



Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty

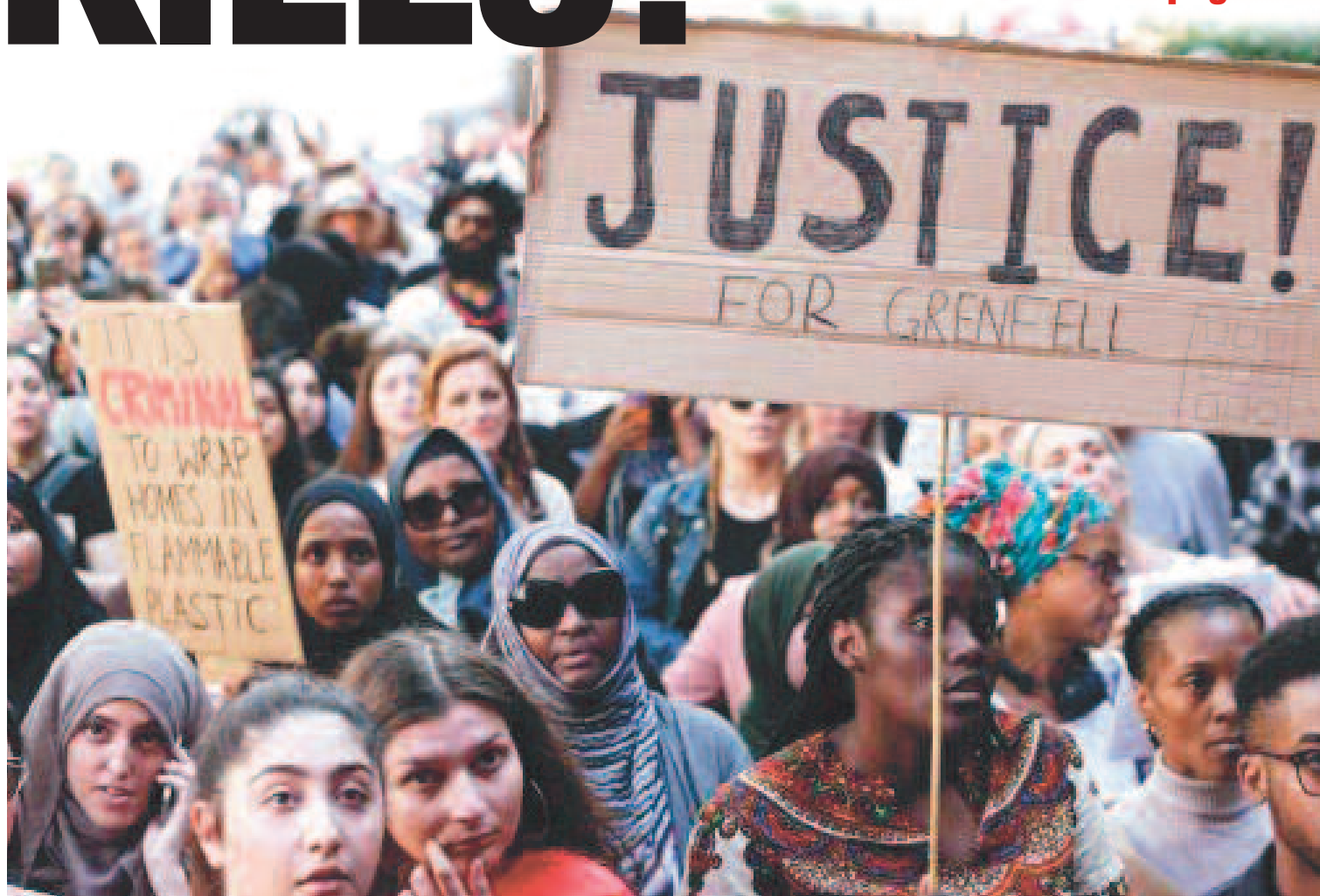
For social ownership of the banks and industry

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CAPITALISM KILLS!

"This symbolises the divide between rich and poor in this area". "They don't care". "They put human beings in pigeon holes. Just because you can't afford anything doesn't mean you should be dumped in somewhere like that". "That would not happen in Chelsea", "Corporate manslaughter". "Why!?".

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- **Corbyn: Seize homes of the rich for the homeless**

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West Papua miners' struggle



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Far right: influence grows



Simon Nelson reports on the state of the far right in Britain.

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Defend sacked cinema reps



Campaigners rally round to support sacked trade union reps.

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Join Labour!

Why Labour needs a Marxist left wing

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Save Lightburn Hospital!

By Ann Field

Fifty demonstrators protested outside of Lightburn Hospital in Glasgow on Saturday 17 June to re-launch a campaign to prevent its closure.

Lightburn is the last in-patient hospital in Glasgow's East End. It provides rehabilitative care for elderly people suffering from strokes, dementia, Parkinson's or similar illnesses. Each year it admits around 450 patients, and deals with 400 new day cases and 3,000 return visits.

The hospital was last threatened with closure by the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board in 2011. After energetic local community campaigning, the proposed closure was rejected by the then SNP Health Minister, Nicola Sturgeon.

But last week — only days after the general election — the health board announced that it was again proposing to close Lightburn. It based its decision on a new national strategy for elderly care, under which only those in need of acute care should be treated in hospital.

Local activists involved in the previous Save Lightburn Campaign reject the arguments for closure and have relaunched a campaign to keep the hospital open.

There are transport problems for

local out-patients needing to access the services which are to be transferred to other hospitals. Inpatients who would otherwise be treated in Lightburn will end up in care homes — a backdoor form of privatisation.

Parkinson's UK has condemned the impact of closure on the local Parkinson's Group:

"We are concerned that the removal of Lightburn as the hub for service delivery presents major challenges. We should be proud of local facilities like the Lightburn and be investing in them — not closing them."

The proposed closure has been classed as a major service change. The final decision on Lightburn's future therefore lies with SNP Health Secretary, Shona Robison.

The SNP Holyrood government is a minority government. It has been badly weakened by the SNP's poor showing in the general election. It is therefore vulnerable to pressure to keep Lightburn open.

Gerry McCann, who led the earlier Save Lightburn Campaign, is confident that campaigning will keep the hospital open:

"Their choice to shut the only local hospital left in the area is a real slap in the face for local people. The battle goes on. ... There can be no excuse for cutting healthcare services in one of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities."

France: unions must reject consensus with Macron

The French socialist newsletter *Arguments pour la lutte sociale* comments on the second round of France's legislative elections, 18 June:

Abstentions: 57.4%. Watch out! This major fact must not be interpreted only as a "civic strike", as Jean-Luc Mélenchon puts it. That is true for many, and for the majority of the 10% of blanked or spoiled ballots or ballots where the two candidates in the run-off were both more or less for Macron. But to see it only that

way is to ignore the defeat suffered by the working class on 23 April [in the first round of the Presidential poll]. Also, many abstentions were right-wing or Front National, or an expression of indifference.

They have a significance, but not one automatically transformable into a social counter-offensive.

The central political issue is the to break the trade union confederations from pseudo-consensus politics at the top.

Northern Ireland's sectarian bear pit

By Micheál MacEoin

The recent General Election results in Northern Ireland reflect continuing sectarian polarisation, as the DUP and Sinn Féin won 17 out of the North's 18 Westminster seats.

The background is the collapse of the fractious power-sharing Executive earlier this year, and the dramatic Northern Ireland Assembly election results in February. In that election, an increased turnout and a surge of support for Sinn Féin meant that unionists lost their majority in Stormont for the first time since the creation of the Northern Ireland state in 1921.

Sinn Féin then piled the pressure on beleaguered DUP leader Arlene Foster, refusing to go back in to government with the DUP until an investigation in to the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scandal had reported. Stalemate resulted.

In many ways, the Westminster election on 8 June was "round two" of the fight. However, this time, Unionists rallied back to the DUP, worried about the prospect of a further electoral triumph for Sinn Féin.

In the event, the electorate polarised. The DUP added 10% to its 2015 vote share, picking up two seats at the expense of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). Sinn Féin increased its share of the vote by 5%, wiping out its moderate nationalist rival, the SDLP, in Foyle and South Down, and snatching Fermanagh and South Tyrone from the UUP.

The result is an electoral map of Northern Ireland split east-to-west, between Sinn Féin and the DUP, with the so-called "centre ground" eliminated. A further Assembly election would likely see further losses for the SDLP and the UUP, cementing the grip of the DUP and Sinn Féin over Northern Ireland.

Amidst this sectarian polarisation, the prospects for independent working-class politics are bleak. Working-class Protestant voters have rallied to the DUP, a reactionary right-wing sectarian party.



Both the DUP and Sinn Féin (above) increased their shares of the vote

Working-class nationalists overwhelmingly support the centre-left Sinn Féin, a party which has little inclination or ability to reach out to Protestants.

Almost twenty years on from the Good Friday Agreement, the current state of Northern Ireland tragically vindicates those who feared that its structures, though largely bringing an end to sectarian war, would lead to the political "continuation of war by other means."

Consociationalism, the idea that political structures in divided societies should work to regulate and contain ethno-religious divisions, has provided no means by which those divisions may ultimately be transcended. Instead, it has created a sectarian bear pit.

The institutional infrastructure of power-sharing was once memorably dubbed the "ugly scaffolding". However, scaffolding is supposed to be a temporary structure, erected until the building

below has been constructed. There is, as yet, little evidence that the building is anywhere near completion.

Rather, the power-sharing set-up has incentivised a form of communal bargaining for resources within the Northern Ireland sub-state. Inevitably, unionists and nationalists have opted for the best fighters for their respective "sides", and non-sectarian — including socialist — politics has been the casualty.

Sinn Féin went into the election preaching that Westminster would be an irrelevant side-show, only to find the DUP holding the balance of power. It may be, then, that the prospect of a Tory government backed by the DUP hastens Sinn Féin's to Stormont.

Yet, there is little prospect of stable government even if that happens, and any Executive formed will likely just be a warm-up for the next acrimonious collapse.

Sodastream exploits precariousness of Palestinian workers

By Gerry Bates

Last month the Israeli union federation, the Histadrut, filed a law suit against Sodastream claiming that the company was disrupting workers' attempts to organise.

One testimony is from a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem and Sodastream employee whose wife is a West Bank resident and whose children have severe medical problems.

According to the testimony, an Israeli security guard at the company promised to arrange for his wife to receive entry permits, or to enter Israel without papers with the help of a contact in the Border Police — so long as the Palestinian man helped to break up attempts at unionisation:

This security guard was not wearing the security company's uniform, he had no weapon, and no two-way radio. ... but he said, "I will help you with the children, but I want you to help me work against the union. I want you to report everything you see in the

factory to me. If someone signs another person up to the union — tell me who it is. If someone signed up for the Histadrut and you see him sleeping during his shift — photograph him."

The employee initially agreed to help act against the workers, but discovered that the security guard couldn't keep his promises, and now supports the trade union.

The current controversy comes a year after Sodastream shut down its factory in the West Bank, and set up in Israel, after global boycott protests.

The move led to the dismissal of 500 Palestinian workers, although 74 Palestinian workers moved to the new factory in the town of Lehavim in the Negev desert. And the Israeli government only renewed the work permits of these Palestinians who remained with the company, after a long legal battle.

The reliance of these employees on bureaucracy and permits from the Israeli state is a weakness that can be exploited.

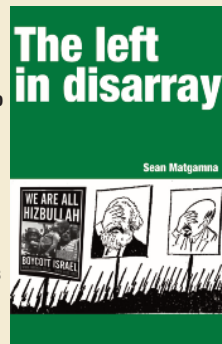
• More: bit.ly/2rMvRLg

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bewilderments of the late 1940s. It charts the demarcations of the left over global political issues.

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Fighting the mine bosses in West Papua

By Rosalind Robson

In May the US mining company Freeport McMoRan sacked 3,000 workers at the Grasberg copper and gold mine in West Papua, Indonesia.

Workers had just begun a 30-day strike protesting against the company's furlough policy — the temporary laying off of workers because of breaks in production. The company has been in dispute with the Indonesian government over new conditions for its licence to mine in West Papua and this had interrupted production.

Since 2011 there have been a number of strikes at the mine over wages and conditions, the backdrop to which has been continuing human rights and environmental abuses in the territory.

West Papua, the western half of a large island, makes up 22% of the land mass of Indonesia, but it is at the periphery of the archipelago. The eastern half of the island is part of politically independent Papua New Guinea. There are strong connections between the indigenous peoples of both halves of the island.

From 1898 West Papua was colonised by the Dutch. After the Second World War Indonesian nationalists fought war to get sovereignty over the Dutch East Indies. This was achieved with the exception of West Papua. Then the territory was annexed in 1969 by the dictatorship of Suharto.

Since the early 60s, between 100,000 and 500,000 West Papuans have lost their lives at the hands of the Indonesian military. Suharto also began a policy of "Indonesianisation", organising the migration of people from Java to West Papua so that the indigenous peoples are now a minority.



Pollution in West Papua has killed fish and other wildlife

West Papua is rich in natural resources, yet the population of 3.5 million in one of the poorest in Indonesia.

The Indonesian military continues to repress, detain and kill the population. The army raises money from payments from the extractive companies for security. Freeport is implicated in shooting incidents around the Grasberg mine.

Freeport started its operations in West Papua in 1972 and the Grasberg mine started in 1988. In recent years the company, which in 2015 had a net income of \$12 billion, has tried to wean itself off payments to the army and improve its human rights record. But it has not used its power (e.g. as the single largest Indonesian taxpayer) to stop the brutality of the army, including the shooting dead of two striking workers in 2013.

After the latest strike began the company declared it illegal. They deemed anyone striking had indicated a "voluntary resignation".

Mining companies around the world wield tremendous power; they right roughshod over workers right to organise, and are implicated in wider human rights abuses. Everywhere they are responsible for environmental damage. In West Papua the waste products from the mine have destroyed forests and wetlands, killing off fish and other wildlife.

In 2015 the new Indonesian president, Joko Widodo, claimed he was willing to work towards a "better Papua".

However, human rights violations have increased since he took power, according to Indonesia's Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (Kontras).

It has logged 1,200 incidents of harassment, beatings, torture and killings of Papuans by Indonesian security forces since his election in 2014.

• **Solidarity** campaign: bit.ly/2rzqhrn

US coalition moves on Raqqa

By Simon Nelson

After several months of deadlock, the US-led operation with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to take Raqqa has begun.

Lama Fakih the Middle East director at Human Rights rightly points out, "The battle for Raqqa is not just about defeating ISIS, but also about protecting and assisting the civilians who have suffered under ISIS rule for three and a half years."

However the largest force on the ground in the Syrian Democratic Forces is the People's Protection Units (YPG). As Raqqa is a predominantly Sunni Arab city, there are legitimate concerns about a non-Arab force helping to take the city, especially one which has scores to settle within the Daesh capital.

Human Rights Watch is concerned about the YPG's persistent recruitment of child soldiers.

The Kurdish police (Asayish) have been accused by both HRW and Amnesty International of detaining and mistreating many. It has detained medics who have given treatment to captured Daesh fighters.

An estimated 400,000 civilians remain in Raqqa governorate, and 160,000-200,000 in the city of Raqqa. More than 200,000 civilians have so far been displaced, according to the UN. Of those left, 40,000 are children.

The coalition is determined that the "liberation of Raqqa" should be done much faster than the slowly progressing operation in Mosul. Raqqa is the Caliphate's capital, and the destruction of Daesh there would be highly symbolic.



Use of white phosphorus

As in Mosul, the defeat of Daesh should be welcomed. However it there are real and serious misgivings about the forces that will undertake the operation. We should have no faith in the combination of militias and the US to respect the interests of the civilian population of Raqqa.

Around 50,000 forces are technically available if all of the YPG and other Syrian Arab militias that have been approved by the US and Turkey are deployed. Daesh have laid mines across the city and booby trapped houses, and have installed a network of tunnels under the city.

There are regular announcements through megaphones during bombing raids, warning civilians not to leave their homes. Those that do flee are shot at by snipers, and civilian vehicles are torched.

The coalition has responded by using white phosphorus. This incendiary chemical is legal if used to make a smoke screen or to guide other forms of artillery. However, Raqqa is densely populated, and the consequences of white phosphorus coming into contact with civilians is lethal. There have been well documented cases of burns through to the bone; wounds can reignite when dressings are replaced.

The use of white phosphorus in civilian areas should be considered a war crime. The coalition has accepted that in recent airstrikes almost 500 civilians were killed.

Who will control Raqqa following the defeat of Daesh is hard to know. The YPG will not enter the city itself. Whoever ends up in control will probably find themselves fighting the Syrian government. Maybe a deal can be struck between Turkey and the US over who can maintain control.

The situation has been made more complicated by the involvement of Iran and Russia. Both have increased their direct involvement in the conflict, and both back Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Russia has warned the US that it will consider US aircraft legitimate targets and will stop the communication that was set up to try to prevent shooting incidents in the air.

Following an attack on the Iranian Parliament by Daesh, Iran's Revolutionary Guards have launched several missiles into eastern Syria. This is the first time Iran has played a direct role in the conflict.

Trump freezes US-Cuba relations

By Cathy Nugent

Donald Trump has introduced new restrictions on travel to Cuba and on US companies trading with Cuban businesses owned by the state's military and intelligence services (which includes most of the tourist sector).

Trump has revised, but not as he originally threatened reversed Obama's policy on Cuba.

At the end of 2014 Obama reopened diplomatic relations with the island's government, a one-party dictatorship overseen by Raul Castro. This began a period of "normalisation", largely ending the economic blockade. Although a ban on US tourism remained in place, US tourists were able to get around restrictions. Trump says he

will maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Obama's policy was not welcomed by right-wing dissidents inside Cuba or right wingers within the Cuban exile community. On the other hand Trump's policy will not be welcomed by US business.

Before Trump most US politicians accepted Obama's policy of doing business with Cuba, with mild pressure for political change. Trump has turned to Marco Rubio, one of his opponents in last year's contest, become the Republican Presidential nominee to help him get through the policy shift.

Raul Castro has promised to step down from the Cuban Presidency by February 2018, although there is no visible strong contender for a successor. This political uncertainty, together with an economic recession in Cuba, may trigger a crisis. It

won't be as big as that after the collapse of the USSR in 1989-90. Then Cuba lost three quarters of its imports and exports. However this recession is being worsened by the collapse of the Venezuelan economy and the loss of subsidised oil imports.

Further instability may be caused by increasing inequalities on the island. Army-owned shops in Havana sell luxury items which cost a year's or even a lifetime's wages for most Cubans. There is also continuing political repression of the opposition. That opposition is not just made up of right wing groups, but also includes leftists.

Socialists support the right of all Cubans to win political freedom. The chances of that will not be improved by Trump's hardline stance.

Mosul: Daesh to fall

The last district in Mosul held by Daesh is likely to fall soon. 100,000 civilians are trapped in the Old City, the most densely populated area of Mosul.

The Iraqi army has said that air and artillery strikes will be used sparingly to minimise loss of life in the narrow passageways and old buildings that make up the Old City.

About 230 civilians have been killed in western Mosul in the first two weeks of June — the result of air strikes and rocket attacks, with a smaller number killed by Daesh snipers as they try to flee.

Although there is officially a humanitarian corridor running out of the city, high numbers of casualties are incredibly likely.

This is not helped by the desire of some of the military to blow up the Nuri mosque, made famous for having Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made his only public and recorded appearance there.

The curious incident of the left that didn't bark

THE LEFT

By Colin Foster

Instructing a stolid and unimaginative official detective, Sherlock Holmes drew his attention to "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

His stooge, or feed, responded: "The dog did nothing in the night-time."

Holmes: "That was the curious incident."

The curious incident of the left in the Corbyn time is something like that. Not that the left has done nothing. But so many groups on the left have failed to do so many things.

Almost all have failed to get involved, or to try to get involved, in the reviving local Labour Parties, or in the efforts to build a live Young Labour movement from the huge support for Corbyn among young people shown on 8 June.

At the same time they have largely failed to act as conduits to bring more radical ideas and criticisms into the still unformed and still, often, quite politically-timid Labour left.

Socialist Worker, in their comments on 8 June, went little further than presenting themselves as specialists in "protests and strikes".

"Only a movement of protests and strikes can beat back the right and hold Labour to its pledges.

"That means building a movement independent of Labour, and a revolutionary socialist party focused on struggle outside parliament."

How staying outside the Labour Party makes them better able to develop strikes — which, at a time when profits are high but real wages are falling again, are surely necessary — they do not explain.

They criticise the Labour leadership for reneging on freedom of movement in Europe, but do not explain how they can square that good criticism with their own bad line of supporting Brexit.

Socialist Worker does almost nothing to inject broader socialist aims into the movement. *Socialist Worker* seems to think that more

protests and strikes *are* socialism, whatever their demands.

Socialist Worker's articles on 8 June were short, and maybe they will add more later. Maybe even an explanation of why, though gushing in their support for Labour in England and Wales, they backed the SNP in Scotland. "In Scotland the picture is more complex... because of... the existence of the Scottish National Party... We urge a vote for the left candidate best able to advance the fight for change".

It's hard to see what that meant other than mostly voting SNP. I know of no left-of-Labour candidates in Scotland, unless you count the (few) Greens.

SP AND SOCIALIST APPEAL

The Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal cannot plead lack of space for political shortages in their editorial responses. The SP, with 2700 words, outdid Socialist Appeal (2300 words).

Both long articles gave most of their space to banal comment about the Tories being in trouble, the election showing that people will vote left, capitalism being in turmoil, and so on.

The SP's lack of criticism of Labour's retreat on freedom of movement was certainly not down to lack of space, since the SP explicitly opposes freedom of movement, equating migration controls with trade-union deals making union membership compulsory in a workplace.

It's unclear, but the SP it seems to call for pressure on the Tories to make the Brexit talks a lever for further reactionary moves: to break up the EU and return Europe to a condition of high barriers and hostilities between nations. "a campaign with European socialists... to use the Brexit talks to tear up the EU bosses' club rules".

In a rather pale echo of its long-time routine agitation for a 24 hour general strike as a cure-all, the SP says: "the trade union movement should call an immediate national 'Tories Out' demonstration against austerity".

Rightly, it calls for opposition to council cuts.



Socialist Worker says we have to drive May out and that Labour members should keep up their drive against the right wing. Thanks for the advice, but why don't they join that fight?

It emphasises democratic reform of the Labour Party, and especially the right for local Labour Parties to select parliamentary candidates anew for each election.

That's not wrong, but it sits oddly with the SP making no serious effort to get into the Labour Party. The oddness is highlighted by the SP ignoring the now-more-urgent call for developing a live and democratic Young Labour movement, and instead calling a meeting on 15 June to amalgamate three of its own youth fronts into a new umbrella, "Young Socialists".

The SP has so far published no report of that 15 June meeting, suggesting it had lim-

ited success.

Finally, the SP advocates socialism, in a curiously roundabout and muted way. In line with the SP's old tradition, when, as the Militant group inside the Labour Party, its staple was motions to meetings for lots of nationalisation, it defines socialism as "nationalising the 100 or so major corporations and banks". No mention of workers' control, or of radical democracy to replace the bourgeois state structures.

And they advocate this socialism-as-statism-in-one-country not so much as an aim in its own right, but as a measure to defeat (or, rather, they oddly write, "prevent") bourgeois hostility to and sabotage of a Corbyn government.

CHILE

In 1970s discussions of the 1973 military coup in Chile, Militant used to say, with slim plausibility, that Allende could have prevented the coup by nationalising all the big enterprises.

They rejected Marxist arguments that the Chilean left should have organised against the coup by organising fraternisation and rank-and-file soldiers' committees to undermine the military hierarchies, and by arming workers' organisations.

Socialist Appeal, also an offshoot of the old Militant group, in its long article, does not defend freedom of movement, but at least it doesn't oppose it. (In the Brexit referendum Appeal favoured abstention, not like the SP a vote for Brexit).

And Socialist Appeal is involved in the Labour Party. Sort of. Most Appeal people are not regular activists in their local Labour Parties. Many Appeal people have been expelled in the last year, and, largely, Appeal has shrugged, rather than joining the campaign against the purge.

Appeal's "orientation" to the Labour Party is more about consoling predictions to its readers, in the year-in-year-out style of the old Militant, that "sooner or later" "the capitalist crisis" will swing Labour irresistibly to the left, than anything active.

General advocacy of socialism and even of revolution is in some ways Appeal's staple. It is vitiated by its citing of Cuba and Venezuela as (not-quite-perfect) models of socialism, and its delusory assurances that "the beginning of a political revolution" is already underway in British society.

In Appeal's screeds, socialism is certainly advocated, but more as a welcome inevitable result of capitalist crisis than as something to be fought for and developed from today's working-class struggles.

"Sooner rather than later new elections will be on the order of the day. The political crisis is a reflection of the capitalist crisis that began in 2008 and is still continuing. This will create sharp and sudden changes in the situation, which will open up new opportunities for Labour and the Left..."

"Capitalism offers no solution to the problems of working people and will increasingly pose the urgent need to change society. In the coming period the support for the ideas of genuine socialism and Marxism will grow by leaps and bounds".

The curious incident of the left groups which don't get involved in the Labour Party, which fail to oppose or even positively support the re-raising of national frontiers in Europe, and which advocate socialism only in coded, diminished, and roundabout ways, places a greater responsibility on the rest of us to do what's necessary.

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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 week thanks are due to the *Solidarity* supporter who donated £1000.



How to go forward from 8 June

The 8 June election result has re-energised Labour's activist base and helped put basic working-class demands back on the agenda.

The increase in turnout among young voters, and the huge Labour lead among young voters, signal a major shift in British politics.

All of this opens up a new period of Labour revival and recomposition.

That gives us many opportunity to argue for socialist ideas among people attracted to the Labour Party, and to work to rebuild the labour movement. At least 25,000 people have joined Labour since the election. It is reasonable to assume that a majority of these new members are younger people enthused by the election campaign.

To organise these young people Young Labour groups should be built at a constituency level. YL groups now have a number of policies in the manifesto they can campaign around like the £10/h minimum wage, banning zero hours contracts, abolishing tuition fees and restoring grants, building council housing and rent controls.

Within parliament the Labour Party should withdraw all co-operation from the Tories, making the case that the government is illegitimate and doing everything within its power to bring the government down, hasten a new general election and win it.

We should denounce any cross-party cooperation to get Brexit through.

Labour's gains in the election have boosted Corbyn's leadership — his standing with the public, among Labour members and even in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Labour's popularity has increased since the election, and especially since May's disastrous response to the Grenfell Tower fire. The latest poll by Survation puts Labour on 44 per cent and the

Tories on 41 per cent.

We should argue that Labour organise demonstrations and mobilise on the streets to oppose the Government outside Parliament. "Force the Tories Out" has a real resonance.

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

Union militants should try to take forward potential disputes.

With a weak and discredited government and a more optimistic climate for organised labour, it may be easier to argue for action. A flurry of industrial action would increase the pressure on the government and create the best conditions for positive pressure on an incoming Labour government.

Labour should become "the party of strikes". Labour should explicitly, directly, and full-throatedly support and encourage industrial action. We know a left-Labour government will need to rest for its power not on Parliament and the existing state, but a well-organised and combative working-class movement in workplaces and communities.

All militant trade unionists should advocate and push for Labour Party affiliation or reaffiliation of unaffiliated trade unions.

MANIFESTO

Labour's manifesto was the most significant statement of Labour policy since Corbyn's first election.

It showed that by challenging the consensus and offering bold, left-wing policies, Labour can win back support. It nails the lie that such policies make Labour "unelectable". There were several issues on which Labour policy was wrong or severely lacking, for example on the issue of increasing police and border guards. There are good possibilities for Labour activists to run campaigns on such issues: freedom of movement/ mi-

grants' rights, Trident, and the Thatcher anti-trade union laws.

In terms of hard policy planks, on many issues, the manifesto was not significantly to the left of the Miliband campaign.

Overall the difference of tone in the manifesto was of great political importance, and so were the pledges for the £10 minimum wage, no tuition fees, and significant taxes on the rich.

MOMENTUM

The Labour left group Momentum had a very good election, using social media, phonebanking, its marginals app. It mobilised many individuals into the campaign.

That helped the election result and attracted people towards the left in the most general terms. But it may encourage Momentum not to say anything to the left of the Corbyn and his team, or to reverse the undemocratic structures which stop Momentum's membership shaping the organisation.

Momentum local groups need to be built up and allow open debate so that they can play a role in organising the left in Labour both locally and nationally.

With the left in Labour strengthened, we must go on the offensive in democratising the Party. We need an amnesty for all currently "auto-excluded" members.

Labour's rules should be changed so that no one who supports Labour can be auto-excluded for also supporting "a political organisation other than an official Labour Party group".

MARXIST LEFT

As argued in more detail on page 8, the reviving Labour Party needs a radical Marxist left wing.

The left swing represented by the manifesto is important in terms of relation to broad-public opinion and to raising

labour-movement aspirations. But relative to what the working class needs to deal with a world capitalist system which is in depression, and may well soon lurch into a new crisis, it is meagre. The manifesto let down migrants, workers who require the repeal of the Thatcher trade union laws to be able to organise effectively, and those who have campaigned to end the threat of annihilation by nuclear weapons.

A Labour government winning office on the basis of the manifesto would, in one way or another, at one pace or another — unless the labour movement had previously been transformed, with revolutionary Marxists making an essential contribution — crumble in the face of capitalist resistance and capitalist crises. The lessons from Syriza in Greece, the Workers' Party in Brazil, and the French SP-CP alliance in 1981-3, are unambiguous. We fight to get Labour returned to office, but also to transform the labour movement.

We advocate a labour movement which fights for redistributive measures such as in the manifesto, and also goes on to secure those measures and change society thoroughly, by common ownership and democratic control of the chief means of production. The election result opens up new chances to instill socialist purpose in the labour movement, in the full revolutionary sense of the word "socialist", but it is down to us to do the instilling: it is not happening automatically or organically.

Workers' Liberty works to build a revolutionary Marxist force in the labour movement.

To fit with the Ideas for Freedom summer school, Solidarity 443 will be out on 30 June, and no. 444 on 12 July.

Grenfell: Capitalism

By Gemma Short

Around 1am on Wednesday 13 June a fire tore through 24-storey Grenfell Tower in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea, killing a currently unknown number of people.

Firefighters have told people the number will be in triple figures. Many hundreds of people have had family members, friends, neighbours, and homes taken from them.

Survivors and local residents are angry. "This symbolises the divide between rich and poor in this area". "They don't care". "They put human beings in pigeon holes. Just because you can't afford anything doesn't mean you should be dumped in somewhere like that". "That would not happen in Chelsea", "Corporate manslaughter". "Why!?"

Grenfell has exposed inequality in housing and exploded the narrative that "we're all in this together". The class divide exists. It kills people.

The fire spread very fast, by some reports covering one side of the building in just 15 minutes. Photographs show how the fire quickly reached the top of the tower before spreading back down the opposite side in the space of a few hours, reaching those who were trapped in their flats.

Grenfell Tower was reclad and refurbished at a cost of £8.7m just last year. The type of insulation used in the cladding is banned in the US and Germany, and on Sunday 18th chancellor Philip Hammond, Chancellor, suggested that it is also banned in the UK for buildings over 18 metres.

Similar cladding was identified as a key reason for the spread of fire at Lakanal House in South London in 2009. Sam Webb, who

acted as an expert witness at the Lakanal inquest, says that the lessons over cladding were not learnt.

The supplier has confirmed that the insulation supplied was a slightly cheaper flammable type. The non-flammable version which would have cost just £5000 more for the whole block.

In the richest borough, in the richest city, in one of the richest countries in the world, people lose their lives for want of an extra £5000 for non-flammable cladding.

It was not that there was no money to refurbish the flats. It is that profiteering and lack of democratic control shaped how the money was spent. Money was spent which made safety worse, not better.

A choice was made not to spend the £8.7m on a functioning fire alarm system, on fixing suspected faulty wiring, on fire risk assessments by experts, or on retro-fitting sprinklers. The British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association estimates around £200,000 for retrofitting sprinklers in Grenfell Tower.

Documents and minutes from the council and the arms-length management company repeatedly cite one of the major reasons for the recladding as improving the external appearance of the tower. (It also improved insulation). So long as it looked good, safety was secondary.

INSULATION

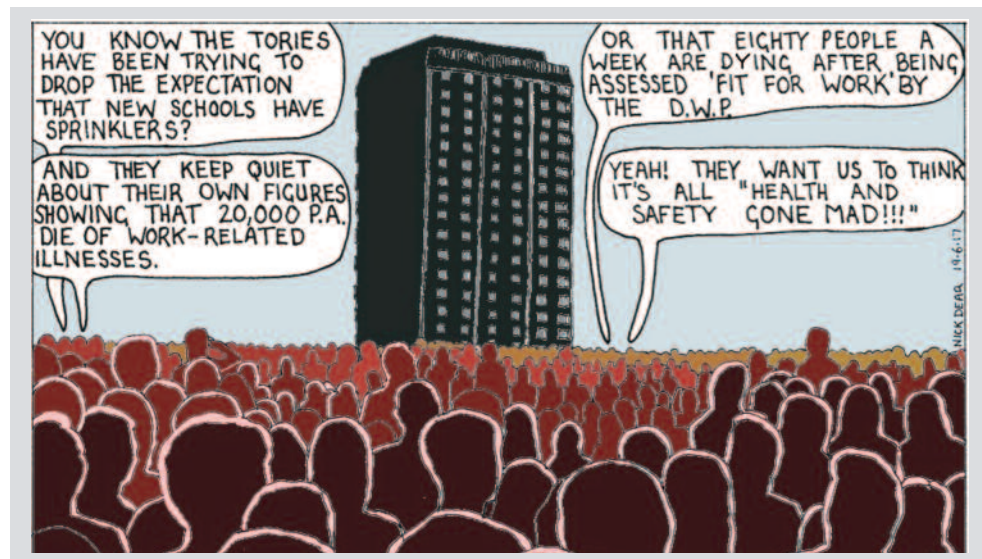
Insulation materials used inside the tower may also have contributed to the rapid spread of the fire.

Without democratic oversight by councils, and democratic oversight of councils by tenants and local people, more spending may damage, not help, safety.

Since 2007 all new blocks of flats over 30 metres must by law have sprinklers fitted by law. There is no obligation to retrofit them to older buildings. Successive governments, both Labour and Tory, have decided against obligation.

The BBC reports: "Just two miles away [from Grenfell Tower] is 3 Merchant Square... It's a different world. The penthouse apartment was sold for £7.5m. One-bedroom flats are at least £1m.

"Once you get past the sales brochure description of 3 Merchant Square's walnut cut-



lery drawer inserts and integral wine coolers, the adjustable mood lighting and heated bathroom walls, you [find] every flat has... sprinklers".

The International Fire Sprinkler Association (IFSA) says that automatic fire sprinkler systems are the single most effective fire protection measure available. There has never been a multiple loss of life from a fire in a building protected by a properly designed, installed and maintained fire sprinkler system.

The prevailing mood in government has been that regulation is a burden on the housing and construction industries. In 2011 David Cameron promised to "kill off the health and safety culture for good" and abolish the "albatross of over-regulation". More than 2400 pieces of regulation have been scrapped by the government under the "Cutting Red Tape" scheme. In February 2017 a government report under the scheme boasted about how fire safety inspections in some companies had been reduced from six hours to just 45 minutes.

The "health and safety gone mad" brigade would have us put our lives at risk for the "right" of businesses to the largest profit possible. Only it wouldn't be their lives, but those of working-class people forced into substandard housing.

Grenfell Tower was managed for the council by an arms-length outfit, Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation.

KCTMO sub-contracted the refurbishment to a company called Rydon, which then again sub-contracted to a myriad of companies. Now the government, the council, KCTMO, and Rydon all scramble to hand blame down the line.

But contracting-out is a problem in itself!

CUTS

Many years of local government funding cuts have reduced councils to economy-obsessed overseers of housing, libraries, social care, youth clubs.

Local authorities used to have their own Direct Works departments, which provided stable jobs to building workers and more accountability over the work done. Most of those were shut down, under pressure from the Thatcher government, in the 1980s or 1990s.

As well as being pushed along by cuts, contracting-out has been a political choice, often made by Labour councils.

When the council is providing and managing your housing there is someone to complain to who can act directly to solve the issue (whether they do or not is another matter). But when your housing is owned by the council, it is managed by an ALMO, and refurbishment, repairs, and fire safety checks, it is all too easy for residents' concerns to be lost in the maze.

A 2012 fire risk assessment on Grenfell reported that "emergency lighting and fire alarm systems along with the dry riser, fire fighter lifts and the hose reels are all subject to a maintenance contract carried out by a third-party contractor", but concluded that there was no evidence that maintenance was being carried out.

The Grenfell Action Group reports that an investigation into faulty emergency stairwell lighting in 2004 found that contractors had been falsifying inspection certificates. It censured poor communications between the contractors and KCTMO.

On Friday 16 June a letter from a richer resident of Kensington and Chelsea reported that the council had given everyone who had paid their year's council tax upfront a £100 rebate. The letter described it as "blood

Occupy the houses of the rich!

Jeremy Corbyn has demanded that the empty houses of the rich in Kensington be requisitioned to house the victims of the Grenfell fire.

Why is the basic human need of shelter privatised? Why is land distributed so that some have large homes with many spare rooms, or multiple homes, and others are packed into overcrowded death-traps?

How can we have empty homes when 170,000 people are homeless in London alone?

Councils should be given the power to requisition property left empty and put it to social use.

And, as Corbyn also said, if councils won't do that, people should simply occupy the empty palaces.

Fire service cuts put us at risk

The fire service could have done little more than they did to tackle the fire once it had taken hold, but cuts in the fire service play a role in the background.

The government cut Fire and Rescue services by 30% in the last parliament. It intends to cut them by another 20% this parliament.

10 London fire stations shut in 2014. One firefighter job in six has been cut since 2010. Firefighters have to work longer, putting their own health at risk or risking failing fit-

ness checks and being made redundant.

Fire service most acutely affect fire prevention. Fire safety audits have fallen by 25% since 2010. The number of specialist fire safety officers is estimated to have dropped by two-thirds.

The number of counsellors who support fire fighters after disasters like Grenfell was cut by Boris Johnson from 14 to just two. Appeals have now been made for volunteer counsellors to help.

kills

money”.

The letter continued: “For years, the Royal Borough has been running huge under-spends in its revenue budgets which it then transfers into capital reserves. The under-spend in the 2016-17 adult services budget alone is £1.9m. Apparently, adult services in the area are doing so well they don’t need the money.

“And every other social service must be performing brilliantly, as the council’s projected reserves of £167m by the end of 2016-17 has climbed to a staggering £209m – that’s £42m surplus to requirements. How many sprinkler systems is that?”

Kensington and Chelsea council has built just 10 social homes in the last 28 years. In the same period private developers built 4060 homes. Social housing has become seen as a full-of-holes safety net for the most desperate, rather than decent, planned, affordable homes for all.

Councils are being prevented from borrowing in order to build housing. Into the gap step greedy private developers.

They get Section 106 agreements which allow them to shake off their responsibility to build a minimum of 20% social housing and instead give an “equivalent” pay-off to build a leisure centre or a traffic crossing. Local democracy goes down the drain when the big private money turns up. Social housing in London is being squeezed further and further.

Councils need a democratic overhaul. All building should be democratically controlled, with councils as elected bodies as the core of that control alongside tenants’ and residents’ groups.

New building should be council building. Councillors should be accountable and not merely rubber stampers. Tenants’ organisations should have access to public funds to organise themselves, and have a presence in the community.

More and more people have been squeezed out of any sort of social housing into the clutches of profiteering private landlords who are subject to even less regulation and charge soaring rents.

In 2016 Tory MPs voted down a Labour amendment to the Housing Act which would have meant rented homes would have to be “fit for human habitation”. 72 of them were themselves landlords, including Fire Minister Nick Hurd, the fourth generation of the Hurd family to sit in Parliament.

Many have called for thousands of towers of a similar age and build to Grenfell in the UK to be torn down. Some of them may need to be taken down, but what will replace the homes, an average of 100 to 120 per tower block?

Across London tenants are struggling against redevelopment plans that are not creating better housing for them, but replacing often decent, if a little run-down, housing with developments where the original tenants have been erased entirely or reduced to a token percentage. Labour-run Haringey



council on Thursday 15 June re-confirmed that it will go ahead with a £2 billion redevelopment plan in partnership with LendLease – who are being investigated in Australia for using, flammable cladding on the Royal Women’s Hospital in Melbourne.

FAMILIES

At Grenfell Tower, many of the one and two bedroom flats were occupied by families of four, five, six people.

Overcrowding is the rule rather than the exception. Many of the missing, presumed dead, were disabled or elderly, yet they were housed on high floors with no emergency escape plan.

The victims at Grenfell were overwhelmingly BAME, many recent refugees. Kensington and Chelsea Council saw poor, BAME, people as a nuisance and ignored their repeated warnings.

Tenants organised in the Grenfell Action Group wrote just six months ago wrote that they had “reached the conclusion that only an incident that results in serious loss of life of KCTMO residents will allow the external scrutiny to occur that will shine a light on the

practices that characterise the malign governance of this non-functioning organisation”.

Tenants had complained over a number of years over a variety of fire risks. Emergency lighting systems not working. Fire extinguishers out of test date or condemned. Regular fire safety inspections lacking. Rubbish blocking fire exits. Power surges and faulty wiring. Fire safety instructions and advice lacking.

The Action Group also highlighted the increased fire risk caused by the refurbishment work; and the cladding which had been implicated in the fire at Lakanal House in Southwark.

Tenants were treated with contempt. Two of the tenants who are now missing, presumed dead, were sent legal threats by KCTMO and the council because of their efforts to organise tenants to campaign for safer and better housing. Because why would working-class people know anything about fire safety? In fact the tenants had organised themselves, educated themselves, joined up with other housing campaigns and probably could have run rings round KCTMO, the council and their myriad of profiteering con-

tractors in an open forum. So those responsible hid behind legal threats and empty promises.

Those responsible are continuing to hide. The local community, and volunteers from across London have stepped in to support residents while as the local state institutions have failed.

Ealing council has now stepped in to help run the emergency relief effort.

We demand:

- The rolling-back of contracting-out
- The repeal of fire service cuts and restoration of fire safety checks done by the fire service
- Councils to be mandated and funded to carry out an audit of fire safety in their areas, and all consequent works.

This must be a political turning point. There must be justice for Grenfell.

Useful information:

- Grenfell Action Group: grenfellactiongroup.wordpress.com
- How to support: grenfellsupport.wordpress.com
- FBU statement: bit.ly/2sLZ2gH

The waste and tragedy of class society

By Jill Mountford

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in West London generally feels like another world compared to my own borough, Lewisham, in South East London.

We visited frequently with my kids when they were younger, I watched their eyes widen, I heard their intakes of breath, at the towering dinosaur skeletons and the life sized blue whale at the Natural History Museum. The blackened Diplodocus stood in the entrance hall. We felt connected with life, big, old, everywhere.

This last Sunday we visited Kensington for a different reason, I took my teenage children to the Grenfell Tower site. Now I watch their eyes widen and heard sharp intakes of

breath, as they stood before another giant blackened skeleton. No celebration of life here, but the waste and tragedy of class society.

We stood around for a while in silence alongside others staring up, slowly shaking their heads with expressions of disbelief and anger.

From a small huddle of people, rises a woman’s voice, it’s old but strong. She stabilises herself on a bench and shakes a fist at the sky.

“How could this happen ... in Britain ... 2017 ...2017!” She apologises to the huddle of people, for her tiredness, her broken English. She tells us she’s fasting but does not retreat from the baking heat. She wants to educate the crowd, telling us about the council and their miserly “savings” which led to



contractors and sub-contractors using combustible materials. She tells us of her son’s experiences of the police. She blames the government.

Her head, shaking in defiance, calls us all into solidarity.

Why we need explicit socialist organisation

By Martin Thomas

The assessment by Ben Selwyn, an English correspondent for the Canadian socialist e-letter *The Bullet*, is typical: Labour's great mobilisation on 8 June "placed socialist ideas firmly back on the political agenda... let the proverbial genie of class politics out of the bottle".

Even conservative commentators interpret the Grenfell Tower fire as showing how working-class people are abused in an unequal society. The word "socialism" comes up more in workplace discussions.

Paradoxically, Labour's 8 June manifesto nowhere uses the words "socialism", or "socialist", or equivalents. It nowhere uses the word "class" to mean sections of society defined by economic conditions.

Labour manifestos have never used the word "class" that way, or referred to "workers" as a social category with class interests which Labour will promote.

The nearest approximation was in February 1974: "Make power in industry genuinely accountable to the workers and the community at large".

Labour manifestos from the 1920s right through to 1987 did state the aim of socialism as a new society.

It was always vague. Sometimes ridiculously so, as in the 1924 manifesto's call for a "Socialist Commonwealth, in which there shall at least be opportunity for Good Will to conquer Hate and Strife, and for Brotherhood, if not to supersede Greed, at least to set due bounds".

In the 1950s, and again in the 1980s, "socialism" receded from being a name for a new society towards denoting "values" or "ethics" admixed to society.

Neil Kinnock, in 1992 — not Blair in 1997 — removed "socialism" and "socialist" from Labour manifestos, and they have not yet come back.

Specific policies to tax the rich, to restore free education and the NHS, and bring in a £10 minimum wage, do more to shift perceptions of what's possible, and open up discussion about changing society, than a few vague words about socialism as a distant star or a desirable value.

Voters listened more to the tune of Labour's pitch for 8 June than to the detail of the lyrics, and the tune they heard was socialist. That's good.

The question posed for the future: is doing good by stealth a workable strategy for socialism? To change society, doesn't the working class have to go beyond *being* what it is, and maybe nods and winks ("by 'the many', we mean the working class, but it sounds nicer as 'the many'"), to openly naming itself as a collective force?

Throughout the history of the left, the reformists, the Fabians, the ostentatious "pragmatists", however much sometimes they boost themselves as "democrats", have always argued for the manipulative, softly-softly approach, the idea that society can be made to "grow over" into socialism despite itself.

Marxists have argued that socialism means the majority taking over the means of wealth and controlling it democratically, and there is no way to win democratic control other than the organised and self-aware way.

"The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves", as Marx put it.

Or as Engels put it: "The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of un-



The example of Syriza shows "good by stealth" strategy doesn't work.

conscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for body and soul".

The nature of the socialist aim disqualifies a "good by stealth" strategy. So does the nature of the obstacles to overcome.

Syriza in Greece, in government since 2015, is the only the latest of many left-wing parties who first retreated to a "good by stealth" strategy, then found that, on the terrain of stealthy intrigue, established power was much stronger.

The Workers' Party in Brazil, in the 1980s, was a lively, democratic, party, openly revolutionary socialist. Over the 1990s its leaders curtailed its party democracy and pushed it to a strategy of amassing votes by vague formulas (it won the presidency in 2002 on the slogan "love and peace"), and then manipulating the system to make it more socialist.

The Workers Party leaders were not cowards or careerists. They had been underground activists under the military dictatorship. They had organised illegal unions and strikes. Dilma Rousseff, Workers Party president of Brazil from 2011 to 2016, stuck to the struggle despite being tortured in jail.

The Workers Party made reforms while Brazilian capitalism was buoyant. Then as crisis struck it became more and more conventionally neoliberal. After winning re-election in 2014, Rousseff adopted the Brazilian right's economic policies wholesale.

When she was removed from the presidency in 2016, on puffed-up corruption charges, there was almost no grassroots Workers' Party organisation left to regroup and resist.

In times when capitalism is buoyant enough to allow leeway — and, despite everything, now is such a time — a Corbyn-McDonnell government with the 8 June manifesto could make serious reforms. But it would leave much undone. And probably those reforms would be fried at the next crisis.

To go further, and probably even to make the manifesto reforms, the Corbyn-McDonnell government would need pressure on it

from the left, from a lively, radical, explicitly socialist, democratic labour movement, to counterweigh the enormous pressures from its right.

Those pressures would come from the Labour right, from the House of Lords, from the courts, from the civil service and Bank of England hierarchy, from possible "strikes of capital" such as turned round the leftish government in France in 1983, even before they came from the military machine.

Capitalism is a resilient system. Its entrenched logics cannot be conquered by a well-meaning mechanic who goes into the system, spanner in hand, assuring the people that she or he is only adjusting the settings, and yet hoping that the successive tweaks will produce a socialist surprise.

MOMENTUM

The Labour Party now has an organised left wing, Momentum. Yet Momentum never proclaims itself socialist or even left-wing, never states a position to the left of Corbyn.

When Momentum still had democratic structures, and they voted for example for freedom of movement in Europe, the Momentum office would not speak up to sustain Jeremy Corbyn's rearguard efforts to stick with freedom of movement, efforts which finally collapsed, in part because groups like Momentum would not support them.

Then the "coup" carried out by its office in January 2017 abolished Momentum's democratic structures.

Since 2015, at the same time as it has turned left, the Labour Party has also carried out the largest purge of left-wingers, by the most bureaucratic methods, that it has ever done in its history.

We know 618 members were "auto-excluded" during the 2016 Labour leadership contest. "Auto-exclusion" means no notice of charges, no hearing, no appeal, no possibility of readmission within five years.

Hundreds of others were "auto-excluded" in the 2015 leadership contest and in between times. Almost all "auto-excluded" have been left-wingers. Many on Labour's soft left don't like this purge, but don't speak out against it, for fear of being purged themselves.

That is just the "good by stealth" strategy

at one remove: the idea that the movement can do without those who will speak out crisply for socialist aims, for unashamedly working-class politics, for strategic policies like public ownership of the banks, because the more cautious, more diplomatic, more soft-spoken types can wriggle through.

As Trotsky commented on similar ideas: "Live and let live. Aphorisms of this type cannot teach an advanced worker anything worthwhile; instead of courage and a sense of responsibility they can only instill indifference and weakness... Revolutionary ardour in the struggle for socialism is inseparable from intellectual ardour in the struggle for truth."

In 1886, in one of the episodes of labour history which prefigures the current Corbyn surge, the United Labor Party and Central Labor Union candidate won 31% of the poll for New York mayor. The candidate, Henry George, was seen as a socialist. It was one of the biggest political breakthroughs for socialist politics in the history of the USA to date.

The comments of Marx and Engels give us a guide on how to relate to the "socialist-but-doesn't-dare-so-say" Labour surge of today.

The election result, wrote Engels, was "epoch-making". "The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the organisation of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers' party. And this step has been taken, far more rapidly than we had a right to hope..."

"That the first programme of this party is still confused and highly deficient, that it has set up the banner of Henry George, these are inevitable evils... The masses must have time and opportunity to develop and they can only have the opportunity when they have their own movement" in which they can debate and correct ideas.

In fact the United Labor Party and the Central Labor Union both soon broke up, and larger-scale socialist politics did not rise in the USA until 15 or 20 years later. But Engels' general approach was right.

Marx appreciated George's work and "the sensation it has made" as "significant because it is a first, if unsuccessful, attempt at emancipation from the orthodox political economy". At the same time he explained that "theoretically" George was "utterly backward", and if George's ideas were considered logically they were no more than "a last attempt — to save the capitalistic regime".

The combative socialists then in New York were almost all German émigrés. Engels counselled them to do two things. Firstly, to educate themselves better in their socialist theory. Second, to make themselves an organised lever in the movement.

"The Germans have not understood how to use their theory as a lever which could set the American masses in motion; they do not understand the theory themselves for the most part and treat it in a doctrinaire and dogmatic way, as something which has got to be learnt off by heart but which will then supply all needs without more ado. To them it is a creed and not a guide to action..."

"It is possible to work along with the general movement of the working class at every one of its stages without giving up or hiding our own distinct position and even organisation, and I am afraid that if the German Americans choose a different line they will commit a great mistake".

That should be the guideline for socialists today.

How the far right are gaining influence

By Simon Nelson

The British far right will find themselves under media and political scrutiny after the Finsbury Park terror attack. This will bring to more light the fact that, though relatively small in numbers, they are, sadly, growing in influence.

Compared to their peak of 2010-11, street fighting groups like the EDL are comparatively weak. Their recent 1,000 strong Manchester demonstration should however remind anti-fascists that when mobilising around an issue like the Manchester bombing they can still turn out large numbers.

The far right's involvement in electoral politics has been all but wiped out — UKIP took away much of the BNP's vote. The BNP are still struggling in the face of a resurgent, right wing and anti-migrant Tory Party.

The BNP managed to only field 10 candidates in the 2017 election, getting a total of just over 4,000 votes. Although up on their 2015 vote, they were prioritising areas where UKIP were not standing, yet still failed to get anything like the votes they got at their height. At one point, we should recall, they were tipped to win control of Barking and Dagenham Council.

The BNP is riven by infighting, financial corruption and incompetence. Its current leader, Adam Walker, is fairly anonymous compared to Nick Griffin. Griffin had convictions for Holocaust denial. Walker is banned from teaching after he threatened a group of children with a knife when they played near his house.

The National Front fielded no one in this election. Two rival factions continue to run rival websites and hold poorly-attended demonstrations. They do however have members and sympathisers who work with other organisations.

The fascists have more influence in street-based movements, predominantly in north-east and north-west England. These "infidel" groups, along with the South East Alliance, have come out of the English Defence League, which since Tommy Robinson left as leader has been unstable. Some come from the BNP and NF.

Many of the most prominent "infidel"



The tactic of "infidel" groups is provocation

members are serving prison sentences for the violent disorder they caused during protests in Dover in 2015. Their leading lights are mostly former members of the BNP, NF and the EDL. These groups have a more football hooligan attitude, and links to petty criminality. They do not have "developed" political platforms. Their main activity has been small provocative protests, often alongside more openly avowed neo-Nazis. Increasingly their time is spent making threats to Muslims and immigrants online.

Those who work alongside the far right include the virulently antisemitic National Rebirth of Poland, who have a small but active group among Polish emigres in Britain. The NOP are fascists with a long history of violence against minorities and Jews. Until recently, they were closely associated with the now proscribed Neo-Nazi National Action.

When NA were banned by the Home Secretary Amber Rudd in 2016, it was the first time a right-wing group had been proscribed since the Second World War. They were a nasty bunch of people. NA, which had one of the youngest profiles on the far right, origi-

nated with disgruntled and mostly expelled members of the BNP youth wing. With skill in creating online content and a tactic of making provocative stunts — for example, they filmed themselves putting stickers and banners across university campuses and defacing a Nelson Mandela statue — they produced some of the most virulently neo-Nazi propaganda. When they turned up for small flash demos they unfurled a banner stating, "Hitler was right".

MOBILISE

While NA's ability to mobilise was quite small — they were laughed out of Liverpool after they were kettled by protesters in the left luggage area of Liverpool Lime Street — their reach extended beyond their membership.

Zack Davies, who was jailed for attempting to behead a Sikh dentist in a supermarket, certainly had contact with the group. Their member Garron Helm was jailed for organising the international online harassment of Jewish Labour MP Luciana Berger.

Their calls to violence and their open cele-

bration of Thomas Mair, who killed Jo Cox MP, put NA on the wrong side of the law. Whether the group can be viewed as a terrorist organisation is not irrelevant, but the state ban on it has not stopped its members from organising informally or finding new identities for themselves in the murkier depths of the internet. Given this was where most of their activity took place, the ban is unlikely to stop them.

These organisations can "radicalise" people to act in ways that the groups' leaders wouldn't. The leaders are often quick to disown actions such as that of Zack Davies. They also know that their calls for action for "British people to stand up" will often be translated into violence by people like Davies. That is what they want.

On the "softer", but in some ways more effective side of the far right, are groups like Britain First and the "alternative media" of *Rebel News* and their main anchor, Tommy Robinson, formerly of the EDL and Pegida. Robinson now presents himself as a serious journalist, but he is a racist rabble rouser who can be found at most far right protests "reporting" on what is happening and asking what action will be taken by the government to deal with the "Islamic threat" in Britain.

Britain First, run by former BNP member Paul Golding and his partner Jayda Fransen, consider themselves on a Christian crusade against Islam. They have held a series of relatively small demonstrations and have a fairly low active membership. Their tactic of undertaking small stunts which they film and circulate on social media has been effective. These stunts range from entering mosques to harass worshippers and hand out bibles, to arguing with restaurants about whether halal meat funds terrorism, and filming themselves outside of court arguing about their victimisation at the hands of the courts.

Golding received more publicity when he ran for London Mayor and turned his back during Sadiq Khan's victory speech, an incident which was both widely condemned and mocked.

Golding was briefly jailed in December for breaching an order not to enter mosques. On his release made a bizarre video statement in which he promised to use "every fibre of my being" to confront "every traitor in this country". He said, "I can promise you, from the very depths of my being, you will all meet your miserable ends at the hands of the Britain First movement. Every last one of you."

Britain First are one of the most successful groups on the far right in having their views shared widely online. Although people have become wiser to the provenance of memes about animal cruelty or corrupt politicians, the group still get content which is peppered with racist imagery and ideas shared well beyond the circles of the far right.

The organised far right is not on the increase but, as Hope Not Hate argue, there has been, "the mainstreaming of some of the more 'palatable' views of the extreme far-right, with prejudicial views on Muslims, immigration and other minorities ignited by issues such as Brexit and absorbed into more mainstream political discourse."

The Tories, UKIP, tabloid columnists or Donald Trump have not of course called for the wiping out of immigrants, Muslims or indeed their political opponents. But much of the more "moderate" language and invective originates in and is amplified by the more extreme parts of the right.

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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 24 June

Women's march on Downing Street against the DUP
12 noon, Parliament Square, London
bit.ly/2rqvsZY

Saturday 24 June

London radical book fair
12 noon, Goldsmiths University, Lewisham Way, London SE14 6NW
bit.ly/2sOR4Ez

Wednesday 28 June

Lobby Greenwich Council: No School Cuts
6.30pm, Woolwich Town Hall, Powis St, London SE18 6HQ
bit.ly/2tgohov

Monday 3 July

March against the Haringey Development Vehicle
5.30pm, Ducketts Common, London N15 3DX
bit.ly/2toSyCH

Saturday 8 July

Durham Miners Gala
All day, Durham
bit.ly/2toYMT4

Saturday 16 July

Fair Funding for all Schools: Carnival Against the Cuts
Noon, Parliament Square, London SW1P 3BD
bit.ly/2sPfiFh

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

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

Labour to blame in Scotland?

SCOTLAND

Scottish Labour and/or its leader Kezia Dugdale bear the blame for the re-election of a Tory government on 8 June.

That's the line currently being systematically promoted by cybernats. And it's not confined to the fringe elements of cybernattery.

SNP MP Angus McNeil and SNP MSP and Scottish Government minister Mike Russell have both tweeted about how Scottish Labour supposedly backed a vote for Tory candidates in the general election.

The cybernat argument runs as follows:

- If the Tories had not won 12 new seats in Scotland, then Tory MPs plus DUP MPs would be a minority in Westminster.
- The Tories were able to win 12 new seats in Scotland because Scottish Labour and/or Kezia Dugdale backed Tory candidates.
- Scottish Labour and/or Kezia Dugdale are therefore to blame for Theresa May being back in Downing Street.

Scottish Labour's vote increased by 10,000. The Scottish Tory vote increased by over 300,000. Scottish Labour could therefore persuade only an extra 10,000 voters to vote Labour. But it supposedly managed to convince more than 30 times that number to vote Tory.

The only "evidence" that Labour did anything like encouraging Tory votes is a brief televised interview with Kezia Dugdale in which she said that with the exception of a few constituencies in the north east of Scotland, Labour was best placed to beat the SNP.

The problem with this statement was not that Dugdale was calling for a vote for the Tories. She wasn't. She was merely stating a fact.

The problem with the statement was that it summed up the weakness of the Scottish Labour election

campaign: it identified the SNP as "the enemy" to be beaten, instead of offering a positive alternative (a Corbyn-led Labour government) to win back ex-Labour voters who had switched to the SNP.

The cybernat campaign to blame Scottish Labour for the election of a Tory government signals a further lurch by the SNP activist base into fantasy politics. It also diverts attention away from the helping hand which the SNP has repeatedly given to the Tories (and vice versa).

In 1979 the SNP voted with the Tories in Westminster to bring down a Labour government. Without support from SNP MPs, the Tories would not have succeeded in winning their motion of "no confidence".

HOLYROOD

Between 2007 and 2011 the SNP minority government in Holyrood relied on support from Tory MSPs to get its annual budget through Holyrood.

As the then Scottish Tory leader Annabelle Goldie later explained:

"When the chips were down, he (Alex Salmond) had to find support for his budget ... he took those Tory votes and was glad to get them. Our position was very clear. In return for supporting their budget, the SNP would include Conservative policies in their budget. It was as simple as that."

From 2014 onwards the SNP deliberately polarised Scottish politics around national identities. In opposition to the SNP proclaiming itself the champion of Scottish-identity-politics, the Tories were able to rebuild support by playing the same role in relation to British-identity-politics.

In the 2015 election campaign the upsurge in support for the SNP



was exploited by the Tories — as their election strategists subsequently boasted — as an opportunity to whip up English and British nationalism in opposition to Scottish nationalism, thereby garnering more Tory votes.

In the 2017 election campaign SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon claimed that Kezia Dugdale had offered — in a private conversation after the EU referendum — to ditch Scottish Labour's opposition to a second referendum on Scottish independence.

This revelation — irrespective of whether or not it was true — was a boost to Scottish Tory efforts to portray themselves as the only reliable opponents of Scottish independence.

It was a cynical ploy by Sturgeon to undermine support for Scottish Labour, even though it meant boosting the Scottish Tories' electoral prospects.

And the Tories certainly made a point of exploiting Sturgeon's revelation to the hilt.

There is no political party in Britain as fake as the SNP. There is no "social-democracy" as fake as that of the SNP. There is no "anti-Toryism" as fake as that of the SNP.

And there is no election analysis as fake as the cybernat version which blames Scottish Labour for the Frankenstein monster of a Scottish Tory revival created by the SNP's own tunnel-vision flag-waving nationalism.

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Defend sacked cinema reps

By Ollie Moore

On 16 June over 100 people attended a short-notice demonstration called at Brixton's Ritzy cinema, in protest at the sacking of three trade union reps.

Three reps for the Bectu union at the Ritzy were sacked for failing to report to management the contents of an email sent from a Bectu branch email address to members' private emails, which mentioned actions that community supporters of cinema workers' strikes planned to undertake. One other rep remains suspended and awaiting disciplinary.

The implication is chillingly feudal: that workers should be compelled to report everything to their employers, that the distinction between work time and workers' private lives can be dissolved at the whim of the bosses.

Bectu plans further strikes at five Picturehouse sites on 1 and 7 July. The long-running dispute to win living wages, maternity and paternity pay, better sick pay, and union recognition has now seen 50 strikes. Activists are pushing for Bectu to escalate the action, and organisers are undertaking a tour of Picturehouse sites across the UK in an attempt to spread the dispute. Community campaigns in support



Demonstrators outside the Ritzy on Friday 16 June.

of the dispute and in defence of sacked and victimised reps have been formed in south London and Hackney.

A Picturehouse striker told *Solidarity*: "Picturehouse have chosen time and time again over the course of our nine month long dispute to resort to intimidation tactics, rather than negotiate: first by legal threats and now by dismissing our reps. In spite of this the strike has continued to grow throughout, with more workers across the chain joining our union."

"We remain confident that with the continued support of the labour movement, we will win"

Support the victimised reps:

• Send messages of protest to: Mooky.Greidinger@cineworld.co.uk

• Send messages of support to: ritzylivingwage@gmail.com, twitter: @RitzyLivingWage and @HPHLivingWage

• Donate to the strike fund: www.crowdpac.co.uk/campaigns/250/picturehousestrike

• Sign the petition: www.change.org/p/picturehouse-pay-proper

• Find out more about the dispute: www.picturehouselivingwage.com

Held back by the anti-union laws

In *Solidarity* 441 we reported on efforts to beat the anti-union laws on the tube. This is *Tubeworker's* report on the outcome.

Today (14 June) we received the disappointing news that the ballot for action to win reinstatement for Lee Cornell, and justice for Dave Sharp and Saeed Sioussi (the "London Bridge 3"), had failed to meet the 50% turnout threshold required by the Tories' Trade Union Act.

Despite returning a majority of 80% in favour of action, the 35% turnout is not enough for the union to call a legal strike, meaning cross-combine action in this dispute is impossible without a re-ballot that does hit the thresholds.

This is the Tories' anti-union laws — not just the 2017 Act but previous legislation — doing their job. They are not designed to promote democracy, but to shackle unions and prevent workers from fighting back. The thresholds demanded of unions (50% turnouts, and 40% of all those balloted voting yes in certain "essential services", including transport) are not applied to any other area of democratic life. Previous legislation, which forces unions to conduct ballots postally, also has an effect.

The fight to get Lee back to work must go on. His Employment Tribunal will go ahead, and should be

supported by solidarity demonstrations. RMT still has a mandate for local action at London Bridge, and further strikes there should be called. The union can also picket in support of the ongoing action-short-of-strikes, which will maintain the profile of the dispute and be a thorn in the company's side.

This outcome is undoubtedly disheartening, most of all for Lee, Dave, and Saeed, and for the reps and activists who have worked so hard to try and leap the Tories' arbitrary hurdles. While we should learn from this disappointment and redouble our efforts in future to make sure we do hit the thresholds, we should not sink into recriminations and bitterness at colleagues who didn't return their ballots. The "blame" for this setback lies with the Tories who imposed the laws, and the employers who lobbied for them.

The whole trade union movement, which met the imposition of the laws with only the most token levels of opposition, must start fighting back, calling demonstrations and rallies against the laws, and looking for ways to subvert and defy them.

Politically, getting involved in the Labour Party and campaigning for a Labour government — now a real possibility for when the Tory/DUP lash-up inevitably collapses — is a key priority.

A Labour government will repeal the Trade Union Act, and

should be pushed to go beyond that and legislate for genuine trade union freedom: restoring the right to workplace meetings, workplace ballots, and to take solidarity action.

• Follow tubeworker online at: www.workersliberty.org/twblog

Unite sacks Coyne

By Charlotte Zalens

Unite has sacked West Midlands regional organiser Gerard Coyne after an investigation concluded he had misused data.

Right-winger Coyne had stood against Len McCluskey for the general secretary position, losing by just under 6000 votes. Coyne was suspended after the ballot had closed but before results were announced.

Whether or not Coyne had misused data, the handling of this by McCluskey supporters has some of the elements we criticise in right-wing undemocratic union bureaucracies.

It is not ok that Andrew Murray, McCluskey's chief of staff, who had been seconded to Corbyn's office during the general election, was the investigator.

Fight at Forest Hill School continues

By a Lewisham teacher

Forest Hill School in Lewisham, south London will strike again on Tuesday 20 June, and then again the following week on 27, 28 and 29 June.

The strikes are the latest in a long running dispute against swingeing cuts at the school, after a hiatus for the exams.

Kevin Courtney, National Union of Teachers (NUT) General Secretary, has pledged to join the picket line on the 20th.

The intransigence of the so-called "Labour" Lewisham council and the school leadership in this dispute are shocking. Unlike, the neighbouring borough of Greenwich, where the council has utilised various methods including using other funds and extending deficit budgets to support schools with a shortfall, Lewisham has not even entered into meaningful negotiations.

This was shockingly highlighted when the newly elected MP for the area, Ellie Reeves, invited the council, the school leadership, the parents and the unions



to a meeting to discuss Forest Hill. Paul Maslin, the cabinet member responsible for schools on the council and Mike Sullivan, the head-teacher, didn't even deign to respond to the invitation. This demonstrates their contempt not just for the teachers, the pupils, the local community but also their elected representatives.

Forest Hill teachers and Lewisham NUT more broadly are discussing how to continue the campaign.

Meanwhile, the school now needs to recruit a large number of teachers as the existing staff have voted with their feet, and many will be leaving before the new school year.

BA blacklisting workers

By Peggy Carter

Mixed Fleet cabin crew at British Airways have called a two-week strike for Saturday 1 to Sunday 16 July.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, workers in the mixed fleet had been striking over poverty pay levels, but strikes had been suspended for talks.

Strikes were called for 16-19 June when British Airways attempted to victimise those who took part in earlier strikes, but were called off for talks.

The workers' union Unite says that British Airways has formed a blacklist of strikers which it is using to take away bonus payments worth hundreds of pounds and staff travel concessions.

UoL security guards strike

By Gemma Short

Security officers at the University of London will strike for the third time, and fifth day, on Thursday 22 June.

Workers are demanding that outsourced contractor Cordant pays them a pay rise promised six years ago, ends the use of zero hours contracts and gives workers itemised pay slips.

During previous strikes the University of London has brought in unlicensed and untrained replacement workers. The workers' union, the IWGB, is investigating the legality of this strike breaking.

On 22 June security officers will join with SOAS cleaners, caterers and their supporters for a joint demonstration.

• Strike fund: bit.ly/2slf1lq

Southern overtime ban

By Ollie Moore

Train drivers' union Aslef has announced an indefinite overtime ban on Southern from 29 June, after talks over pay and conditions broke down.

The move marks a welcome return to industrial action from Aslef, whose members have twice re-

jected deals from Southern management aimed at resolving a dispute over the imposition of "Driver Only Operation".

Larger rail union RMT, which organises guards on Southern, is still in dispute over the same issue.

The overtime ban could lead to the cancellation of dozens of trains.



Solidarity

For a workers' government

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Finsbury Park attack: defend Muslim communities

By Keith Road

We condemn the murderous attack on people outside the Muslim Welfare Centre in Finsbury Park, London, on 19 June.

As it is Ramadan, worshippers had just finished their prayers after breaking the daily fast.

One man was killed and nine people were taken to hospital. We do not yet know the details. It seems the killer, Darren Osborne, had no direct links to the far right, but that picture may change. The government and press are calling it an act of terrorism. It is certainly a hate crime; an extreme example of the racism — harassment and violence — suffered by many UK Muslim communities all the time. Since the Manchester bombing and London Bridge attacks, there has been a sharp rise in attacks on Muslims.

Before Osborne drove his van into the crowd, he was heard to shout, "I want to kill all Muslims." If it turns out Osborne is not part of the organised far right, he must have been influenced by their propaganda. It may be he has similar political thinking to Thomas Mair, who murdered Jo Cox MP exactly one year ago.

Reports say that the local imam stopped those around Osborne from assaulting him. The imam and others were left to detain him for 20 minutes before the police arrived. A witness told *The Independent* that, "He tried to run away but

we brought him down. He would've died because so many people were punching him but the imam came out and said 'No more punching, let's keep him down until the police come'.

"As he was being arrested he was laughing and smiling and shouting things about Muslims. I don't want to say what, but it was but it was the sort of thing that made people want to punch him."

PRESS

Violence against Muslims is something that the mainstream tabloid press helps to stir up — most insidiously, the idea that all Muslims have a special responsibility to sort out Islamist terrorists.

This idea is very divisive. It is like saying all white British people have a special responsibility to sort out Darren Osborne. Of course, all of us, whatever our background, should be concerned about the likes of Osborne and Youssef Zaghba, and do what we can to counter the hateful ideas which incite them. But the people with a special responsibility are the people with power — politicians, the media and after that, educationalists, community leaders, religious leaders and so on.

Right now there is sad inevitability about the hateful reaction against Muslims, mosques and Islamic community centres. In Manchester a couple of weeks ago 1000 members of the EDL were



A vigil in Finsbury Park on Monday 19 June, the day after the attack.

able to gather, hurl racist abuse and attack anti-fascists. A much smaller demonstration in May in Liverpool had been driven out by a successful anti-fascist mobilisation. The left needs to be part of a much stronger mobilisation against the racists.

There have been calls for government help in increasing security around mosques, maybe increased police presence. While such measures may provide short term relief, many Muslims, espe-

cially young people experience the police as a source of harassment and suspicion, fears which are compounded by the way the Government's "Prevent" strategy has been implemented.

People like Osborne, just like the Daesh sympathisers who made their attacks in Westminster and London Bridge, know they can make a horrific and devastating impact with very little resources. Socialists need to discuss how to prepare for this, while we build

the politics of social solidarity we need to undermine the hateful ideologies.

One element is physical defence, as we said following the 7 July 2005 bombings in London. Solidarity said "We call on the labour movement to mobilise for physical defence wherever mosques or Muslim neighbourhoods are attacked by racists feeding on the backlash against the bombs."

That call is still, unfortunately, very relevant.

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