



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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REBUILD LABOUR TO FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST POLICIES

Labour's manifesto for 8 June proposes a clawback from the rich to benefit the working class and social provision.

The manifesto has the potential to rally and activate millions of working-class people who have resented neoliberalism but seen no alternative as possible.

We have three weeks to get that process rolling: to draw in the hundreds of thousands have signed up as Labour Party members or supporters, and equip them to convince their workmates, neighbours, and friends. We want to start a revitalisation of the Labour Party and trade unions, to make them ready and capable to push through the measures in the manifesto and to go further.

Whatever the outcome of the poll on 8 June, the battles continue for the NHS, for free education, for union rights and collective bargaining, for social provision, and for public ownership.

We need movements with a mass membership, with a vital youth wing, democratic and lively in debate, organised and active daily in the workplaces and in working-class streets.

More pages 6-7

Inside:

Vote Labour!

**Keep fighting
for free
movement**

Solidarity examines recent statements by the Labour Party on migration and what the manifesto says.

See page 5

**Solidarity
across borders**



Trade unionists hold joint Palestinian-Israeli May Day event.

See page 2

**Bob Crow: an
unapologetic
socialist**



Janine Booth reviews *Bob Crow: socialist, leader, fighter* — A political biography, by Gregor Gall

See page 9

**HE Act passes:
universities
make cuts**

EDUCATION
NOT
MARKETISATION



University activists report on the likely outcomes of the HE Act, the fight against it, and the cuts already happening.

See page 10



Solidarity across borders: May Day in Jerusalem

By Janet Burstall

“Music without borders mingled with an encounter of solidarity among humans” in a special May Day celebration, with Palestinian garage and carpentry workers, art teachers, musicians, agricultural workers and cleaners, Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians.

The WAC MAAN Workers Advice Centre organised this gathering in Jerusalem, and WAC backs all the campaigns and projects presented there.

At the centre were to be Palestinian workers from the Zarfati Garage, who were held up for an hour at a checkpoint into Israel, a daily experience for thousands of Palestinian workers. Finally they arrived and the evening began.

Hatem Abu Ziadeh, head of the workers’ committee at Zarfati Garage, thanked the workers who stood by him during the struggle to organise with WAC. Four years ago the Zarfati workers were employed at low wages, with no social benefits. The struggle and their membership in WAC brought real change.

Hatem also expressed his hope that other workers in Mishor Adumim would join WAC and unionize. Amir Basha, the labour lawyer who advocated for the Zarfati Garage workers, told how he had “never seen a case in which the employer began with such a negative attitude — firing the workers’ committee head, accusing him of criminal acts, submitting complaints with the police about WAC and its

lawyer” before understanding they must reach an agreement.

The event was led in Hebrew and Arabic by the theatre writer and director Guy Elhanan and by Hanan Manadreh Zoabi, WAC’s Chairwoman, who invited various musicians and speakers onto the stage.

Hanan Zoabi explained that this Labor Day celebrates solidarity between Palestinian and Israeli workers, and also solidarity with human beings in their struggle for democracy, freedom and human rights.” She was the first of many to support “the struggle of the Syrian people against the bloodthirsty regime of Bashar Assad.” Elhanan’s current play “Above and Below the Scaffolding” in Arabic is about accidents in the construction industry.

Ala Khatib spoke on the struggle against work accidents in construction, after a particularly bad year. Khatib noted that the government refuses to invest in supervision and training to reduce accidents.

Rania Salah, WAC’s woman coordinator from East Jerusalem, spoke of her daily work in the struggle against poverty and the exploitation of workers and the unemployed in the city.

Wafa Tiara, WAC coordinator for working women, came to the event together with a big group of women agricultural labourers and cleaners from a region of Arab Towns and Villages inside Israel. She spoke about the struggle to increase employment opportunities for Arab women. “We women will not stand aside. We demand an equal place in all areas of life” she



Hatem Abu Ziadeh, head of the workers’ committee at Zarfati Garage

said.

Artist Galia Uri spoke about her work in the NGO “Wings” guiding artists with special needs. Her colleagues had joined WAC, because many among them do not get social benefits” and because “WAC works for solidarity in many ways, both inside and outside the Green Line, between women and men, between workers in various fields.”

Kiki Keren Hos, a music teacher at Jerusalem’s Musrara College, is a workers’ committee activist there. She described how administrative

staff joined WAC, with the full support of the teachers.

Musical performances included a Turkish piece, a song from the Threepenny Opera performed by Jewish classical musicians; and a well-known song of the Lebanese fishermen “Shidu al-Hima” performed by Palestinian musicians from East Jerusalem. The song has become a hymn of workers’ struggles throughout the Arab world. Improvisations expressed the empathy between musicians, ending the night with jazz sounds of flute, saxophone and darbuka.

Erez Wagner, director of WAC’s Jerusalem office, said “On 24 May 2017, Jerusalem will mark 50 years to the occupation that was imposed on its Palestinian residents and on the entire West Bank.” Breaking down the walls through joint struggle for workers’ rights, workers’ and an end to poverty is “the way to overcome the violence in which we live, and to finally move from a reality of occupation to a reality of peace, progress and freedom.” He noted the need to recreate the concept of “left” which is often associated these days with support for



Hanan Zoabi

dictators like Putin or Assad.

WAC director Assaf Adiv closed the event emphasising WAC’s unique character as an organisation which crosses borders and walls, and said he is proud of the fact that it was the only workers’ organization in Israel that unequivocally stands by Palestinian workers against the occupation.

“We don’t buy empty slogans. The creation of a popular workers’ movement, both on the Palestinian side and on the Israeli side, is our answer to anyone who says peace cannot be made between the nations.

“The democratic vision to which we are committed in Israel in Palestine and the Arab world, is linked to the need to redefine the workers’ movement and the left around the world, where unfortunately today many workers vote for nationalist and racist leaders like Trump, Le Pen and Netanyahu. Many workers in Israeli society are xenophobic and nationalist. We are not prepared to trail behind those regressive trends.

“On the other hand we also reject dogmatic leftism. Our effort is part wherever possible of the effort to create of a new democratic left, struggling against savage capitalism, and aspiring to build an equal, pluralistic society that embraces difference.”

• Based on a report on the WAC-MAAN website 9 May 2017
<http://eng.wac-maan.org.il/?p=1863>

Five Star play the race card

By Hugh Edwards

After last November’s referendum rejection of Renzi’s constitutional amendment, the populist Five Star Movement has come to lead Italy’s opinion polls.

A few weeks before Easter the movement’s leader in Parliament, Luigi Di Maio, denounced what he called the “taxis in the Mediterranean ferrying refugees to Italy”, meaning the non-governmental humanitarian ships who have saved the lives of many desperate people.

Di Maio claimed cynically that his “only wish is to save the good name of those virtuous NGOs and save lives”. His remarks were, however, aimed at winning people from the Lega Nord, whose hopes of riding to victory on the coat-tails of a Le Pen triumph in France have now been dashed.

The “substance” of what Di Maio called evidence of “collusion” between the humanitarian agencies and the Libyan traffickers purportedly came from inves-



tigations by the European coastal agency, Frontex, and he quoted the District Attorney of Catania. When asked to provide hard evidence, both Frontex and the legal worthy from Catania admitted they had none. The District Attorney added, revealingly, “there are too many people arriving on our shores. The majority of them have no right to international aid of any kind.”

A leader of one of the German NGOs active in the Mediterranean retorted that Frontex and other

European-created missions like Sophia and Triton have done everything to discredit the work of the NGOs. Her remarks were seconded by other NGOs.

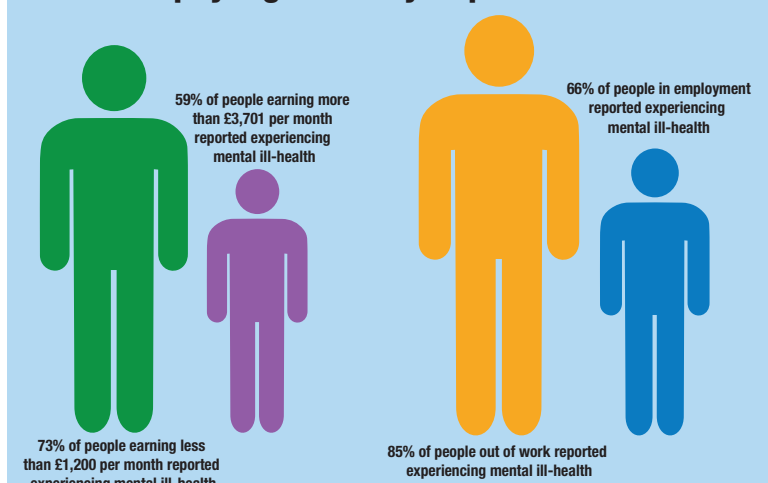
In late 2014 the EU decided to abandon its brief period of collective European humanitarian effort, Mare Nostrum, introduced following the 370 deaths just off the beaches of the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2012.

Since then the EU has adopted a policy of systematic prevention across the Mediterranean, a police profile with a diminishing dimension of rescue.

Doctors without Borders refused to participate in the EU conference in Turkey two years ago, where for three billion euros Erdogan 90s Turkey agreed to imprison millions of refugees in its camps.

A similar exercise was repeated recently in Malta between the Italians and the Libyan government, with Italy offering the Libyans money in return for them blocking their

Work and pay significantly impacts mental health



Scotland: local elections, national issues

By Dale Street

The outcome of the Scottish council elections held earlier this month can be summed up as: the Tories did well, Labour did badly, and although the SNP won more seats than other parties, it failed to maintain the electoral momentum unleashed by the 2014 referendum.

The boundary reorganisation carried out after the 2012 council elections makes it difficult to compare the number of seats won in 2012 with seats won in 2017.

Labour losses can be calculated as 112 or 133. The SNP tally can be calculated as an increase of around 30 seats or a loss of seven seats. And whatever the precise figure for Tory gains (somewhere around 164), it was enough for them to overtake Labour as the second largest party in terms of council seats.

In terms of the popular vote, the SNP scored a fraction short of 33%, the Tories scored 25%, and Labour 20%.

The Tories did particularly well outside of the Central Belt. What seems to have happened is that "traditional" Tory voters who switched to the SNP in previous years as the best way to defeat Labour are now returning to voting Tory.

For a time SNP policies which benefited the middle classes and the better-off — such as the council tax freeze and no tuition fees for university education — had maintained the support of ex-Tory switch voters.

But Sturgeon's announcement of plans for a second referendum, the end of the council tax freeze for higher-valued properties, the SNP's deplorable do-nothing



Scottish Labour's Kezia Dugdale needs to lead a fight against the SNP

record in Holyrood, and Sturgeon's ongoing transformation into a latter-day Alex Salmond, have now resulted in substantial desertions.

Although the council elections also saw a limited revival of the working-class Tory vote, especially in and around Glasgow, the SNP's limited successes were mainly in the Central Belt.

They failed to win an absolute majority in Glasgow, for example, despite the resources they had poured into their campaign in the city. But they won enough seats to become the biggest party after 40 years of Labour rule.

And they overtook Labour as the largest council group in Edinburgh, but only because Labour lost more seats (nine) than the SNP (two). The Tories, on the other hand, increased their number of seats by seven.

The irony here is that the SNP vote held up or even increased in

areas and sections of the electorate which have been the prime victims of SNP policies — falling literacy and numeracy standards, the growth of child poverty, major cut-backs in FE places, and cuts in council funding and local services.

(The Westminster block grant for the current financial year increased by 1.4% in real terms. But the SNP government in Holyrood cut local authority funding in real terms by 2.5%.)

Labour, the SNP and the Tories all claimed that they were fighting the elections on local issues. In fact, for all parties, the issue of a second referendum on Scottish independence was central, overtly or

covertly, to the elections. It was also certainly the main issue on the doorstep.

The current centrality of the issue of independence is also reflected in how political commentators have chosen to "analyse" the results: unionist parties — 605 seats, up by 28, 57%; independence parties — 450 seats, down by 2, 43%.

Although some voting patterns are clear from the council election results, they provide little clarity about the likely general election results in Scotland. There was a low turnout, and Scottish council elections are based on Single Transferable Vote, not first-past-the-post.

To date the Tories have been the

prime beneficiaries of the growing but still limited disillusionment with the SNP. The latest Scottish opinion polls put the SNP on 41%, the Tories on 30%, Labour on 17%, and the Lib-Dems on 7%.

The Tories have become a magnet not just for their own ex-SNP 'returnee' voters but also for a layer of anti-independence working-class votes. As long as the Tories and the SNP can collude to make independence the major issue in the general election, Scottish Labour will struggle to make inroads.

Over the next three weeks Scottish Labour therefore needs to make clear that the key question which should determine how people vote in the general election is not: "Who will best stand up for Scotland?" or "Who will best stand up for the Union?"

The key question is: "Who do you want to form the next Westminster government — the Tories or Labour — and what policies should the next Westminster government implement to end Tory austerity at a UK level and SNP austerity at a Scottish level?"

Ten years of SNP failures and broken promises at Holyrood are undercutting the electoral support the SNP picked up from disappointed "Yes" voters after the 2014 referendum.

Scottish Labour needs to attack the SNP where it is the most vulnerable and offer a real political alternative to Tory rule in Westminster and SNP rule in Holyrood.

No prosecutions on electoral fraud

By Simon Nelson

Nominations to stand as an MP in the general election have now closed.

About 30 mostly Tory MPs could breathe a sigh of relief as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) confirmed that "no criminal charges have been authorised" over alleged cases of electoral fraud.

This follows investigations by 14 police forces into the use of the "Battlebus2015" in marginal seats. The CPS accept that there is evidence that returns on electoral spending were inaccurate but these cannot prove "to the criminal standard that any candidate or agent was dishonest."

The cost of the bus, travel, accommodation and expenses costs

of the activists was put down as national expenditure rather than recorded for each seat individually.

Early investigations by Channel 4 prompted the Electoral Commission to look into the case, and Tories were fined a record £70,000.

The CPS had to decide if it was within the "public interest" to pursue the matter in court. As candidates appeared to have been informed that the Battlebus and other expenditure was national, it is hard to prove there was any intentional dishonesty. The CPS may have thought it too expensive to pursue the case.

Whatever the reasons, the leniency of the CPS decision on these Tories is something rarely shown to supposed "benefit scroungers" or working-class "criminals."

Rallying to stop Macron-monarchy

The French socialist newsletter *Arguments pour la lutte sociale* reports on preparations for the June legislative election.

This Sunday [14 May], while the workers of the Souterraine [factory] barricade their works with the active support of the whole population, the Elysee is seeing the monarchical ritual of the "transfer of power" from Mr Hollande to Mr Macron.

The new President of the 5th Republic launched his first major political operation this week: the nomination of candidates for "La république en Marche" [his proto-party] for June's legislative elections...

The Macron boys and girls can be divided into three groups: a bit under a quarter are big names from the right wing; a bit more than a quarter are recycled from the PS; and a majority are "start-ups"... whose sociological make-up is in reality very uniform: boys and girls in their 30s or 40s who



generally have backgrounds in commerce, financial services, HR management and local government, who are looking for a good salary and stability. If elected, they will owe their loyalty not to the voters but to the President.

Already, Macron appears to have lost hope for getting a majority of Macron boys and girls, rather than a majority produced by coalition with LR [The Republicans, the mainstream right party] and that part of the PS [Socialist Party] represented by [right-wing

outgoing prime minister] Valls and, in fact by the PS leadership, given that [PS secretary] Cambadélis has announced, in one of those ambiguous formulations for which he has such a talent, that his party would be "neither saboteurs nor doormats"....

Even [that] majority for Macron-LR-Valls would not be possible if united and democratic anti-Macron candidacies on a platform of repealing the El Khomri [labour] law were to become widespread.

The main obstacle at the moment is the position taken by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his "France Insoumise" movement: by standing candidates everywhere (except where Communist Party deputies who had supported Mélenchon's candidacy were standing), and demanding "unity" in the form of unilaterally rallying people around the "programme of La France Insoumise", they are the major factor creating conditions of division.

They are permitting the election, by default, of a maximum of Macron boys and girls.

French left discuss prospects for fightback

By Faza Kurly

Over the weekend of 29-30 April members of the French Trotskyist group, Fraction L'Étincelle met in Paris to discuss their industrial organising and the class struggle in France. I attended the meeting and this is a flavour of their perspectives.

Fraction L'Étincelle (which works in the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, NPA) overwhelmingly took the line "Ni Macron, ni Le Pen – Ni patron, ni patrie" [neither bosses nor nation] in regards to voting in second round of the presidential election.

In a reflection of the depth of the social crisis, the Front National received close to eight million votes in the first round, a wide surge since its last serious challenge for the presidency in 2002. Both 2002 and this year's poll came after French labour had been subject to five years of aggression from the Parti Socialiste, contributing to the rise of the far right. In the recent election Macron proposed to deepen the cuts, privatisations and labour reforms of the outgoing Hollande-Valls administration.

Militants in L'Étincelle see a left wing call to vote for these policies as counterintuitive. Voting Macron, they said, is a very bad way

to combat the FN: fascism cannot be fought through a front with capitalist governments whose main objective is to attack our class.

If Macron is elected, the FN will continue to exploit the crisis by blaming migrants for the pressure on wages, housing and public services. The socialist left needs, therefore, to find a way of opposing the incoming government rather than ushering it in.

Philippe Poutou, a militant of the car industry and the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste candidate, delivered an energetic campaign during the first round following the initial feat of gathering the 500 necessary nominations from elected officials.

He had a tough time from the wealthy media which dismissed him as un-serious for belonging to the proletariat. However he gained lots of sympathy following the televised debate in which he accused the right wing candidates of corruption. This became the media's focus on Poutou, drawing attention from his main demand of outlawing redundancies.

L'Étincelle militants reported that their distribution at a branch of La Poste the following day was extremely well received: workers liked that he had "gone hard" on Fillon and Le Pen.



Philippe Poutou, Presidential candidate of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste

Combined the revolutionary left (NPA and Lutte Ouvrière) gathered over 600,000 votes. This has produced a swell of interest in the NPA so great that they are struggling to respond to it. However Jean-Luc Mélenchon swept up a number of far left votes from people who thought he might reach the second round.

Mélenchon himself was strongly opposed by the NPA for his lack of interest in the organisation of workers. He did not present a programme for struggle nor an internationalist as perspective. Instead his rallies were adorned with the tricolore, while at some rallies red flags were actively rejected by the organisers.

Some tendencies within the NPA are hoping for discussions on a "new project" with elements of Front de Gauche, Ensemble and

La France Insoumise. But this is difficult when the far left achieved only 1% of the national vote, compared to almost 20% for Mélenchon.

Le Pen, though she has won support in many working class and deindustrialised communities, is not regarded "classically fascist" as the FN does not have a considerable violent street movement at its base. She would have governed constitutionally on an extreme right wing anti-union, anti-worker, and anti-migrant platform, rather than as fascist in its 20th century form.

The prospects for a combative mobilisation against both Le Pen and Macron are bolstered by the young, vocal and militant milieu which led the struggle against El Khomri's labour law last spring.

Taxation, the super-rich and the rest of us

LETTER

I thought Charlotte Zalens' article "Does £70,000 make you rich?" (*Solidarity* 436) was really useful, informative and thought provoking.

Charlotte made three important points. One, that £70,000 is way beyond the £22,400 median wage. Two, that a salary of £70,000 places someone in the top tenth of the population by income. And, three that income inequality at the top of the scale is far greater than at the bottom.

So, while £70,000 will place someone in the top tenth, this is relatively small beer when compared with the average £270,000 for the top 1%, chicken feed compared with £1 million plus for the top 0.1%.

Charlotte might also have noted that one reason why the mass media get so over excited over rumours of tax plans for those on over £70,000 is that the great majority of the "commentariat", those journalists who produce and communicate through the mass media, the big daily newspapers, who front the TV news programmes, are themselves earning well over that amount.

Interestingly, Charlotte suggests we should be aiming for the majority of the population to enjoy the benefits and relative security of those currently earning over £70,000, which sort of implies she is against additional taxation on this income band.

I don't think we should over-estimate the security of those who happen to get around £70,000. It is a truism that we are all just three or less pay cheques away from homelessness and destitution.

Given £70,000 is hardly comparable with £1 million, do we really regard people earning (say) between £70,000 and £100,000 as fully paid up members of the capitalist class?

The capitalist class are surely defined as those whose income is a number of multiples

beyond which it is necessary to compensate for their socially necessary labour. £70,000 to £100,000 hardly represents a significant share of the total surplus product of society.

If one was trying to manage capitalism fairly, you could argue that those earning (say) more than £40,000 should pay more in taxation, and progressively more as you go up the income scale.

It is obvious from Charlotte's analysis (itself drawing on HMRC figures), that the real serious income and wealth is held by the top 1-5%, and if a progressive government wanted to raise serious additional sums of revenue, that is where new additional taxation should fall. i.e. we can raise tax rates for the £70,000 to £100,000 bands, but comparatively little additional revenue would be raised.

However, targeting the majority of the required additional revenue on the 1% and 5% would instantly raise the class divided and antagonistic nature of our society, who would see this as an implied threat to their continued existence and would be expected to respond accordingly.

So, the choices facing a progressive government on taxation seems to include: loading the majority of the additional tax requirement on what is effectively the capitalist class and inviting an almost counter-revolutionary reaction; loading the majority of taxation on upper working class and middle but non capitalist class strata, causing sharp reductions in their living standards and pushing them towards the capitalist class.

Or, lastly, give up any real hope of raising significant additional tax revenue this side of socialist revolution, and try in vain to manage capitalism better than the capitalists, with inevitable demoralisation and demobilisation of the labour and working class and wider potential movement.

Andrew Northall

Judges should be elected

LETTER

Between 20 and 27 April the US state of Arkansas rushed through four legal killings of death-row prisoners, to get them done before the use-by date for its stocks of a sedative used in the killings.

Stephen Larkin's article in *Solidarity* 436 indicted the macabre penalties; but, oddly, seemed to conclude by blaming not the death penalty as such but the USA's practice of electing judges: "the moral bankruptcy of a state where the judicial system is inherently political, and human beings can be sacrificed for short-term electoral approval".

In fact three of the eight prisoners whom the state governor wanted to kill were reprieved at the last minute by the judges of the Arkansas Supreme Court (elected for staggered eight-year terms), and another reprieved by a federal district court (judges appointed by the President).

In the UK, judges were appointed by a government minister until 2016, and are now appointed by a government-selected commission which currently comprises several senior legal figures, a retired general, a retired top civil servant, a JD Wetherspoon boss, and a medical professor.

Judges are political. They make law, as much as parliament does.

In a settled bourgeois democracy, like the UK (and the USA too), they work in a system and a culture of constraints, tied by precedents and public opinion. But they are



not non-political.

Witness the 1982 case in which the House of Lords banned the Labour Greater London Council's reduced-fares scheme, a central part of the manifesto on which it was elected, because Bromley's Tory council pleaded that the policy was too expensive. The judges said that councils must not "treat themselves as irrevocably bound to carry out pre-announced policies contained in election manifestos".

Such cases are unusual only because, sadly, Labour councils and Labour governments rarely push the envelope.

The Erfurt Program, the classic detailed socialist program of the 19th century, specifically endorsed by Frederick Engels, demanded "judges elected by the people".

The socialists presumed that judge candidates would need qualifications, that they would have some security of tenure to give them autonomy from ephemeral public moods, and so on: but they were right, I think, to want judges elected by the people rather than appointed by pub bosses, generals, and ministers.

Martin Thomas

Keep fighting for free movement!



Interviewed by ITV on 15 May, Jeremy Corbyn said that Brexit means the free movement of citizens between the UK and the EU is going to end, even if Labour wins the election.

In January Corbyn had said much the same, only later to retract, saying that he was not proposing new restrictions on the rights of people to move to the UK. At that time he hinted that free movement would be part of a negotiation to keep the UK in the single market. No such clarification now.

Although Labour's shadow Brexit Secretary Kier Starmer has given a commitment that Labour would "unilaterally guarantee" the existing rights of EU citizens in the UK if elected, it is extremely disappointing that a stronger commitment — to keep the borders with the EU open and to continue freedom of movement — is off Corbyn's agenda. In any case Starmer's commitment is the one Tories have recently accepted.

In part Corbyn's latest statement is a further retreat from fighting Brexit and from being clear that the UK should be closely integrated into the EU. That too is disappointing.

In part Corbyn was aligning himself with

Labour's manifesto commitments on immigration. That uses the formula which Corbyn has been repeating for some time — that Labour will apply "fair rules and reasonable management" on immigration.

CONSISTENT

Although Labour's manifesto condemns Tory scapegoating of migrants, says migrant workers make a valuable contribution to the UK's economy, and deplores the growth of hate crime, neither this, nor the "mother and apple pie" approach of "fairness and reasonableness", is good enough.

For Labour to consistently oppose scapegoating migrants, it should spell out what its stance is on such things as the detention and swift deportation of asylum seekers, or the proliferation of immigration checks in the health service and by landlords. Neither of these things is mentioned in the manifesto, so it is difficult to know whether they will be ended by the stipulation to introduce "fair rules".

The detailed issue that is mentioned is the stipulation that spouses of migrant workers have to have a certain level of income to be

allowed into the UK. Labour says it will "replace the income thresholds for family attachments with an obligation to survive without recourse to public funds". That's good, but what will happen to spouses who rely on their partner's income and then become victims of domestic violence? Having "no recourse to public funds" will leave them stranded.

The main thrust of the manifesto seems to be aimed — in a not a very explicit or clear way — at stopping employers using migrants as a reserve army of very low-paid workers; the implication being that this tactic is responsible for low wages throughout the UK economy. The argument is based on a poor statistical assumption. The evidence is that higher migration depresses the lowest wage levels only a little. The way to tackle low wages is to stop employers from paying low wages to *all* workers.

Labour proposes measures that will help here — proposing rights at work from day-one of employment, banning zero hours employment. But there is also a nod to economic nationalism — Labour will "stop employers from recruiting only from overseas". That shift is worrying. Such a stance could become a full-scale "British jobs for British workers" policy in the future.

The manifesto says that the way to help migrant workers is to strengthen union rights and organising. That's right. But to do that effectively, Labour needs to reverse all the anti-union laws!

Despite wide support on the Labour left (in Momentum) for freedom of movement, there has been no active campaigning. The result is that those on the left that have compromised on this issue (for example, Paul Mason), the union bureaucracy and Labour's right, have made the running. That is why the manifesto, is, at best, a vague compromise.

Win or lose on 8 June, the left has to take the lead on building a labour movement campaign that defends migrants, pushes for a comprehensive freedom of movement policy between the UK and the EU and indeed the rest of the world.

That campaign can build on Labour's other commitments, to reduce the strain on the NHS, education and other public services by investing in those services.

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 two weeks *Solidarity* sellers have increased standing orders, bringing in £100.

• 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, 60-83-01 (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

Sponsored dog walk

Workers' Liberty comrade Joe Booth will be doing a sponsored 10 mile dog walk for the website fund on Sunday 11 June. Sponsor him at: bit.ly/2oGBwdd

Mobilise the members!

Labour has almost 500,000 members. If just half of these members were mobilised and turned into activists, they could transform the party and make a huge impact at the election.

Despite some impressive mobilisations by Labour — bringing members into marginal seats across the country for instance — many members are completely unengaged with their local party.

In a snap election, there will always be a strain on resources. Mobilising new members, many of whom have not yet been integrated into any activity, is a challenge. But it is one Labour must do everything to take up.

Reports show that in many seats across the UK there are very small numbers of activists doing the work and that there is little attempt to get new members involve, or

outright resistance to it.

If whole areas even in predominantly working-class safe Labour seats, have no contact from campaigners, then there is a real risk that seats will be left vulnerable and voters will not turn out to vote.

Weakened majorities for Labour MPs — even where marginals are retained — will embolden the right in Labour who continually claim that Corbyn and his policies are not popular or not popular enough with the "core vote". They want left-wing and socialist ideas to fail.

Activists should ring Labour Party and Momentum members and supporters and get them out as soon as possible. This will make a difference in the election and after, and will be our main defence against a possibly resurgent Labour right.

Labour manifesto: clawing

By Martin Thomas

The output (value-added) of the UK economy these days is around £1900 billion a year. Of that, about £360 billion is goods and services bought by central and local government, about £320 billion is capital investment, and about £1,130 billion is stuff bought by households.

The sub-totals do not add up to the overall total because of other categories, and the figures are rough, based on the last available official figures, for 2014.

The UK government produces many useful statistics on the distribution of household income, but not for the percentage of household income taken by the rich, the top 5%, and the fairly well-off, the top 20%. To get an idea, let's borrow the US figures — 20%-plus of the total for the top 5%, 50%-plus for the top 20%.

Historically, US income inequality has been greater than the UK's, but the gap has decreased, and inequality between top and bottom incomes has been rising in a way that makes official figures, always produced after a delay, usually underestimates. Household income and household consumption can diverge, especially for very high-income people who save a lot of their income, but the US figures will give us a ballpark estimate.

A dozen complications make the figures inexact; but an inexact estimate of the shape of the forest can teach us lessons not visible from more precise statistics about the trees.

If we subtract 20% from the employed-

workforce total of 32 million for bosses and their high-paid associates, some 26 million workers turn out about £74,000 each in products and services.

Of each £74,000:

- about £22,000 returns as wage, benefit, and pension income to the lower 80%, mostly working-class households
- about £9,000 goes in household income to the top 5%
- about £12,000 to expanding capital, from which they benefit most
- about £13,000 in household income to the well-off-but-not-rich 15%
- about £14,000 in government purchases of goods and services, be that medicines for the NHS and books for schools, or Trident missile replacements.

Let's say half to two-thirds of that £14,000 is health, education, and similar spending which should be counted as part of the social wage. That leaves over £40,000 of the average worker's value-added going to the rich or well-off, to the expansion of capital controlled by the rich, and to the expansion of the power and pomp of the state. Or over £1,000 billion a year in total.

UNCOSTED

The figure is rough. But it gives a measure of the mendacity of the Tory propagandists who denounce Labour's manifesto as made of "wild, uncostered spending commitments".

To pay for:

- More than £6 billion extra per year for the NHS

Each worker creates a year in products and



£22,000 to 80% of households

£13,000 to well-off-but-not-rich 15% of households



£9,000 to top 5% of households

£12,000 to expanding capital



£40,000 going to the rich or well-off

“The key provision of the manifesto on workers' rights is the proposal to roll out sectoral collective bargaining. For trade unions it is crucial to lift collective bargaining levels up from their current levels of only 20% or so. Only 1 in 5 workers are now covered by a collective agreement compared to 4 in 5 at the start of Thatcherism.

Labour's plans will help to reverse this trend. We will otherwise continue to drift towards the US position where only 1 in 10 workers is covered by a collective agreement and where unions have been strangled by tight legal restrictions.

If the Tories win the election, the pressure to mimic US free markets will be intense post-Brexit — not only ideologically, but also economically, as we hook up under a free trade agreement in which US business demands the right to do in the UK what they do in the US — no labour rights and no labour unions.



Keith Ewing, Professor of Public Law at King's College London

- £8 billion extra for social care
- Reversal of the Tory school cuts
- Reversal of the Tory benefit cuts, including the bedroom tax and cuts to disability benefits

- Restoring student grants, and scrapping university tuition fees

- Ending the 1% freeze on pay rises for health and education workers, the Labour manifesto promises to:

- increase income tax for the top 5%
- reverse the Tories' cuts in corporation tax.

It promises to take some tens of billions of pounds — John McDonnell estimates £50-odd billion — out of the £1,000 billion a year which currently goes to the rich and the very well-off, or to enterprises under their control.

Many other economic measures in the manifesto require little extra public spending.

The government can readily borrow to build new council housing, and then by law council housing accounts are “ring-fenced”. Tenants' rents cover the costs. In fact, more than that, since in recent years councils have been sneakily raiding their housing accounts by artificially increasing “service charges” paid from them to other departments.

Abolishing tuition fees will cost little in current government spending. After tuition fees were raised, the Institute of Fiscal Stud-

ies reported “the average total taxpayer contribution has not fallen very much”, since the government pays about as much on student loans for fees, and their administration, as it previously paid direct to universities.

Increasing the minimum wage to £10 an hour will force bosses to limit their profits and the amount they pay themselves, but that is all. The Picturehouse strikers have reported that the boss of Cineworld (which owns Picturehouse) could pay Picturehouse workers the Living Wage out of his own personal take, and still pocket £1 million.

Repealing the punitive Trade Union Act, abolishing zero-hours contracts, and saying workers have “employee” rights by default (putting the burden on the boss to prove that they are not employees) will not tap public funds, but will help workers reduce inequality.

RENATIONALISING

Renationalising the railways, and launching publicly-owned energy companies, will limit privatised operators' loot, but not cost taxpayers.

The moral and political content of the manifesto is the reduction of inequality. It is not to be counted in a few pounds here and a few pounds there. It is about changing towards a society of solidarity and cooperation from

back from the rich

£74,000
d services

,000
standing
capital



£14,000 in
government
purchases

well-off 20%

one where a rich few lord it over a majority who have to scrape and scabble to find food and shelter, education and health care, or even to get a few hours' work each week — where each one jabs their elbow in their neighbour's face to get out of the mire and on to the high lands.

It is about reversing the trends of the last near-forty years, since Thatcher.

When Thatcher took office in 1979, the ratio of incomes at the bottom of the top 10% to those at the top of the bottom 10%, the 90:10 decile ratio, was about 3. By the time she quit, in 1990, it was up to 4.5.

Since then, and until now, Thatcher's "neoliberal" mode of economic policy has dominated, with only slight inflections this way or that. Inequality has steadily drifted up to 5.3 now. Under the Blair and Brown Labour governments, measures like the minimum wage and tax credits improved things for some of the very poorest, but inequality still rose, because the rich increased their loot much faster.

Under Thatcher, the very richest gained — individually, though not in terms of the society they were living in — and also a large group of upper-middle-income people.

That has changed since the crash of 2008. The very richest quickly recovered their losses. The conservative *Sunday Times* head-

lined its report on its annual Rich List for 2017: "In a year of uncertainty, one thing was without doubt — Britain's richest were getting richer... the total wealth of Britain's 1,000 richest individuals and families soared to £658bn — a 14% rise on last year".

Since 2008 both the worse-off and also middling-income people have seen at best stagnation.

Real wages increased a bit, on average, in 2014-5 and 2015-6, thanks to some recovery in the world economy, but are still well behind pre-crash levels. Almost certainly they are already decreasing, and set to decrease further.

No-one yet knows what the eventual Brexit deal will be like. But only the most fanatical ultra-market economists believed that Brexit could actually improve Britain's overall income. Their recipe is to slash all social and environmental regulations and protections, so that Britain becomes a high-profit, low-wage, high-insecurity, low-welfare platform for global capital, conveniently close to Europe.

VIABLE

The main Tory leaders do not think that is viable. They know that, by diminishing and hindering trade, they will diminish economic life, to a yet-unknown extent.

What justifies that, for them, is their mean-minded obsession with excluding migrants. Which will further diminish economic life, since those migrants are mostly young, keen, taxpaying workers, essential to many public services.

The Tory future is grim. That is why Theresa May has gone for an election now, and why she refuses to offer any substantial prospectus other than "strong and stable leadership". It is why she refuses to rule out tax rises.

The Resolution Foundation think-tank, analysing known wage trends and already-programmed benefit cuts, has predicted a rise in the 90:10 inequality ratio from 5.3 now to 6 in 2020, a faster rise even than under Thatcher. That is without taking into account effects from Brexit.

The choice at this election is between a "strong and stable" drive to make inequality even more hurtful, and an attempt to reduce inequality and institute some social solidarity and cooperation.

Explaining the Labour manifesto to workers who have been beaten down by years of Thatcher, Blair, and Cameron into believing that no plan for improvement can ever be true is a first step.

It is not all. We need an active, mobilised, and lively labour movement to sustain the message, and to sustain and push a Labour government if we win one on 8 June.

The proposed clawback from the rich is moderate. In simple arithmetic, they could afford it easily — some tens of billions out of hundreds of billions of value which they siphon away each year.

But the rich do not get rich, in a capitalist

“ Labour's policy on "nationalisation of energy" is a big step forward, but is not nationalisation of the big six energy companies as some on the left are claiming. Labour look like they are avoiding the confrontation with the fossil fuel industry necessary for a rapid and just transition to a low-carbon economy.

While government control of national grid is huge progress, their proposal to create public energy companies in each region depends on the idea of competing with the big six by charging less and driving prices down. The market in energy — the large source of fuel poverty and unrestrained emissions — will be maintained. But we can't solve the climate crisis through the market — we need full nationalisation combined with democratic ecological planning.



Nationalise the Big Six Campaign
facebook.com/nationalisebig6

society, by being generous and easy. They get rich by being the people most ruthless in pursuit of greed, exploitation, trampling down and squeezing the working class.

What they say now, while they are still confident of a Tory victory, about Labour's policies being "wild", "ruinous", "disastrous", and "illegal", is a pale anticipation of how they will react if Labour wins.

They have a hundred levers of sabotage of an elected government — from "strikes" of capital, through top officials, to the Labour right — and they will use them.

In *Solidarity's* view, even the moderate re-balancing proposed by Labour's manifesto can be implemented thoroughly and securely only by a labour movement ready and willing to take economic power out of the hands of the ultra-rich, by workers' control and social ownership across industry.

The movement will become strong enough to do that only by uniting, now, to create organisation in every workplace and working-class street capable of winning a majority for the manifesto and fighting the battles needed to implement it.

“ The railways can only be accessible, reliable and safe if they are publicly-owned.

Better still, if they were run under democratic workers' and passengers' control, we could extend and improve them even more.

Everyone knows that rail privatisation has been a disaster. It is good to see a Labour leadership commit itself to carry out long-standing Party policy of renationalisation.



Janine Booth RMT activist
and author of
*Plundering London
Underground: private
capital and public
service, 1997-2010*

US socialism and organising against Trump

Jason Schulman is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, co-editor of *New Politics*, and author of *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response*. He spoke to *Solidarity* about the challenges facing the US left under Donald Trump.

Donald Trump's populist rhetoric, his frequent invocation of "forgotten Americans," was never anything more than bombast. He's assembled the most oligarchical cabinet in American history.

It's true that the American ruling class overwhelmingly preferred a Clinton victory, but the Trump victory hasn't led to a great clash of interests within that class — yet. Few capitalists are happy with Trump's appeals to protectionism, but they have no choice but to deal with Trump...and they will make their peace, but not totally on their own terms.

The Republicans see their dominance of both chambers of Congress and the executive branch as their chance to implement "right-to-work" laws across the whole country, at least in the private sector. As *Labor Notes* recently put it, these laws will "codify freeloading, making it optional to pay for union representation," which would starve the unions of revenue. Few American unions, particularly at the national level, are at all prepared for this.

The response by some union tops to Trump's victory has been especially appalling. Teamsters General President James Hoffa Jr. praised Trump for having "taken the first step toward fixing 30 years of bad trade policies" and for "executive orders today that will advance the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline and the Dakota Access Pipeline, creating thousands of good union jobs."

The building trades union leaders are particularly friendly with Trump for the same reasons, though of course those "thousands of good union jobs" will be very temporary, never mind the pipelines' ecological impact or the lack of acknowledgement of American Indians' persistent, justified struggle against the DAP.

It really is reminiscent of Samuel Gompers and the old AFL all over again. And it will do nothing to revive organised labor, which represents a minuscule portion of the US working class.

Trump's domestic agenda is austerity mixed with at least some degree of protectionism. His promises to protect what there is of a "safety net" in health insurance — Medicare for the elderly, Medicaid for the poor — were completely empty.

He intends to slash the federal government's workforce. And of course he's promised to deport three million undocumented immigrants in his first year. This is logistically impossible but we can be sure he will "ramp up" the deportations that were a staple of the Obama presidency. Some unions are defending targeted communities but not enough of them.

Direct action against Trump is essential, however possible and wherever possible, particularly by those of us who aren't — except as workers — notably part of Trump's "hit list." This is absolutely necessary to protect undocumented immigrants from ICE and people who "look Muslim" from Trump's white supremacist fan club. Persistent pressure on elected Democrats to oppose the entirety of Trump's agenda is already happening and there's now less capitulation by Democrats than there was earlier. Democratic mayors who pledge to make their cities

"sanctuary cities" have to be forced to keep their promises.

We've already seen the gigantic women's march and the "day without a woman" in response to Trump's sexism, his inadvertent admission to being a sexual predator, and his opposition to abortion (however insincere that last declaration may be). Abortions are still readily available for women with the financial backing to travel to states where it is easily accessible. The danger is primarily in Texas and other Republican-dominated states, with their extremely restrictive laws and the threat of vigilante violence against abortion providers, which force poor women into unwanted pregnancies or "backstreet" abortions.

As to climate change, Trump has famously said that he considers it a hoax dreamt up by the Chinese, and the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency is a climate-change "skeptic." Trump not only loves oil pipelines but the dying coal industry. Unfortunately even the most militant direct action is unlikely to be successful. Local governments may be able to effect some change if they're forced to do so. But "late capitalism" is an ecological nightmare and no reform under it will be sufficient to stop humanity from speeding toward the precipice. If there was ever a case for the global socialist revolution, impending eco-cide is it.

SANDERS

Millions of people did support Bernie Sanders but as of yet there's no organisation with which all of these millions are involved.

A "political action organisation" called "Our Revolution" emerged out of Sanders' presidential campaign; it engages in educational and electoral work but isn't structured as a political party. The organisation's 501(c)(4) designation prevents Sanders from playing a role in the organisation because he's an elected official.

Similar entities like "Justice Democrats" (a political action committee) and "Brand New Congress" (same) have also formed, but they seem to be completely election-oriented and represent more attempts to replace all elected Establishment Democrats (those who obviously represent the ruling class) with Sanders-style social democrats who eschew funding from big business.

It's important to note that these groupings aren't internally democratic dues-paying membership organisations — they're not really attempting to found a "party within the Democratic Party," certainly not with plans of splitting the Democrats in order to found an independent working-class party as — in a sense — your Labour Party emerged from the Liberal Party.

However, I've also seen an online petition to "Draft Bernie for a People's Party." I'd be extremely happy if this led to Sanders declaring the need to form a nationwide independent party of the left but I doubt this will happen, as he seems to now think that the only way to create such a party is by taking over the whole of the Democrats, or at least to make a serious attempt to do so.

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) started growing significantly in 2015 once we became involved in the Sanders campaign. It really was a godsend for us — he brought terms like "democratic socialism" and "political revolution" into the political mainstream, and if one types "democratic socialism" into an online search engine, voila, there we are. And then suddenly after the Trump victory unaffiliated leftists started signing up in



droves. We had around 7,000 members before November 2016 and now have around 18,000 members.

When so many people — most of them under 35 — are now paying dues and want to be actively involved in building DSA, it gives me hope for the future. Even the mainstream media has taken notice.

I'd say that DSA is somewhere between the left edge of social democracy and what the historian Christopher Phelps once called "the rational wing of revolutionary socialism." I can live with that, particularly since there's nothing that prevents Marxists from promoting our political perspectives within DSA. I'm especially glad to see a number of current and former members of the Marxist group Solidarity joining DSA — it says good things about our political trajectory.

I gather that the International Socialist Organization (ISO, formerly aligned with the British SWP) and Socialist Alternative (aligned with Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party) have also grown substantially though not to the degree that DSA has. It's perfectly fine that there are multiple socialist groups in the US though I find it very annoying when some of them attempt to "poach" new DSA members at our events (this is the modus operandi of certain Trotskyist organisations). Thankfully the ISO doesn't do this (any more) and we're friendlier than we once were.

But unfortunately we're not on the verge of creating a new mass socialist party. Yes, there's now a revival of American socialism (finally!), but not to the degree where DSA could form a party that would attract the attention of the entire US electorate. For one thing, American socialists are still disproportionately white and male. If we want to run candidates with a chance of winning elections then it's particularly important to develop candidates who have "street cred" with constituencies, particularly constituencies of colour, beyond our membership.

They'd have to be also leaders of tenants' rights organisations, union locals, organisations fighting against police violence and our "criminal justice" system, etc. Plus we'd need significant union support at the national level for Congressional campaigns, and even the politically best unions don't seem inclined to support fully independent political action.

Individual DSA members do run for office (and sometimes even win!). And of course a mass socialist party is a necessity in the US and we should say this often. But even now we can't just found one with the hope that the toiling masses will suddenly join in great numbers.

The apologists for Russian imperialism are mainly from the far-left groups in the US whose outlook derives from the late Sam Marcy — Workers World Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation — as well as a few semi-famous individuals, the more Stalinoid, ostensibly-Trotskyist sects as well as peace activists.

On the other hand, most liberal pundits and elected Democrats seem to be looking for

"Russians under every bed" in a bizarre replay of the 1950s minus Joseph McCarthy or the Communist Party USA. I think most American socialists understand that Vladimir Putin is in no sense our friend. Obviously he presides over a far-right, reactionary regime. I also gather that most of the top union officials are following the Democrats' belief in a Great Russian Conspiracy that helped Trump become president.

Of course socialists should be declaring "Neither Washington nor Moscow, nor Beijing, nor anywhere else," so to speak. But building a truly internationalist working-class politics is very difficult when most U.S. unions remain sectionalist and nationalist and not particularly interested in whether or not there's anything approximating a labour movement in Russia, or in the "spontaneous" strikes that have repeatedly broken out in China, winning significant concessions.

TRIANGULATION

Solidarity: In Britain, the response from some on the left and in the labour movement to Brexit (in some ways our "Trumpism") has been to argue that socialist politics should triangulate to accommodate the concerns of nationalist-inclined working-class voters — such as by ending free movement arrangements with other European states and reducing immigration.

AWL has opposed this. Is there a similar debate in America? What policies can the American left offer that address the social grievances of disaffected working-class communities while simultaneously challenging racism and nationalism?

The debate over "triangulating" seems to be confined to American liberals and partisan Democrats who appear to think that addressing income and wealth inequality or addressing "identity politics" are mutually exclusive things. Some even say that struggling white workers who voted for Trump because he spoke to their desperation, while Clinton said nothing, deserve to have their health insurance taken away. This is a far cry from the quasi-social democratic liberalism of decades past and helps to explain why "liberalism" is increasingly a swear word even among American democratic socialists.

But even smart left-liberals understand that racism, sexism, bigotry in general often express themselves in "economic" ways in the US. Counterposing an economic populism which would supposedly only appeal to working-class whites to clear opposition to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc. is, as my friend and fellow DSA member Michael Hirsch would put it, "a mug's game."

Adolph Reed is totally right when he says that leftists must be "crafting a politics based on recognition that the identity shared most broadly in the society is having to or being expected to work for a living and that that is the basis for the solidarity necessary to prevail and, eventually, to make a more just and equitable society." That doesn't mean we should ignore or dismiss the particular oppressions that women, racial "minorities" and LGBTQ people face within the American working class. Far from it.

Sanders' popularity should indicate that fighting for an immediate program of far-reaching social-democratic reform does not require making concessions to racism and nationalism. Solidarity within the US working class that transcends our "ascriptive identities" is the only basis upon which a social-internationalist workers' movement can be built.

Bob Crow: an unapologetic socialist

Janine Booth reviews *Bob Crow: socialist, leader, fighter — A political biography*, by Gregor Gall (Manchester University Press)

As the first book about Bob Crow published since his untimely death three years ago, Gregor Gall's political biography of Crow provides us with an opportunity to review his life and his time in the railworkers' union NUR and its successor RMT, to highlight the key reasons for his effectiveness and impact, and to examine the limits of those.

The book promises to assess Crow from a critical Marxist perspective, in particular looking at his personality, politics and (members') power, and how these interact with each other.

Gall explains that "critical Marxism" means "avoiding the 'spin' that Crow and the RMT put on the battles they fought, instead using independently arrived at criteria to judge what Crow said and did." It is a measure of Crow's leadership that he comes out of this independent, critical judgement very well. This is a more credible appreciation of his contribution to our movement than a straightforward hagiography would be.

Gregor Gall notes the fierce loyalty within RMT to its leaders, and the union's tendency to introversion. The union refused to co-operate with Gall in writing this book, on request of Bob's family. Without the access to information that this would have given, the book makes some factual errors, which is unfortunate but not, I think, enough to spoil the valuable assessment it makes.

Gall's research includes interviews with RMT members and other trade unionists, and use of media sources (including this newspaper and Workers' Liberty railworkers' publications).

The first part of the book tells the story of Bob's life, beginning with his upbringing in a working-class East London / Essex family, influenced by his trade unionist and communist father George. As a young man, Bob joined the Communist Party (CP), joined London Underground and joined the RMT's predecessor, the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR).

After some years as a representative of London Underground track workers and a critic of the union's leadership, Bob had built a base of support that saw him elected first to the union's Executive and then, in 1994, to the position of RMT Assistant General Secretary (AGS).

Gall argues that it was the CP that influenced Crow to believe that the best way to deal with right-wing union leaders was to replace them with left-wingers, differing from the Trotskyist view that prioritised organising the union rank and file. Indeed, although there were several "broad lefts" in the NUR/RMT, they were short-lived and were dispensed with once left candidates had been elected to leading positions in the union.

In 1999, Crow was re-elected as AGS, seeing off a challenge from Mick Cash, whose election pitch was that the hard left had too much influence in RMT and that the union was too strike-happy. Gall argues that with his successful re-election, Crow marked himself out as a young, radical, militant trade union leader, in a union machine that was still dominated by men who were none of these things.

Crow became General Secretary in 2002,



elected with twice the vote of both his opponents put together, in an election where "new Labour" briefed heavily against him. Union members wanted a leader who would stand up not suck up to the government that was attacking them (refusing to renationalise the railways, privatising the Underground), and so joined various other unions in electing "awkward squad" General Secretaries pledged to give Blair a rough ride.

As Gall writes, "His victory highlighted that for the RMT, a much more forceful personality, effective deployment of bargaining power and radical politics were better suited to the turbulent times of 'new' Labour, privatisation and neoliberalism."

Once elected, Crow set about reorganising the union. He combed through the union's books and discovered that the "financial crisis" used as a pretext for cuts by his predecessor Jimmy Knapp had been exaggerated, and used the union's resources to open new regional offices, introduce new technology, set up the Organising Unit and open a new National Education Centre.

The book recounts Crow's political associations, his leaving the CP and joining the Socialist Labour Party in 1997, only to leave the SLP when he could not support Arthur Scargill's policy of standing candidates against left Labour MPs. Crow led RMT

away from the Labour Party, tried unsuccessfully to cultivate a new workers' party with No2EU and TUSC, and had a fraught relationship with Ken Livingstone, who accused him of using strikes "as a bullying technique" and called on RMT members to cross the union's picket lines.

It would have been interesting to see how Bob would have responded to the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader; I am sad that he did not live to see it.

While Gall's book subjects Crow to an intelligent scrutiny, and criticises him at points, its strongest theme is that Bob Crow was the most effective trade union leader of his time, and that his confident, unapologetic militancy was the crucial factor in that. Crow rightly said that, "whoever has muscle at the end of the day gets what they want ... That is why I make no excuses about taking industrial action to look after our members."

But Gall also points out that at times there was dissatisfaction with Crow's role, for example during the union's dispute with London Underground over the Public-Private Partnership at the turn of the century, when a "group to the left of him" developed on the union's Executive. He also points out that "While Crow frequently condemned the anti-union laws and their use, urging unions to break and defy them, he never led the charge for this to happen in practice, calculating that the RMT on its own would not be able to easily withstand the consequences of defiance."

MEMBERSHIP

RMT membership grew under Crow's leadership, bucking the trend of unions generally.

Gall attributes this partly to the fact that as well as employing some paid staff, the union's organising strategy "focused not just upon recruitment but upon encouraging and deploying the energies, talents and knowledge of existing reps and activists to recruit and represent members." Crucially, though, Gall argues that workers join unions that fight because they fight, quoting Crow as saying that "our brand is that we're out there, having a go ... If a trade union ain't gonna fight, there is no point in joining."

In a short but interesting section on women in RMT, Gall recounts that while Crow supported women's equality, he did not do much to tackle the macho culture of the union. Gall

argues that this culture "had two sides — one often militantly oppositional to management and the other often not progressive regarding women. Women benefited from the first but not the second." A former Executive member is quoted as saying that Crow "took over a union in which women were marginalised and under-represented, and that did not change nearly as much as women activists would have liked it to."

The book is strong on exposing the enormous hostility that Bob endured from the media, and hints that the stress and effects on his health had led him to consider not re-standing for General Secretary. "Other than Scargill during the miners' strike, no other union leader has experienced the same degree of constant, hostile scrutiny".

Newspapers followed him around the world, went through his rubbish, and were not averse to printing straightforward lies about him. The media routinely personalised the union as the figure of its General Secretary, although the union itself may have enabled that by, for example, rarely quoting anyone other than Bob in its press releases. Crow, though, was quite media-savvy, always willing to give interviews or quotes (except to newspapers which no self-respecting trade unionist would speak to), write articles when asked to, and write letters correcting untruths.

The book applauds Crow's unapologetic socialism, quoting him as saying that "Some people are scared to use the word socialism, but I am not. We are opposed to the capitalist order and want a socialist society." But Gall also describes Crow as having an "incoherent" and "underdeveloped" understanding of the link between industrial militancy and workers as agents of socialism: "What he advocated sounded more like social democracy and labourism, however left-wing, being brought about by Parliament and not workers directly."

Gall identifies many of Crow's strengths, including his willingness to accept criticism and disagreement within the union. Several RMT reps testify to this in the book. I remember one occasion when the Workers' Liberty website had published an article about Crow's salary, advocating that trade union officials receive a worker's wage, which would be rather lower than they currently receive. Bob phoned me about it — not to attack our view or our right to publish it; it was just that we had got one of the figures wrong and could we please correct it? We did. Other trade union leaders would do well to take a similar approach.


Gall also recognises Bob's ability to make union activists feel good about ourselves, describing him as "a heroic talisman for others on the political left ... He instilled in many activists a particular radical oppositional perspective where fighting back was seen as a good in itself. He was able to do this not only because he led a pugnacious union but also because of his politics and personality."

This book is not solely the story of a life: it tells the story, then offers an analysis. I do not agree with every word of that analysis, but overall it is insightful, thought-through and well-grounded.

It will help union activists to understand that unions become effective by being active and militant, that being left-wing is something to be proud rather than embarrassed about, and that Bob Crow, despite having some flaws, was a giant in our movement and the RMT a successful union built by generations of activists.

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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!

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

HE Bill passed, keep fighting

By the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts

Parliament rushed through the Higher Education and Research Bill — the legislative vehicle for their ruinous agenda of fee-raising, university-privatising reforms — through to Royal Assent on 27 April in advance of the snap General Election.

Over the past eighteen months, we've fought a major battle against the reforms. We have argued the case against the misleadingly named Teaching "Excellence" Framework (TEF), presented our alternative vision of a free education system governed by democracy not the chaos of the market, and through protest and direct action — most notably the boycott of the National Student Survey — we've generated pressure that has extracted some concessions from the government. Despite wrecking attempts by a handful of right-wingers, the NSS boycott was taken up in large numbers on many campuses and, despite substantial spending by many universities to cajole and bribe (!) students, participation at a number of institutions is expected to come out below the crucial 50% threshold that makes the data unusable.

Under this pressure, many amendments were passed in the House of Lords, and though the Commons reversed many of them, we retained a number, including a tightening of regulations on new private universities, and a delay in the link between the TEF and tuition fees until 2020.

But these compromises are not enough. Fees are still set to rise (if only with inflation), the TEF is still



coming, and measures to ease and accelerate privatisation will be put into place.

We can reverse the higher education reforms by continuing and stepping up our campaign. The NSS boycott begun this year must continue until the reforms are dead. The goal of the NSS boycott is leverage — to disrupt the functioning of the market and the TEF until our demands are granted. To make the 2018 boycott bigger, we should be preparing now, in particular assessing our local campaigns to learn from what worked well, and convincing and signing-up next year's boycotters as far in advance as possible.

We also need protest and direct action, locally and nationally. Actions should be part of a coherent drive to add to the pressure, win hearts and minds to join the campaign, mobilise and organise activists, put the issue on the public agenda, and issue a show of force to our institutions and the government. We need discussions with education workers, whose trade

unions supported our boycott enthusiastically, to see how we can co-operate and how their industrial muscle might be brought to bear on the issue.

And our movement and NUS need to organise all this under the banner of an unequivocal political demand. No fudging and no tinkering round the edges — let's be crystal clear that we won't settle for less than the complete reversal of the reforms, and that longer-term we are fighting for a free, democratic, universal National Education Service.

The results of the upcoming general election will have a massive impact. As well as the smaller parties on the left, now the Labour leadership supports free education too.

We want opposition parties to pledge that they will reverse the reforms and build the free and democratic education system we are demanding.

• Abridged from: bit.ly/2pQ7k2X

Universities start cutting jobs

By a UCU member

Staff at Manchester Metropolitan University will strike against job cuts on 24 and 25 May, against a backdrop of hundreds of jobs at risk across the sector.

Manchester University is planning to cut 171 jobs; up to 150 are at risk at Aberystwyth; 139 at the University of Wales Trinity St David; Sunderland, Durham and Plymouth are all looking for voluntary redundancies.

Publicly, universities have been blaming Brexit's impact on international student recruitment and research funding. But Manchester Met has £400m reserves, while Manchester Uni is planning to hire an extra 100 junior researchers (presumably hoping they can pressurise them to perform harder).

The background to these cuts is the decision by the coalition government to lift the cap on student recruitment from 2015. Previously the government gave universities a

quota of publicly-subsidised students that they were allowed to admit. That made admissions (and therefore staffing needs) relatively stable. The new free market system has created enormous volatility.

Some universities with a more "prestigious" reputation have recruited more students. Combined with a drop in the number of 18-year-olds (and a slump in mature student numbers following the rise to £9k fees), that's caused problems for universities lower in the league tables.

CONTRAST

Manchester, in contrast, has a relatively high entry tariff in terms of A Level grades.

But its management wants to increase entry requirements so as to become a more "elite" institution. That way they think they can rank higher in the league tables (some of which rate universities on the basis of how selective they are) and in student experience surveys that

will feed into the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Aside from the devastating impact on the staff affected, cuts to courses are also deeply damaging for students who need to study locally rather than move away to go to university.

Alongside news of the job cuts, employers have offered a national pay award of 1.7% this year. With inflation currently running at 2.6% this is yet another real-terms pay cut, while the pay of senior managers soars and the gender pay gap remains above 10%.

All in all, the situation is bad for staff, bad for access to education and bad for students. UCU should take the lead in co-ordinating campaigns against these job cuts — and against the real pay cut — before they spread further.

• Read the statement of Save Our Staff Manchester — www.facebook.com/SOSMCR

Events

Saturday 20 May

Bristol march to defend education
11am, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5UY
bit.ly/2pGP4Ni

Saturday 20 May

Stand Up For Choice: UK March for Life 2017 National counter-demonstration
11.30am, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B14 4LB
bit.ly/2qomH5B

Wednesday 24 May

Education Question Time in Broxtowe
7pm, Chilwell School Theatre, Nottingham, NG9 1GT
bit.ly/2qs5si3

Thursday 25 May

Fund our Children's Future — Harrow public meeting
7.30pm, Harrow Baptist Church, College Road, Harrow HA1 1BA
bit.ly/2pGx4TD

Saturday 27 May

Stop school cuts Newcastle rally
12.30pm, Grey's Monument, Newcastle, NE1 6JG
bit.ly/2pBK21t

Saturday 27 May

East Dulwich Picturehouse strike
2.45pm, East Dulwich Picturehouse, 116A Lordship Lane, SE22 8HD
bit.ly/2pQTcXr

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

LSE cleaners fight back

By Gemma Short

Cleaners at the London School of Economics (LSE) will strike again on 17 May in an ongoing dispute for parity of conditions with directly employed workers.

The cleaners, employed by cleaning contractor Noonan, struck for the first time on 15 and 16 March. After their first strike LSE pleaded for a halt to strikes, promising that they would come back with an acceptable offer. They did not. Cleaners voted to strike every week indefinitely, with the first strike on 11 May and further strikes on 17 and 24 May, with more to be announced. Over 70 cleaners joined the strike on 11 May and picketed LSE with support from student campaigns.

In an attempt to smear the cleaners LSE sent an email to all staff claiming the protests were the work of "protesters who had entered campus" — implying it was solely the work of outside agents, not employees and students of the university. LSE also accused the pickets of "noise pollution" and affecting student exams. LSE Justice for Cleaners student campaign said: "the email expresses a hypo-



critical concern for "noise pollution", when students have been suffering disruptions due to demolition and construction on campus for the past two years (including exam seasons). Noise seems to be an issue for this university only when it does not favour its economic interests."

LSE has apparently set up negotiations between itself, Noonan and Unison. Unison represents directly employed workers but the majority of cleaners are members of the United Voices of the World, who have organised the strikes.

Strikes have already moved LSE to offer more sick pay, holiday and maternity pay. However the offer would still see them receiving just 10.9% of the sick pay and a quarter of the maternity pay of directly employed staff, and 10 days less annual leave. LSE has made no improvement to the cleaners' pensions.

• Support their campaign and donate to the strike fund at: www.uvwunion.org.uk/justiceforlsecleaners

Waiting six years for a pay rise

By Sacha Ismail

Security guards at the central University of London site in Bloomsbury struck for a third day against the university and contractor Cordant on 16 May, following two last month.

They want an end to disguised use of zero-hours contracts, itemised pay slips and a pay rise they were promised six years ago when UoL's outsourced workers first won the Living Wage.

In part the dispute represents the impact of earlier struggles by their union, the Independent Workers of Great Britain, working through. The guards were supposed to get a 25% pay increase to maintain their previous differential but it was never delivered.

Some of them worked during strikes by other IWGB members in 2012-13. Because the union has vigorously pursued demands for various groups of workers, rather than seeing some as inherently hostile, the result has been security staff becoming more organised.

The university and Cordant have indicated some concessions on the other two demands but not yet on pay. They are using untrained replacement workers on zero-hours contracts and the minimum wage during this strike! The IWGB is working to expose this and get a relationship with those workers too.

As usual with the IWGB, the 16 May picket line was well-attended, lively, extremely noisy – and actually a picket line. The crowd was

right in front of the entrance and activists spoke to delivery drivers and so on and tried to persuade them not to go in. Contrast the attempt by some unions, for instance BECTU in the Picturehouse strike, to prevent effective pickets from taking place.

The workers are holding a demonstration at a UoL poetry event on the evening of 16 May and a march with LSE cleaners' union United Voices of the World, also on strike, on 17 May.

Let's mobilise widespread solidarity.

• More at iwgb-universityoflondon.org and www.facebook.com/uoliwgb
• Donate to their strike fund at bit.ly/2oFvjSG

Fujitsu workers fight 1800 job losses

By Charlotte Zalens

Workers at Fujitsu sites across the country will struck again on 18, 19, 22, 25 and 26 May in their dispute over job losses, union recognition, and pay.

Workers have already struck for 15 days between February and May, and strikes have been stepped up now that Fujitsu has served redundancies notices on a number of staff including Unite reps. Fujitsu plans to cut 1800 jobs across its UK

sites.

Activists also protested at the Japanese embassy (Fujitsu is a Japanese company) in London and handed a letter to the ambassador. They leafleted the launch of "Responsible business week" run by Business in the Community for which Fujitsu is one of five Corporate Partners.



• Support the strike and donate to the strike fund: <https://ouruniontest.wordpress.com/fujitsu-national-dispute>

Stop job cuts at EHRC

Around 50 people supported the PCS picket line at the Glasgow offices of Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on 15 May.

Trade unionists in the EHRC — mainly PCS members, but also some Unite members — are staging four successive weeks of strike action around the country in the run up to the general election: Glasgow, London, Cardiff and Manchester.

The strikes are the latest stage in a long-running dispute in opposition to EHRC redundancies.

Government funding for the EHRC has been slashed by 70% since the organisation was created in 2008. A further 25% cut is now being implemented over a four year period. EHRC management is also implementing an 'organisational restructuring', at a cost of even more jobs.

Potential redundancies were announced at the close of last year. Employees in the "at risk pool" were disproportionately ethnic-minority staff, older employees, employees with disabilities, and trade union activists.

REDEPLOY

Despite the availability of suitable alternative employment within the EHRC, and despite the legal obligation to do so, management has consistently refused to redeploy staff at risk of redundancy into those vacancies.

At the same time, the EHRC has been advertising externally for a new raft of highly paid senior management and 'strategic thinkers'.

Notices of dismissal were served on twelve members of staff in February, while they were taking part in a 24-hour strike against the proposed redundancies.

Seven were from ethnic minorities, three were union activists, three were disabled and eight were older workers. At the time of their dismissal the EHRC had around thirty vacancies, including vacancies at the same grades as those dismissed.



Without precedent in the civil service, all twelve were dismissed with immediate effect and paid Compensation in Lieu of Notice (the civil service equivalent of PILON). They were also told that they had 24 hours to clear out their desks.

Under pressure from campaigning by the PCS, supported by other trade unions, ten of those dismissed were reinstated onto the EHRC payroll. But industrial action was suspended by the PCS in mid-March and mediation talks resumed at ACAS.

The EHRC continued to reject proposals for redeployment within the EHRC itself or elsewhere in the civil service. It also refused to allow those who had been dismissed and then reinstated to return to work, i.e. they were effectively on "gardening leave".

PCS members responded to the lack of progress in ACAS talks by deciding on four successive weeks of strikes in the different EHRC offices, starting off in Glasgow last Monday.

Ironically, the new Scottish EHRC Chief Executive recently gave evidence in an Employment Tribunal in defence of his former employer (the Scottish Refugee Council) against claims of unfair dismissal and sex discrimination. He'll feel at home in the Scottish EHRC.

• Donations to: PCS PSG Hardship Fund, Sort code: 608301. Account no: 20151243
• Messages of support to: londonbargaining@pcs.org.uk
• Messages of protest to: Rebecca Hilsenrath, EHRC CEO, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX
• Twitter @savetheehrc

Nurses may ballot for strikes

By Peggy Carter

A survey of Royal College of Nursing members shows that 78% of members would support strikes against the 1% pay cap.

Members voted at the RCN's conference on 14 May for a motion which called for a summer of protests against the pay cap and to consider moving to a formal ballot for strikes if the new government does not increase NHS pay.

RCN general secretary Janet Davies said: "What's happened today is unprecedented for the

RCN and is a reflection of the deep anger members feel. The current conditions in the NHS are driving people out of the profession and putting new people off entering it.

"Our argument is not with patients – this is about ensuring that they get the safe and effective care they need. The 1% cap on nursing pay is putting patient care at risk."

Nurses have had a real-terms pay cut of 14% since 2010 and a recent report by the Health Foundation predicted that the NHS will face a shortfall of 42,000 nurses by 2020.



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NHS cyber attack could have been thwarted



By Claudia Raven

This week a cyber attack affected hospitals across the NHS.

My hospital, which is largely paperless, told staff to turn off Windows XP computers as a precaution. Across the country, care was delayed, some minor operations were cancelled, patient data was rendered unavailable and appointments postponed.

The NHS has been at risk of this kind of cyber attack for two years. Many NHS computers still run on Windows XP, which stopped receiving security updates in September 2013. The government paid £5.5 million to Microsoft to extend

support for public sector systems, buying the time needed to purchase computers capable of running more recent operating systems, but this arrangement ended in May 2015. The government could have done one of two things: bought more time from Microsoft, or updated the systems. They did neither and left patient data and patient care vulnerable to attack.

Staff in hospitals are well aware of the substandard quality of our IT. The day after the attack BMA junior doctors' conference passed a motion calling for employers to ensure the tools we work with are fit for purpose. There will be a lot of focus on tracking down and

prosecuting those who created the cyber attack, but the negligence that led to its success must also be

criticised.

Goodwill of the staff, whether doctors, health care assistants,

or IT support workers, cannot hold up the NHS in the face of massive cuts.

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