, claiming £300 a day and drafting written questions to the House about whether they will bring back the TV room where he used to enjoy watching cricket.

Lord Borwick is a Tory whip who is doing his best to get the Government's Housing Bill through. The legislation makes affordable housing scarcer and protects millionaire landlords and property developers. Lord Borwick is the man for the job because he knows a lot about housing: he is a partner in a firm dealing in real estate and director of five of its subsidiaries. He's also the chairman of two holding companies and a director of a further subsidiary. On film we see him being driven round some of his latest property developments.



Lord West of Spithead, former Admiral and Labour Minister, is very proud to show off his great achievement — some extra flagpoles to ensure Scottish, Welsh and English flags can be flown at all times at the Palace of Westminster.

Sadly this is not the only silly part of "tradition" we are asked to take seriously. The fact that Black Rod, — the Head of Security and House Operations Manager — wears tights and carries different swords for different occasions is something the British people are supposed to be immensely proud of. As a student, I once met a previous Black Rod and asked whether junking stupid costumes, writing on vellum, and wasting time on ceremonies might make the work of the legislature feel slightly more like it existed in the real world. My comments were treated with polite disdain: "Millions of people watch the State Opening of Parliament... these traditions are part of the very fabric of Britain".

The current Labour leadership, both John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn, and even large numbers of the Labour right have called for the abolition of the House of Lords. Right-wing former Labour MP Austin Mitchell wrote a whole book on it! Yet, Corbyn has so far failed to take up the issue or other democratic questions. Amid press furore over how he would relate to the Queen if elected Prime Minister, Corbyn said that in the current circumstance he would have to interact with the Queen, but would like to see the monarchy, the House of Lords and other feudal remnants abolished. Yet he appointed peers into the Shadow Cabinet. That should not have happened.

The House of Lords may have recently amending Brexit legislation for the good (but it didn't challenge the government when its amendments were removed), but any serious radical, socialist and pro-working class Labour Government would find itself forever hampered by the existence of the second chamber. A Workers' Government would also need oversight, accountability and restraints. But these should come from broader democratic structures rooted in society.

The kind of reforms that we should advocate, as well as abolition of the Lords, could be an executive elected by and accountable to parliament, annual elections, the right to recall MPs, and the opening up of workplace and economic democracy.

Sadly we have not had even minor tinkering suggested by Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Greece: Toward

By Theodora Polenta

The latest poll in Greece shows Syriza has the support of just 15% of the electorate.

Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos has boasted that a third of the austerity measures Greece had to impose as part of the current programme have been "totally completed", another third are "totally agreed", while the rest are subject to "political negotiation."

Alexis Tsipras's Syriza-Anel government, elected in January 2015 with the claim and the hope that it would be Greece's first government of the left, is overseeing a social counterrevolution.

More than a third of the population (35.7 percent) are officially in poverty. Unemployment stands at 23 percent and 46 percent among youth. Last year alone Syriza slashed another €350 million from the health budget. 2.5 million Greeks have no health-care coverage.

Public spending on higher education was gutted by 75% five years ago, with 15 to 25 percent cuts in each subsequent year. An example of the impact of this is at the University of Crete, which had a budget of €17.5 million in 2011, but now operates with just €3.1 million.

GDP showed a decline of 1.1% in the fourth quarter of 2016, instead of the expected growth of 0.3%. GDP decreased by €338 million, and added value fell much more, by €637 million. Gross capital formation fell 30.7% compared with 2015.

DEBT

The Syriza government must make a further €7 billion payment to its creditors by July or risk default on its entire debt, which remains at a staggering €330 billion.

For the last two years, the IMF has been involved in a fraught standoff with the EU, insisting that it would not back any further bailout programmes for Greece if they did not include some debt relief. The IMF is on record that Greece's debt is unsustainable and opposes demands from the EU that Athens must show a primary budget surplus of 3.5 percent. Instead, it calls for Greece to be bled dry more slowly, with a 1.5 percent primary budget surplus and debt relief.

The IMF estimates Greece's debt will be 170% of gross domestic product by 2020 and 164 percent by 2022, and "become explosive thereafter", escalating to 275 percent of GDP by 2060.

Germany responded not by backing down, but with brutal language and further threats against Greece. German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble has warned: "We can't undertake a debt haircut for a member of the European single currency. It's ruled out by the Lisbon Treaty... For that, Greece would have to exit the currency area... The pressure on Greece to undertake reforms must be maintained ... otherwise they can't remain in the currency area."

When the IMF and the Eurogroup reached a tentative agreement on 10 February, Reuters



Greek farmers protesting tax hikes in Athens clash w

reported, "Officials said the lenders would ask Greece to take €1.8 billion euros worth of new measures until 2018 and another €1.8 billion after 2018, focused on broadening the tax base and on pension cutbacks."

The new cuts represent 2 percent of GDP, which has already fallen by 25 percent since 2010. Or taking another €327 from every man, woman and child in the country.

The government returned from the Eurogroup meeting of 20 February celebrating. In fact we are on the way to the imposition of a fourth memorandum.

These are the measures of the "government's step forward" towards the completion of the second evaluation:

- Reductions of the lower income threshold of tax free allowance from €8,600 to €5,900, so that all minimum wage workers are set to lose about €500 per year.

- 1.4 million pensioners, those getting more than €700 monthly, will see their pensions further reduced in 2020-2025.

- Privatisation of the remaining large public services (electricity, water transportation). Restructuring of the Superfund and the passing over to it of additional public assets and wealth.

The coming fourth memorandum will build on the ground laid waste by the previous three memoranda. However, there is some extra political weight here: the Syriza-Anel government is already creating the framework for post-2019, when it is highly unlikely to be in power post-2019. None of the previous memorandum governments (Papandreou, Papademos, Samaras, Venizelos) dared commit that far in the future.

The fourth memorandum will not, unlike

...ds a fourth memorandum?



with police

the previous three, be supported by a new loan or “bail-out” agreement. Bankrupt Greek capitalism will have to self-fund, and that can only be done by plundering salaries, pensions, health, education, and public wealth.

To mislead the Greek public, and to sooth the residues of their left conscience, the spin doctors of the government offer a gloss on the negotiations over the second evaluation and the prospect of a fourth memorandum.

They say the government will implement a package of counter-measures in favour of workers, pensioners, etc., to counteract the anti-working class measures of the fourth memorandum and produce a “neutral effect”.

The same argument was used in the past when Syriza was signing off on a third memorandum and promising a “parallel program”. Any crumbs will be given only after 2019 and only if the target of a 3.5% primary budget surplus is met.

They say that Tsipras, with the World Bank, will be preparing a €3 billion program to reduce unemployment and create 300,000 jobs in 2018-2020.

In fact, the miserable government of Syriza-Anel will vote through all the anti-working-class measures (with an ever-decreasing pool of tears) in order to cling to power.

Meanwhile, the opposition ND (Tory party) leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who now has a 20% lead in the opinion polls, is claiming (rightly so) ownership for his party over all the memoranda. He endorses the line of a smaller state, budget surpluses, redundancies in the public sector, and further privati-

sation. The other parties of the establishment, such as Pasok and Potami, are dreaming of national salvation governments. The Greek CBI is “campaigning” for collective redundancies, reduced taxes for the capitalists, and Bulgarian levels of wages.

The Versailles summit of the four biggest countries of the eurozone (Germany, Italy, France, Spain) on 6 March announced a program of a two speed eurozone and the dissolution of the hypothetical front of the countries of the south upon which the hopes of the Syriza-Anel government were based. It remains to be seen how this two speed Eurozone will be institutionalised.

After the Dutch elections on 15 March 15 come the French presidential election on 23 April and 7 May, the German elections in late September, and the Italian elections on a date yet to be set. If there is a turn towards the

populistic right and far right, some of these countries may withdraw from further financing of the Greek program without IMF involvement.

Greece’s stalemate not only maintains the widespread social distress, but carries the risks of sudden acceleration and shocks. An “accidental” and regressive Grexit is creeping back onto the agenda.

It is us — the workers in the public and private sector, the pensioners, the unemployed, the youth, the struggling self-employed — against them. Hopes for the reversal of the social Armageddon cannot be placed with the bureaucrats of Greece’s union confederations, Gsee and Adedy. The leader of Gsee refuses to organise any resistance. He is going to the negotiating table with the Greek CBI for another round of misery. Adedy, under a coalition leadership of ND, Pasok and Syriza

supporters, remains at the level of symbolic protests.

At the last meeting of Adedy, the representatives from the Greek Communist Party (KKE) union faction, Pame, did not propose even one strike day.

The tide can be turned only by united struggle of the working class and popular strata movement.

Only by rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins, civil disobedience, solidarity networks, strikes, based on the rank and file and our own forces of self-organisation.

A united front is needed, on a political level, of all the anti-capitalist radical and revolutionary anti-memorandum left forces. This includes KKE, Popular Unity, Antarsya, and the groups of the revolutionary left.

A working-class-based, radical, anti-capitalist transitional program must have at its centre workers’ power, the nationalisation of the banks and all key sectors of the economy under workers’ management and control, and the creation of a workers’ government as the only way to safeguard and defend the implementation of our program of transitional demands.

Throughout the history of the working-class movement, first comes the “revolution against something”, a broad united front of all forces rallied against a common enemy.

MELANCHOLY

And then comes the “revolution for something,” the breakdown of yesterday’s united front and the coming to the fore of those who will go to the end to build a new order.

What makes the Greek left currently unattractive is that it is permeated by an array of melancholy and an air of honourable defeat. No revolution would have ever have been won if the vanguards had only responded to the interests of the subordinate classes, and not also sparked the collective imagination, projecting a dynamic, confident, winning picture.

Missing most cruelly in these dramatically difficult days for the Greek working class is just that sort of “story” of a different future.

Why is the left in disarray?

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

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

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



The Russian Revolution: when workers dared to fight

The 1917 Russian revolution was the greatest event in political history so far – the first time working-class people took political power and held it for several years. Yet the real history is buried under myths.

Since the 1960s, and especially since the opening of archives in Russia from the 1990s, much more is known about the Russian revolution.

This book aims to bring original Marxist perspectives together with a wide range of scholarship. It is written from what Lenin and Trotsky called the “third camp” independent working class socialist perspective.

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

SNP nationalism no answer to Brexit nationalism

SCOTLAND

By Dale Street

On 13 March a school in the constituency of SNP Education Secretary John Swinney sent a letter to pupils' parents asking them to help teach maths in the school, due to a shortage of maths teachers.

Later in that week a new report revealed that child poverty, income inequality and the number of people living in relative poverty in Scotland were all increasing.

Over the past year child poverty increased by 4%, to 260,000. The numbers in relative poverty increased by 2%, to 1.05 million. The income of the top 10% of the population is now 38% higher than the income of the bottom 40%. In 2014/5 the income difference had been 15%.

Reflecting the ongoing fall in the median income in Scotland, 70% of Scottish children in poverty are in households where someone works. 15 years ago the figure was 48%. But teacher shortages and growing poverty hardly merited a mention in the news.

Nor did SNP First Minister Nicola Sturgeon have much to say about them in her keynote speech to SNP conference (11-12 March). Schools and education got one mention each, amounting to 94 words out of a total of 4,297 — despite Sturgeon's promise during the Holyrood election campaign that "improving Scotland's education system" would be her "number one priority".

Instead, what dominated the news and Sturgeon's speech was her announcement about another referendum on Scottish independence, to be held some time between autumn of 2018 and spring of 2019.

The case for a second referendum, according to Sturgeon, was that Scotland had voted "Remain" in last June's EU referendum, whereas a (narrow) majority at UK level had

voted "Leave".

By the end of the week Theresa May had stated her opposition to a second referendum, at least in the short term ("now is not the time"). This means that Tory-controlled Westminster will not grant the "Section 30 order" needed to stage a referendum. And the SNP had also recalibrated its position on a second referendum.

It was not a referendum which, if successful, would lead to Scotland joining the EU. The alternative to the UK and Brexit had become membership of the European Economic Area and the European Free Trade Area (with possible membership of the EU at an unspecified later date).

This shift in emphasis was unsurprising. 38% of Scottish voters, and 34% of SNP voters voted "Leave" last year. Voting for Scotland to leave the UK only to join the EU (i.e. "regain" powers from Westminster only to "hand them over" to Brussels) was unlikely to motivate them.

There was also some room for debate, it turned out, about the date of a second referendum. According to Sturgeon: "If she (Theresa May) is talking in the spring of 2019, a bit later perhaps than I was suggesting, there may be some room for discussion about that." Later, a second referendum was no longer being posed as "the will of the Scottish people" which Westminster would ignore at its peril. Instead, it was posed as "the will of the Scottish Parliament" (which Westminster would ignore at its peril).

Both the latter changes can be put down to opinion polls carried out during the week. They consistently revealed majority opposition to an early referendum and majority opposition to independence (in slightly greater numbers, according to some polls, than in 2014).

Throughout the week SNP spokespersons had ducked the question of the currency of an independent Scotland. Then Sturgeon announced that the currency of an independent



Scotland would be the pound sterling: "It's our currency, it's a fully tradable, international currency." (Sturgeon qualified it by saying: "I have a growth commission looking at a plan for the economic future of Scotland." And to say in 2017 that an independent Scotland would use the pound is open to the same criticisms as in 2014.)

At the time of going to press, the Scottish Parliament is debating a motion calling for Westminster to grant a "Section 30 order", even though it is already clear that it will not be granted. But grievance-mongering is the DNA of nationalist politics.

The SNP are in a minority at Holyrood. But the Scottish Greens will ensure a majority for the motion, even though this contradicts their 2016 manifesto commitment: "If a new referendum is to happen, it should come about by the will of the people and not be driven by calculations of party-political advantage."

Sturgeon's drive to call a second referendum also enjoys the support of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Her "bold move" has "thrilled independence supporters": "Weakening the junior partner of US imperialism, especially in the era of Donald Trump, will be a positive thing."

Confirming the other-worldly nature of its politics, the SWP goes on to say that Corbyn's decision to oppose independence for Scotland "is likely to find few friends in the (Labour) Party."

The Socialist Party (SP) also supports a second referendum. But it will give only "critical support" for a pro-independence vote, basically because socialism will not be on offer in the referendum:

"We stand for an independent socialist Scotland (which) would seek to forge the closest of relationships with a socialist England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe."

At the same time, the SP sees a second referendum as a great chance for the left: "Because a second indyref would have the issue of the bosses' EU as a central issue ... there will be a big space to the left of the nationalists." That is to say: the SP's target audience consists of pro-Brexit and pro-independence voters.

Socialists outside the ranks of this "independence left" have not been "thrilled" by Sturgeon's "bold move". And with good reason.

The answer to nationalism is not more nationalism. Not even if the latter nationalism is of a different brand, calls itself a "civic" nationalism, and postures as being different from, and morally superior to, all other nationalisms. SNP nationalism is no answer to Brexit nationalism.

UNITED

A socialist response to Brexit is to help build a united working-class campaign at a UK level which, at a minimum, prevents a "hard" Brexit.

Proffering independence for Scotland as an appropriate response to Brexit cuts across building such a campaign. 13 million "Remain" voters in England — the existence of whom is hardly visible in the SNP's black-and-white England-Leave, Scotland-Remain portrayal of the EU referendum result — are potential allies. A referendum on Scottish independence is not a bridge to link up with them.

A renewed focus on possible Scottish independence — although, in fact, the focus has never gone away since 2014, or 2011, or even 2007 — will push aside a focus on class politics and social and economic issues, and on the SNP's record of failure in Holyrood.

The 2014 referendum campaign — contrary to the current SNP rewriting of history — was socially divisive. It counterposed previously co-existing national identities (Scottish-British and Scottish-only). The prospect of a second referendum will exacerbate such divisions.

The displacement of class politics and class-based voting by politics and voting based on national identity has consolidated an electoral base for the SNP and boosted the Tories. Opinion polls put the SNP on 48%, the Tories on 26% and Labour on 14%. The prospect of a second referendum will reinforce that political polarisation.

Labour, quite rightly, is opposed to a second referendum and to independence for Scotland. So too are the Tories. This will be the trigger, and has already been fired to some degree, for a fresh bout of post-factual denunciations of Labour as "Red Tories", the staple diet of SNP loyalists.

The prospect of a second referendum at some undefined point in the future is an unfavourable terrain for socialists. But when politics is polarising around the false alternatives of Brexit nationalism or SNP nationalism, socialists have an irre-

The origins of the Petrograd soviet

TROTSKY'S RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



Continuing a series of extracts from Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. Here Trotsky describes the inception and initial political and social character of the Petrograd soviet. For most of 1917 the soviet backed the bourgeois Provisional Government.

The organisation created on February 27 in the Tauride Palace, and called "Executive Committee of The Soviet of Workers' Deputies," had little in common with its name.

The Soviet of Deputies of 1905, the originator of the [soviet] system, rose out of a general strike. It directly represented the masses in struggle. The leaders of the strike became the deputies of the soviet; the selection of its membership was carried out under fire; its Executive Committee was elected by the soviet for the further prosecution of the struggle....

The February revolution, thanks to the revolt of the troops [in Petrograd], was victorious before the workers had created a soviet. The Executive Committee was self-constituted [mainly by members of the Menshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party] in advance of the soviet and independently of the factories and regiments after the victory of the revolution.

We have here the classic initiative of the radicals — standing aside from the revolutionary struggle, but getting ready to harvest its fruit. The real leaders of the workers had not yet left the streets. They were disarming some, arming others, making sure of the victory. The more far-sighted among them were alarmed by the news that in the Tauride Palace some kind of a soviet of workers' deputies had come into being.

Just as in the autumn of 1916 the liberal bourgeoisie, in expectation of a palace revolution which somebody was supposed to put through, had got ready a reserve government to impose upon the new czar in case it succeeded, so the radical intelligentsia got ready its reserve sub-government at the moment of the February victory. Inasmuch as they had been, at least in the past, adherents of the workers' movement and inclined to cover themselves with its tradition, they now named their offspring Executive Com-

mittee of the Soviet.

That was one of those half-intentional falsifications with which all history is filled, especially the history of popular revolutions. In a revolutionary turn of events involving a break in the succession, those "educated" classes who have now to learn to wield the power, gladly seize hold of any names and symbols connected with the heroic memories of the masses. And words not infrequently conceal the essence of things — especially when this is demanded by the interests of influential groups.

[The Executive Committee], ratified by the first chaotic meeting of the soviet, thereafter exerted a decisive influence both upon the membership of the soviet and upon its policy. This influence was the more conservative, in that the natural selection of revolutionary representatives which is guaranteed by the red-hot atmosphere of a struggle no longer existed.

It required months of new conflicts and struggles in new circumstances, with the consequent reshuffling of personnel, in order that the soviets, from being organs for consecrating the victory, should become organs of struggle and preparation for a new insurrection.

We emphasise this aspect of the matter because it has until now been left completely in the shade.

The inspirational art of Buffy

By Carrie Evans

On 10 March 1997 something was created that changed my world forever. This is not using hyperbole to illustrate a point. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* shaped my world.

Unfortunately for me (or fortunately depending on context) I'm not the only person who feels this way. Which is why Buffy has launched a thousand think-pieces.

But Buffy's originality still stands up today because it took every cliché and trope and turned them on their heads. To the people who still think Buffy is exclusively for hormonal teenage girls who long for the "bite" of a vampire and basement-dwelling neck-beards — where have you been for the last 20 years?

The first time I saw Buffy I was seven years old and BBC 2 just happened to be on. There was this new American show with a stupid name, but the title sequence caught my attention...

Episode One opens as a horror genre show would open. A beautiful blonde, with a petite frame and soft voice, wearing a Catholic school uniform, is being talked into breaking into school by her bad boyfriend.

The boyfriend is an archetypal creep who is simultaneously trying to impress a girl with his badness and bully her into "making out" with him. I remember the rush of fear and excitement I had knowing she was about to die.

"I'm scared. I think I can hear something outside" says Darla. ("Owww, she's definitely about to get it", thinks me.)

"Baby, there's nothing out there" says creepy boyfriend.

Then in a plot twist that my seven-year-old mind could barely comprehend, Darla says "Good", transforms into a vampire and sinks her teeth into creepy boyfriend's neck. "OMFG! She was the monster!"

From then on I was completely and utterly hooked. I was a Whedonite (fan of Jess Whedon, the show's writer).

I wasn't disappointed by the rest of the show. Whedon purposefully makes the opening scene a microcosm of what is to come.

Buffy started out simply. Firstly, what if a young woman walks down a dark ally at night and gets attacked by a monster. But instead of dying as she would in a horror show, she kicks that monster's arse.

Secondly, growing up and going to secondary school is hell for most of us. But what if your school was built on the mouth of hell? Buffy is a typical teenage girl in every respect apart from the fact she is the vampire slayer. The one girl on earth with the supernatural strength and skill to fight the forces of darkness.

Horror is a brilliant medium through which to represent society's fears. It is why "penny dreadfuls" and Dracula became widely popular during the 19th century's industrial upheaval and intense urbanisation. Buffy is simply the last and in my opinion best example of this tradition.

On the surface it a show about vampires, demons and the forces of darkness. However the demons are metaphors for our own demons. They allow us to safely process and analyse our own deepest fears.

For instance, Angel, the love of Buffy's life, is a vampire cursed with a soul. In the buffyverse the demon takes your body when you're "turned" and the soul quits you, unharmed. All that's left should be a remorseless killing machine with no empathy or morality.

However Angel is thought to have killed



the most beloved daughter of a gypsy clan. They exacted the perfect revenge by putting his soul back into his body to spend the rest of eternity fighting with his demon. Angel has a conscience. Angel has to be suffering all the time. If he feels even one moment of true happiness the curse will be broken and his soul will be freed.

Here's the real kicker though, guess what makes Angel happier than anything else? You've got it, Buffy. Or more specifically, sex with Buffy.

In the episode 'Surprise' Buffy turns 17 and loses her virginity to Angel. Only to wake up the next day with a boyfriend that's a monster. The story is fantastical yet completely truthful at the same time. Many women experience this phenomenon of going to bed with one person and waking up with someone else. The phrase "He wasn't like this when I first met him" is a cliché for a reason.

MAGIC

Demons and magic also act as devices through which to analyse wider society.

Sometimes this takes the form of long overarching narratives, as with the dark and brilliant Season Six, with three separate but intertwining story lines painting a grim picture of what it's like to be a twenty-something woman in the modern world.

A lot of this season focuses on Buffy trying to reconnect with humanity. The Scooby Gang (Buffy's friends) accidentally bring Buffy back from heaven, thinking that they were saving her from a hell dimension. Only her mother has died, so she's pulled out only to face being the primary carer to her kid sister, having medical debts her mother's brain tumour incurred and having no prospects except menial jobs and poverty wages.

The season is a great big metaphor for the depression you face in your mid twenties. Buffy is directionless and lacking inspiration. She isolating herself, alienating her friends and engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Meanwhile two "big bads" are developing right under her nose in the forms of Dark Willow and The Trio.

Dark Willow is the storyline in which Buffy's best friend becomes addicted to magic. She transforms from being everyone's favourite shy geek into the world's most powerful and out-of-control dark witch.

Buffy is unable to stop this from happening or even recognise it because she is so lost herself.

The Trio is a group of super villains who are in fact just three misogynistic men, who can't cope with not being popular, athletic or sexy and decide to turned their frustrations on the Scooby Gang.

The Trio start out as comedy villains — typical sad, hapless, kind of pathetic, misogynists, but morph into something a lot more sinister. By the middle of the series, one of the Trio has bewitched his ex-girlfriend into being his sex slave. Fortunately for her his spell goes wrong; she wakes from the spell, confronts him with the reality of what he did, telling him that this isn't just some sick fantasy but that he has repeatedly raped her. He freaks out and murders her.

Whedon and his gang of merry writers often analysed society's ills in a single episode, often directly critical of capitalism. In the episode 'Double Meat Palace', Buffy is forced to take a job in a fast food restaurant but soon realises that her co-workers are disappearing at an alarming rate. At first we think the secret ingredient in the double meat medley is in fact human meat, but there is actually a demon who is picking the workers off one at a time. In our culture, workers are just disposable pieces of meat; they come, they go and no one notices.

Buffy: "Wow they're all so identical".

Boss: "Yeah they all start to look the same to me too."

Buffy: "No not the employees. The chicken slices".

Similarly in the episode 'Life cereal' Buffy takes a job in retail and gets caught in a time loop, forcing her to live the same day over and over again. This is a pretty obvious (even heavy handed) metaphor for the monotony of working life. In the same episode Buffy gets a job in construction but is fired because the men can't cope with her being stronger than them.

In 'The wish' the vampires work out how to mass-produce and start factory farming humans. They reflect on their activities: "Undeniably we are the world's superior race. Yet we have always been too parochial, too bound by the mindless routine of the predator. Hunt and kill, hunt and kill. Titillating? Yes. Practical. Hardly. Meanwhile, the humans, with their plebeian minds, have brought us a truly demonic concept: mass production!"

Marx delved into the world of gothic horror when explaining capitalism and often (quite poetically) compared it to Vampirism: "Capital is dead labour, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks."

Another favourite episode was 'Anne'. Here Buffy runs away to LA and takes a job in a diner. Again, she notices young run-aways are disappearing with no trace. She follows the trail and it eventually leads her to a church group that are doing outreach work with the young and homeless. But free meals come at a cost. If you allow the group to baptise you, you get sucked into a parallel hell dimension where you are forced to slave in a factory until you die, for a boss class of demons.

As a final cherry on the cake for communist buffy fans, when Buffy does lead the factory rebellion, she picks up two tools to fight with — a Hammer and Sickle. Buffy literally destroys the exploitative class and frees the slaves using a Hammer and Sickle!

I don't think every staff writer on Buffy was a Bolshevik; I think they saw the oppor-

tunity for a joke and ran with it. But there were a lot more thoughtful criticisms of capitalism, state power and modern culture in Buffy than in most popular TV.

Buffy was one of the first shows to treat TV as a complex art form, rather than just cheap entertainment. It established a reputation for innovation, experimentation, witty dialogue and meta humour. It broke new ground in what a prime time TV show could do.

When Whedon was accused of using witty, pithy dialogue as a crutch for the show, he decided to do a whole episode, 'The Gentleman', in silence. It is still one of the funniest and scariest things I've ever seen.

Here, The Gentlemen come into town and steal everyone's voices in order to help them harvest organs. When they rip out your heart no one will hear you scream.

There is also a musical episode, a few episodes set entirely inside dreams and an art house episode called 'The Body' which has absolutely no score — a first for television.

Another stand-out arty episode is 'Normal again'. In this episode we find out (or do we? no we don't. Wait, maybe we do? No. Fuck, I have no idea what is going on...) that the whole Buffyverse is actually just the complex delusion of an institutionalised girl. By doing this, the writers were able to tear down the fourth wall and critique their own work without being obnoxious.

Psychiatrist: "But Buffy, it all fell apart when you introduced this sister character into your delusions didn't it? You can't just invent a sister out of nowhere."

GENDER

Breaking new ground was very apparent in the way the show dealt with gender and sexuality.

Buffy isn't just one super-woman in a man's world. The whole show centres around amazing women. Women who are powerful, intellectual, magical, caring and sexual. Some of them butch, some of them fem, some of them gay, some of them straight. Most of them are a mixture of both bad and good. All of them however, are belittled, talked down to and held back and physically abused by men who couldn't even dream of being in the same league as them.

Then when you think you've seen it all, Buffy goes and pulls the ultimate socialist feminist move by giving her super powers away to every woman in the world. She is no longer the chosen one, nor is she the burdened one. We all share the power and work together.

Buffy: "What if you could have that power now? In every generation a slayer is born because a bunch of old men made up that rule. Those were powerful men. This woman is more powerful than all of those men combined. So I say we change the rule... From now on, every girl in the world who might be a slayer, will be a slayer. Every girl who could have the power, will have the power. Can stand up, will stand up. Slayers everyone of us. So make your choice. Are you ready to be strong?"

So yes, Buffy may look like a show about vampires and high school, with cheap production and a painfully outdated wardrobe, but there's a reason it consistently features in "best TV ever made" lists.

It is camp, complex, beautifully moving and never patronising. It inspired women and girls all over the world to stand up and be strong. It got a generation of writers to treat TV as art and push the boundaries on what is acceptable.

Forever a Whedonite.

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Events

Saturday 25 March

Unite for Europe march
11am, Park Lane, London
bit.ly/2nNNA98

Saturday 25 March

Durham teaching assistants' march
12pm, Gala Square, Durham
bit.ly/2n3D6J8

Monday 27 March

Strike while the mic is hot —
Picturehouse fundraiser
7pm, The Victoria, 451
Queensbridge Road, London E8
3AS
bit.ly/2n9wtGX

**Have an event you
want listing? Email:
solidarity@workersliberty.org**

Tuesday 28 March

The left and Brexit —
Manchester Workers' Liberty
public meeting
7.30pm, Central Methodist hall,
Oldham St, Manchester M1 1JQ
bit.ly/2nNNAfL

Saturday 1 April

Protest Against Housing Benefit
Cuts For 18-21 Year Olds
12 noon, Parliament Square
bit.ly/2mi4R1Q

Leeds march for the NHS

11am, Victoria Gardens, Leeds
LS1 2LH
bit.ly/2naCINn

Another Europe is still possible
11am, Museum of Science and Industry,
Liverpool Road, Manchester M3 4FP
bit.ly/2nihnze

More online at www.workersliberty.org



Workers' Liberty



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DOO strikes spread

By a railworker

On Monday 13 March RMT guards and drivers on Southern Railways struck and were joined for the first time by RMT guards and drivers on Northern and Merseyrail.

RMT continues its fight against the extension of driver-only operation on Southern, while the leadership of drivers' union Aslef seems desperate to surrender. Two days after the latest RMT strike, Aslef announced to its members the result of the latest secret round of talks. The result? The same deal, with some very minor improvements. The *Financial Times* was open in describing it as the same deal rewritten and talks about this whole debacle as a "humiliation" of Aslef. It is unsurprising that the union finds itself in this current mess — it should have returned to strike action before going back into talks. The ballot of Aslef members on this deal closes on 3 April.

Meanwhile at Northern and Merseyrail, the RMT has begun taking action in its disputes with those companies over the same issue. On Northern RMT members were rock solid, with only very small numbers of scabs and none at all at some depots. The picture among RMT members was very similar at Merseyrail.

Perhaps the biggest story to come out of this day's action was the massive show of solidarity by Aslef drivers at Merseyrail. *None* of the drivers booked to work that day crossed the RMT picket lines, meaning the only trains to run that

day on the network were driven by managers, and the company had to almost completely scrap its planned timetable of reduced services. This show of unity with guards by Aslef drivers, ignoring a circular from their union advising them to work normally, massively increases the likelihood that a campaign of industrial action against DOO can succeed in defeating employers and the Tory government.

Meanwhile, on Northern, where there is no pre-existing culture of respect for picket lines between Aslef and RMT members, only one Aslef driver chose not to cross the picket line. Arriva Rail North management attempted to victimise that driver but were forced to back down or face a dispute with Aslef.

Talks were held between Merseyrail managers and RMT to try to avert a strike during the up-

coming Grand National horse racing festival at Aintree 6-8 April but no agreement was reached. RMT has now announced strikes on 8 April on Northern, Southern and Merseyrail.

RMT has written to Arriva Rail North asking for talks — presumably to make itself appear reasonable. A better approach would have been to announce strike dates and declare itself available for talks.

This dispute is likely to rumble on, spreading as it does so. It is to be hoped that it spreads from RMT to Aslef, or at least to ASLEF members, following Merseyrail drivers' lead.

Real unity is needed in order for rail workers to defeat the bosses and the Tory government in their attempt to smash organised labour on the railway.

Guard found not guilty

by Janine Booth

RMT member Martin Zee has won an important legal battle concerning his actions as a train guard.

Martin was a guard on a Merseyrail train in 2015 when an elderly passenger tried to board a train after the door closure procedure had started and was injured. Martin carried out his role properly, ensuring the train and track were made safe and climbing down to support and reassure the passenger until the emergency services arrived.

The prosecution of Martin Zee took place in a political context. The government and profit-motivated train operating companies want trains to be operated by drivers only, without the support of guards. This prosecution was a vindictive attempt to discredit guards to make it easier to scrap them.

So the "not guilty" verdict is not only a huge relief for Martin, but a welcome blow to the push towards driver-only operation.

• Full article online:
bit.ly/2mLs2yB

Student union cuts cleaners' hours

By Justine Canady, UCLU Women's Officer-elect (personal capacity)

UCL Student Union's senior management have agreed cuts in the region of 90k to the cleaning budget.

Secura Clean, the company contracted to carry out UCLU cleaning, have promised there will be no redundancies. However, hours will be drastically cut, meaning that some cleaners possibly losing one-third of their hours. Many cleaners are currently organised through independent trade union CAIWU. It

is likely that they will ballot for industrial action if these cuts go through.

There has also been some controversy around the cleaners' pay. UCLU is a London Living Wage employer. However, some cleaners provided pay stubs showing that they in fact received slightly below LLW.

UCLU Board of Trustees will be meeting 23 March to discuss the cleaners' situation. It is likely, the board will not want to overrule management's decision to make cuts, despite the Union Council passing a motion earlier this month to support the cleaners. UCL stu-

dents are currently circulating a petition calling for the Board of Trustees to "respect UCLU's cleaners and respect democracy".

UCLU is currently running a deficit, and needs to balance its books; with cleaning currently accounting for such a high cost, it would appear to make sense to go after this budget first. Balancing the books must not be done by sudden, drastic changes to the contracts of the most vulnerable at a moment's notice.

Instead, the cleaners should be made in-house staff and cuts, if needed, should be made to managerial pay.

Sacked for using holy water?

By Simon Nelson

Three cleaners at Kinsley Academy near Wakefield have been sacked on trumped-up charges relating to allege religious discrimination against the employers!

The three cleaners, employed by

C&D cleaning, struck for 68 days for union recognition and the living wage. They returned to work in December with a settlement, but just before Christmas were sacked.

The outrageous charges stem from their Halloween protest, the "Kinsley 3 Vampire Gathering". C&D claims that the mere notion of

dressings as vampires and throwing "holy water" amounts to an attack on their Christian faith. It would appear laughable if it were not these women's jobs on the line.

C&D themselves have shown complete disdain for the workers and have refused from the beginning to engage with, let alone recognise, their Union.

Picturehouse strikes spread to six cinemas

By a Picturehouse worker

On Saturday 18 March workers at five Picturehouse cinemas struck in their ongoing dispute for the Living Wage and union recognition. It was the first strike by workers at the Duke of York cinema in Brighton.

The strike was successful. The Duke of York strike marks the first time our campaign has reached out of London. In addition to about 50 workers coming down from London to demonstrate outside of Duke of York's, we were joined by lots of supporters from Brighton. The Duke's workers came away feeling quite positive about it. Over the course of the day they recruited quite a lot of new members — some workers who weren't working the day shift, and had previously not joined the union, ended up not go in for their scheduled evening shift.

We also marched from the Duke to the Komedia cinema, another Picturehouse branch in Brighton. We are confident that staff at the Komedia will soon get involved in the dispute.

East Dulwich Picturehouse is

currently being balloted to join the strikes, with the result expected on 29 March. This will be the sixth cinema in the chain on strike. We want to tour other UK Picturehouses, which are currently not on strike, and organise meetings with workers. We are starting a campaign for statutory recognition. This won't happen overnight, but we think we currently have half the numbers we need to win a statutory recognition ballot. We don't want to rely on the law, though, and whilst we do this we want to spread the strikes to new sites.

BOYCOTT

There is also now a boycott of Picturehouse and its parent company Cineworld.

A lot of celebrities are getting involved in the boycott campaign and calling on Cineworld and Picturehouse to pay the Living Wage. In addition to individuals boycotting Picturehouse and Cineworld, which could be useful but won't be decisive in the dispute, the boycott is gathering pace with Picturehouse partners. For example the Human Rights Film Festival has said it will not host its

festival with Picturehouse next year if it does not pay the living wage, and NUS NEC has passed a motion calling for its member student unions to remove Picturehouse from their freshers' fairs.

More strikes are planned for 31 March, to coincide with the release of 'Ghost in the Shell'.

Picturehouse and Cineworld have demonstrated that they are not prepared to "play nice". The union and individual activists have been receiving legal letters with ludicrous threats, which are factually incorrect. But none of these threats have yet resulted in legal action. The intent is to intimidate the union and activists, whether or not there is any substance in the threats, and to tie the union up in replying to and examining legal threats.

As a consequence of this, as well as the new Trade Union Act, we have seen greater regulation put on our picket lines and protests. The latest issue is having a picket supervisor, and our union Bectu is currently not allowing this to be a lay activist but rather a full-time union official, meaning Bectu does not have



enough staff to cover pickets at all sites. We have the capacity to organise strong and effective picket lines which turn away cinema-goers, and the campaign has great momentum. It is frustrating when we have that sort of momentum to have restrictions placed on us organising effective picket lines by the law, but also by our union which, rightly or wrongly, is increasingly nervous of legal action and is therefore being overly cautious.

We should be cautious to not put members at unnecessary risk, but it needs to be weighed

up with the need to win the dispute. At a certain point we have to push back so our action is effective.

- The Picturehouse strikers have a new website with resources for supporting them: www.picturehouselivingwage.com
- Lewisham Momentum will be leafletting Greenwich Picturehouse for the boycott on Friday 7 April — bit.ly/2nhXaKd
- Write to your MP and ask them to sign EDM 1000 in support of the strikes — bit.ly/2nNO8Cm

Teachers say: “not our deficit!”

Teachers at Forest Hill school in Lewisham struck on Wednesday 21 March. Joe Cowley, the NUT union rep, spoke to *Solidarity*.



In September we were told that the school had fallen into budget deficit — a projected £1million — and that this would necessitate a massive restructure in the school.

This is about job losses, and the detrimental impact that will have on workload, and therefore on students' education. It will impact the curriculum, particularly in areas such as the creative arts and technology. Everything that we as teachers believe in, providing quality education for young people in our community to address the imbalance of inequality, will be made difficult if not impossible by the restructure. We've already had cuts through natural wastage, which has meant that the special educational needs department has been decimated.

We were told that the deficit was due to both external and internal factors. The external part is that of a bigger crisis facing education in the change to the national funding formula. The NUT projects this will mean cuts of up to £25 million in Lewisham schools alone! Alongside the increased national insurance and pensions contributions. As for the internal factor — clearly something has gone catastrophically wrong, and as of yet we have

been unable to find any reason for the deficit or anyone to hold accountable. Neither senior management or the council seem to want to have that discussion. They just bat our questions away and describe the situation as “financial mismanagement”, so it's difficult to know where the deficit came from and suggest alternatives.

The council has said it will provide some deficit management aid, but this comes with strict stipulations on cutting the wage budget — clearly there will be no RBS bailout for schools! We want to force the council into accepting that it's their job to protect education in Lewisham, and the varied curriculum we provide to students.

As the NUT we are demanding that redundancy payments (at a projected £450,000) are covered by the local authority, who are legally responsible, not the school as we are currently being told will be the case. This could make a huge difference to the school budget.

We will be holding a demonstration at Lewisham council cabinet on Wednesday 22 March, and we

expect to be joined by members from the Forest Hill parents' action group and students who have jumped at being part of the campaign we have been building.

More strikes are named for Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 March. There is a real commitment amongst the union group to win this. I don't see any reason why we would cease until we win.

The NASUWT is not currently involved in the dispute, but some of their members would like to get involved, and they won't be covering any NUT members' work on the strikes they are not currently involved in.

**More industrial news:
Bromley library strike
bit.ly/2nG3NXq
Fujitsu workers strike again
bit.ly/2n9cKr4**

TAs force concessions

By Ralph Peters

On 15 to 17 March there was a dramatic reversal of the bullying and confrontational attitude that Derby's Labour Council had until then shown to Unison in the 10 month long dispute with school support staff.

The sudden change followed several weeks in which increasing solidarity had been shown towards the school support staff.

Both wings of Momentum gave support at national meetings or conferences. The *Clarion* magazine launched a petition that got the signatures of leading national officials of Labour-affiliated unions. Reports started flooding in of supportive motions being passed at Labour Party meetings.

Another pressure was the likely reopening of the dispute of the Durham Teaching Assistants' dispute. A march has been called in Durham on 25 March as frustration builds at the suspension without progress of their dispute.

On Friday 17 March, the stew-

ards agreed to put a proposed deal out to ballot with a recommendation to accept. As we go press, we do not know the details.

Last June Derby Council unilaterally imposed a new contract on the school staff. Allegedly because of an equal-pay review, it led to a pay cut of about 25% for the teaching assistants (TAs, mostly women) and an attempt to make them work longer hours.

The deal included promises of compensatory payments. The proportion of staff receiving those payments, and the extent of compensation, have not been yet revealed.

The council is saying that much of that funding will have to come from the local schools. That will make it difficult to get agreement at the many academies in Derby.

School support staff will need to extend the solidarity they developed with parents and develop campaigning links with other education unions against all the cuts on school budgets.

- Full article: bit.ly/2mQnuYI

Sacked for organising

By Luke Hardy

Deliveroo drivers in Leeds are fighting for the reinstatement of seven workers and for union recognition.

The workers had an online discussion group for workers which got into the hands of management. Two riders were sacked and five had their hours cut.

Deliveroo employs about 300 workers in Leeds, with only 30 working full-time. Deliveroo rider

and IWW member Jack Hannam said:

“One rider who was disgruntled for some reason showed it to management and within a week two union members who were active on it had their contracts terminated, Five of us had our hours cut.

“I had about 40 hours scheduled and they have been taken off me.”

- Donate to the hardship fund at: bit.ly/2nFQnea



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Labour should fight Brexit all the way

By Martin Thomas

Prime minister Theresa May will formally announce her wish to quit the European Union, and thus trigger separation proceedings under Article 50 of the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, on 29 March.

Current Labour Party policy is to give the Tories a free hand to shape Brexit. Labour leaders say they must defer out of respect for the referendum decision on 23 June 2016.

Labour leaders have talked about "holding the Tories to account" and pushing a "People's Brexit", but surrendered the means to make those words reality by voting with the Tories when they legislated to give themselves a free hand.

The Tories explicitly rejected amendments requiring regular reports to Parliament, or allowing Parliament to vote down a "final" deal and force renegotiation.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell said last October: "The Government is hurtling towards a chaotic Brexit that will damage our economy, and hurt the poorest and most vulnerable most of all."

"By pulling up the drawbridge and tearing up longstanding ties to Europe, we will inflict huge and unnecessary pain on our society. Yet a hard-line Tory minority believe [in] the fantasy of turning our whole country into a giant offshore tax haven, with rock-bottom wages

and no public services. It is a nightmare vision that I believe would be rejected by the majority of people who live here".

Labour should be convincing people, including those who voted for Brexit last 23 June, that this Tory Brexit *should* be rejected by the majority, and that the majority should have the means to block it.

Plebiscitary democracy — decision by one-off vote, with terms of the vote decided by the government, and the implementation which determines what the one-off vote really means also decided by the government — is a thin form of democracy.

DEMOCRACY

Lively democracy means the continual formation, revision, and re-formation of a majority opinion, with minorities always having the chance to become majorities.

Labour's deferential attitude means letting live democracy be killed by dead quarter-democratic forms.

The referendum result gave a new right-wing leadership in the Tory party a boost for their agenda. Labour has to accept that as a fact. It doesn't have to, and shouldn't, "accept" any moral obligation to cease opposing that agenda.

The Tories are shaping Brexit in a right-wing way. In our view, that goes with the terrain, but it was not clear to the voters on 23 June, nor

something that the majority clearly voted for then.

Since January, Theresa May has repeated that "no deal is better than a bad deal", meaning that the Tories retain the option — to be used by them at will, whatever Parliament thinks — to go for quitting the EU on terms that would leave British citizens in EU countries, and EU nationals in Britain, stranded; that would block travel and movement between Britain and the EU; that would disrupt trade and supply chains by tariffs and heavy border paperwork; that would erect "hard" borders between North and South in Ireland and, quite possibly, between England and Scotland.

On 15 March Brexit minister David Davis said: "We wanted to be clear we could actually manage this [a no-deal exit] in such a way as to be better than a bad deal and that is true... It's not as frightening frankly as some people think".

So he has found "clear" facts? Not at all. "I can't quantify it for you in detail yet. I may well be able to do so in about a year's time".

What if the Tories get what they think a "good deal"? Even that will be bad.

They insist on quitting the EU Single Market, which allows trade to flow across borders without tariffs or delays, although polls have shown 90% in favour of staying in. They want to withdraw, in large part, from the looser Customs



Union, which even Turkey is in.

They want, above all, to stop free movement and cut immigration, from non-EU countries as well as from the EU. Making Britain a walled-off, meaner country will hurt working-class unity between workers of different countries and origins, and impoverish it economically. Since immigrant workers pay in so much in taxes, and disproportionately staff public services, the walling-off will create great pressures for further social cuts.

So far the Tories are circumspect about trashing workers' and other rights which entered British law from the EU. But they say openly that they will use so-called "Henry VIII powers", allowing the government to change laws without reference to Parliament.

Labour's deference on Brexit

also undermines the work of rebuilding Labour support.

The Labour right wing's staged Shadow Cabinet resignations in June-July started the process which has given Theresa May a lead in the polls despite unpopular policies (continued benefit cuts, new schools cuts, grammar schools...) But the new line of deferring to a supposedly fixed Brexit majority has worsened it.

While the Lib-Dems — despite their so-recent record in government, despite the fact that one-third of their voters went for Brexit on 23 June, despite everything — have doubled their membership by making at least some show of fighting the Tories' Brexit, Labour's surge in membership has been paused or even slightly reversed.

We cannot beat the Tories by deferring to them. Labour should fight Brexit all the way!

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