



& Workers' Liberty

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 455 24 November 2017 50p/£1

Against the Brexiters and Merkel-Macron

WORKERS' UNITED EUROPE

Brexit means loss of the real if limited freedom of movement which exists now for people from continental Europe to come to live in Britain, and British people to go to live elsewhere in Europe.

It means unlinking Britain from the pressures from social levelling-up which operate within and through the EU.

It means a step away from European unity and backwards towards the old trade barriers, border posts, and race-to-the-bottom competitive bidding by countries to attract global capital.

More page 5

Inside:

Australia says yes to equal marriage



The religious right are routed in Australia's equal marriage "survey".

See page 3

Insect armageddon



Les Hearn explains why we should be worried that insects are dying.

See pages 6-7

China: "new era", same repression



Carmen Basant examines the political situation in China.

See page 9

Join Labour!

Unite, Len McCluskey and Jewish Voice for Labour

See page 10





Free education now!

By Ruairidh Anderson

As many as 7,000 students marched through London on Wednesday 15 November to demand "Free Education now — tax the rich".

The protest was organised by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts and supported by Momentum, RMT, Unite, NUS Scotland and student unions across the country. Workers' Liberty student activists were centrally involved in organising and leading the demonstration, along with other comrades in NCAFC.

The demonstration was arguably the most energetic and loud free education march in recent years. The atmosphere was boosted by well timed flares and the presence of the largest ever aerial banner at a UK free education demo (held horizontally to be seen from above). The three demands of the protest were: scrap all fees, living grants for all and stop the campus cuts.

The demonstration passed Pic-

turehouse Central, stopping outside in solidarity with the striking workers, and so that protesters could chant slogans used by Picturehouse workers on the picket lines.

As expected, many demonstrators came from London universities. However, over 60 campuses across the UK mobilised. This has created the potential for NCAFC to link up these activists into a national movement, the task now is to maintain and build these connections.

NCAFC will keep up the immediate pressure for free education and build into our activism the democratic networks and culture that will bring future generations of activists into the fight for free education, until it is won, and beyond that.

**NCAFC Winter Conference 9-10 December
Liverpool Guild of Students
bit.ly/2zsROmk**

Grenfell: the fight goes on

By Charlotte Zalens

The Metropolitan Police have confirmed the final death toll of the Grenfell Tower fire is 71 people.

Fatalities include one family of six, and at least three families of five, and ranged in ages from a still-born baby to an 84 year-old woman. The pattern of deaths exposes inadequacies of social housing — housing the elderly high up in tower blocks with inadequate escape routes, and large families in small flats.

Rumours that the real death toll is higher still persist. While this is extremely unlikely, it is understandable that many distrust the authorities. It is also true that many residents will have been "unofficial" residents, subletting or staying with family. Many people did not give reports to authorities because of fears over immigration status.

320 households are still living in hotel accommodation, including more than 200 children. They have yet to have been offered suitable long-term housing offers by the council.

Many have had offers of short-term housing which they have, understandably, turned down in order to wait to be housed long term and avoid future upheavals. There is simply not enough social

housing.

Theresa May announced new housing policies at Tory party conference in October but these will barely scratch the surface of the housing crisis. The Radical Housing Network said "May is pumping £10 billion into a housing policy that worsens the housing crisis: Help to Buy has kept house prices high, provides subsidies to a small number of people, and does nothing to address the chronic shortage of low-cost housing."

"And her announcement of £2 billion for affordable housing alongside permitting some councils to build more social rent homes is simply tinkering at the edges of a failed system. [The policy] would only provide homes for just 5% of the 1.2 million people who have languished on waiting lists for years."

Only 13% of the new homes announced in the last year meet the government's "affordability" standard — a very unaffordable 80% of market rate — and many of those homes are to buy, not rent.

Grenfell campaigners are now trying to save Kensington and Chelsea Further Education college (where many residents have studied) which they fear will close after it merges with another college in a different borough.

NHS needs cash to solve staffing crisis

By a junior doctor

In recent weeks NHS England and NHS Improvement (the body overseeing NHS Trusts) have joined calls for extra NHS funding.

The claim of the Brexit Leave campaigners to provide £350 million a week on leaving the European Union have been exposed as nonsense. Yet the Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond has been left in an impossible situation.

Constrained by neoliberal Conservative politics, he is unwilling to put forward a budget that will enforce the necessary taxes on the rich and find sufficient funds to support our National Health Service.

Yet as long as funding is lacking, recruitment and retention of staff continues to be in crisis. Despite Je-

remy Hunt's consistent promise of 5,000 extra GPs by 2020, the latest figures show that the number of full time equivalent GPs is falling.

GPs have been driven to leave General Practice or reduce their hours in the face of an unrelenting workload and inevitable burnout. To meet their GP pledge the government now needs to employ an extra 6,200 GPs.

The TUC and affiliated public sector unions wrote to the Chancellor in the run up to the budget, calling once again for the lifting of the public sector pay cap and the end to the pay freeze. Yet the letter does not make the necessary promise of serious and sustained industrial action if a real terms pay increase is not given to public sector workers.

Nothing short of a complete reversal of policy will be enough to stop the persistent haemorrhaging

of staff out of the NHS.

The blame game amongst politicians and senior NHS leaders has started early this winter, with Theresa May appearing to take the Secretary of State for Health out of the firing line by suggesting all blame for another bad winter should be put on Simon Stevens, the Head of NHS England.

Meanwhile there have been no serious attempts to try to get to grips with the necessary planning or funding required for dealing with a winter that is set to be worse than last. Certainly if the flu burden is as bad as predicted.

Only a radical Labour government willing to nationalise the banks and tax the rich will be able to stave off further decline in standards within our NHS.

Salmond, RT UK, and nationalist propaganda

By Ann Field

Alex Salmond now has his own weekly show on RT UK, the British subsidiary of what used to be called Russia Today.

This is good news, in the sense that it has further undermined Salmond's credibility and has added to divisions within the SNP.

RT is a propaganda channel for the Russian government. Not simply because it is funded by the Russian government, but first and foremost because that is what it understands its role to be.

For Putin, a Russian-government-funded TV channel will promote the official government line on events and issues both inside and outside Russia.

Thus, when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, Russia Today loyally repeated Kremlin claims that the Georgian army had been attempting genocide in South Ossetia and that the Georgian president was a psychopath.

When pro-Russian separatists — or Russian troops stationed in Ukraine — used Russian-supplied missiles to shoot down a Malaysian airliner over eastern Ukraine in 2014, coverage of the event by RT was so tendentious in absolving Russia of blame that one of its London reporters resigned in protest.

Contrary to claims by SNP cybernats, RT is not the Russian equivalent of the BBC.

The BBC can rightly be accused of bias and news manipulation. But that is far removed from a TV channel which exists for the specific purpose of being part of a broader government propaganda exercise.

And the government in question — that of Vladimir Putin — is one which has annexed Ukrainian territory, waged war on Chechnya and Georgia, crushed domestic political dissent, outlawed homosexuality and stifled freedom of the press.

According to a recent report by



Salmond gives credence to Putin's propaganda station

"Reporters Without Borders", Russia is the 148th worst country for press freedom out of 180:

"Leading independent news outlets have either been brought under control or throttled out of existence. More and more bloggers are receiving prison sentences for their activity on online social networks."

"The climate has become increasingly oppressive for those who try to maintain quality journalism or question the new patriotic and neo-conservative (political agenda)."

But Salmond himself has spoken admiringly of Putin: "He has restored a substantial part of Russian pride and that must be a good thing."

When it comes to press freedom, the main enemy for Salmond is in London: BBC news output, he has claimed, is akin to that of the Soviet Communist Party's *Pravda*.

Salmond's decision to take the Kremlin kopeck, together with his new business partner and former Conservative Party member, former Labour Party member, and former SNP MP Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, has created ructions within the SNP.

Salmond's cult-followers and cybernats have rallied round their

hero.

SNP ex-MSP Kenny MacAskill claims Salmond would not have taken the job had he been offered some kind of international role by the government. MacAskill has not explained why someone opposed to the existence of Britain should be appointed to represent Britain.

SNP MEP Alyn Smith, on the other hand, has lashed out at Salmond ("What the f**k is he thinking?") And for the first time ever, Sturgeon has publicly criticised Salmond.

Some SNP members have also demanded that Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh be removed from her post of SNP Women's and Equalities convener, given Russia's repression of LGBT rights. There must also be a question mark against her membership of the SNP NEC.

Politicians who have given interviews on Russia Today and RT, including Corbyn, deserve to be criticised. But running a weekly show on RT UK is in a manifestly different league.

And while The Alex Salmond Show has little entertainment value, the infighting which it has triggered within the SNP is priceless.

Catalonia: for self-determination

By Colin Foster

The latest opinion polls for the parliamentary election in Catalonia on 21 December suggest an outcome similar to the previous election in 2015: a narrow parliamentary majority for the separatists, but with a minority of the popular vote.

A 15 November poll gives the ERC 24%, Puigdemont's people (running as Junts per Catalunya) 17%, and CUP 6%, in total 47% of the vote but 68-74 seats out of 135.

The non-separatist parties — in order of their electoral support, the neoliberal Citizens' Party, the social-democratic PSC (linked to the PSOE elsewhere in Spain), Catalonia in Common (including Podemos), and Madrid prime minister Mariano Rajoy's People's Party — are estimated at 53% of the vote.

But because, like most electoral systems, Catalonia's gives bigger parties proportionately more seats in relation to votes, and the separatist vote is more concentrated in two big parties, the non-separatists would get only 61 to 67 seats.

The Citizens' Party has called for an anti-separatist front, but the PSC refused. The ERC, the biggest separatist party, has suggested an alliance after the election with Catalonia in Common, which op-



posed Catalonia's declaration of independence but also opposes Madrid's imposition of direct rule.

Santi Vila, who served as head of the business department in the Puigdemont's government, resigned because Puigdemont refused Rajoy's call for the Catalan government to organise the new elections now being run by Madrid on 21 December, but has now joined Puigdemont's Junts per Catalunya alliance, has suggested a policy of "independence from a position of moderation" after 21 December.

"I think we need to base this on three ideas: the defence of Catalan institutions, amnesty [for the Cata-

lan politicians being prosecuted by Madrid authorities for 'sedition'] and... a referendum that's agreed on and recognised by the state and by international institutions".

Short of a big electoral turnaround, it will be very difficult for Rajoy to refuse concessions after 21 December. And that is how it should be.

Even if Catalan socialists oppose separation, and many of them do, with good reason, the first job of socialists in Spain and across Europe now is to insist that Madrid recognise the right to choose of the people of Catalonia — their right to self-determination.

The bankers' let-out

By Gerry Bates

The big banks — UBS, Royal Bank of Scotland, JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Barclays, HSBC, and others — are nearing a deal with the EU over their rigging of foreign-exchange markets.

They have already paid American, British and Swiss authorities more than \$10 billion for the rigging, and the EU over \$2 billion for rigging interest rates.

The 2008 crash has been followed by a cascade of investigations and scandals, triggered by resentment built up against the banks by government authorities and non-bank capitalists.

The twist, however, is that even when the high powers of bourgeois society are enraged at the banks, the law for those rich is different from the law for the poor.

A cleaner or shop worker

caught pilfering would face much worse. The big banks just admit guilt, pay over some billions, and carry on.

The total in penalties since 2008 is reckoned at \$320 billion, but the system is run so that the banks can afford it.

One prominent banker has been convicted and may face jail if his lawyers can't work the appeals process well enough — Mark Johnson, former head of global cash foreign exchange trading at HSBC, convicted in a US court on 23 October.

But most of the big bank bosses carry on, despite what they effectively admit was endemic chiselling and cheating.

The banks should not be run for private profit. They should be taken into public ownership and run under democratic control as part of a public banking, insurance, and pensions service.

Religious right routed in Australian marriage equality "survey"

AUSTRALIA

By Riki Lane

Australia's "postal survey" on same-sex marriage saw a resounding victory for LGBT+ equality.

61.6% said yes to marriage equality, and over 12 million people (79.5%) participated in this voluntary, non-binding poll — a higher rate than the Brexit vote.

All states had a yes majority, and 133/150 electorates voted yes, including almost all regional and rural ones.

However, 12 electorates in Western Sydney voted no. These were mostly Labor-held, with working-class, largely immigrant populations.

These areas were systematically targeted by right-wing religious organisations, and not so thoroughly worked by the Yes campaigners. This pattern was not however replicated in similar areas — e.g. only two similar electorates voted no in Melbourne. This points to a need for systematic work to make links between the struggles of oppressed LGBT+ and migrant/refugee people.

The strange beast that was the

ABS postal survey — not a plebiscite, not really a survey — came about as a sop to the right-wing conservatives of the Liberal/National coalition, who hoped that young people would not participate and a no vote would sneak through.

Instead, hundreds of thousands of young people enrolled and voted, energised by the campaign for equality.

Conservatives are on the back foot on the legislation likely to follow. Religious exemptions are unlikely to be too extensive, although they are already bad e.g. religious schools have the right to sack teachers or expel students. The religious right are correct to fear that this legalised discrimination is likely to be wound back in future; hence their attempt to entrench it further now.

There were many downsides to the process — \$100 million wasted and a lot of mental health harm caused, especially to young LGBT+ people, indicated by skyrocketing referrals to LGBT+ friendly counselling. Even experienced psychologist colleagues of mine who are queer felt the strain — much more than they expected.

Now the upsides are much more prominent, given the huge

turn out and clear result — there is a great sense of inclusion, with some concerns in Western Sydney.

The newly energised layer, especially of young people, can have a lasting impact on activist and electoral politics.

Northcote by-election

On 18 November Lidia Thorpe won the Melbourne inner city seat of Northcote in the Victorian state parliament for the Greens.

The Australian Labor Party had held the seat for 90 years. There has been an ongoing process of gentrification and swings to the Greens in inner city suburbs in the large cities. State ALP figures are seriously concerned they could be forced into a coalition or minority government at the next election.

The left has generally been inspired by her victory, as Lidia has a strong record of activism around environmental and indigenous issues.

She becomes the first indigenous woman member of the Victorian State parliament in its 161 year history, a fact which highlights the entrenched racism that has been directed toward indigenous peoples.



Shut down Yarl's Wood!

By Tony Johns

Hundreds attended a demonstration outside Yarl's Wood Detention Centre on 18 November to show solidarity with the women detainees.

Many ex-detainees spoke about their plight, and a PA system was linked to the mobiles of detainees. They were able to speak movingly of their situation, despite obvious intimidation from the guards.

Detainees stuck up notices and waved towels and blankets at their windows.

The crowd made a thunderous noise, which, I was told, could be heard miles away, as we all repeatedly kicked against the fence. The

fence shuddered but unfortunately did not fall. All in all it was a very good demo, and the women are really pleased that we on the outside are rooting for them.

Controversy continues about the group organising these events, Movement for Justice by any Means Necessary, and the Revolutionary Internationalist League which is the core group behind the MFJ. Although formally Trotskyist, the RIL seem to be Maoist, sectarian and "cultish" and against Labour and any form of Parliamentary involvement.

However these demonstrations, which have done a great deal to boost the morale of detainees, should continue to be supported.

Failed strategy More than sympathetic listening



Mensheviks assisted White Army Generals

LETTERS

Sadly Eric Lee's response to my review of his book on Georgia (*Solidarity* 454, 15 November) avoids the substance of my critique.

Lee's book argues that the Georgian Menshevik strategy between 1917 and 1921 was better than the Bolsheviks in Russia. Yet in Marxist terms, Bolshevik politics were far superior:

The Bolshevik-led Russian workers made a socialist revolution in October 1917; the Georgian Mensheviks did not lead a revolution.

The Bolshevik regime that resulted in Russia was a workers' government; the Georgian Mensheviks led a bourgeois government.

The Bolshevik government stopped Russia's involvement in the First World War; the Georgian Mensheviks supported the war and its continuation.

The Bolshevik government tried to implement national self-determination; the Georgian Mensheviks persecuted national minorities.

The Bolsheviks fought a civil war against the imperialist powers and the White counter-revolution; the Georgian Mensheviks claimed to be neutral, while at times aiding the ex-tsarist generals.

The Georgian Mensheviks in power could have chosen to ally with the workers' government in Russia. Instead they chose to work with Germany and then Britain, as well as cooperate with General Denikin.

Lee equates Menshevism – the idea that “an impoverished, backward society cannot skip historical stages” – with Marxism.

Yet the root of Marxism is working class self-emancipation – that the workers themselves can abolish capitalism and create a socialist society. For Eric Lee, “Marxism” appears to be an historical watchtower from which to adjudicate between big power lesser evils.

Today capitalism is massively more advanced. States and classes across the globe have experienced what Trotsky called “combined” development, skipping stages rather than simply following the same path as Western Europe. The waged working class today is billions-strong. The material conditions for socialism are even more developed than a century ago.

The Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky was and is about the working class taking power, in its own interests, to create its own democratic state and to develop new, socialist relations of production. The AWL does not mechanically transpose strategy and tactics from 1917 onto today's conditions – our Bolshevik first duty is to assess today's reality and today's conditions.

But we take a great deal from the methodology and approach of the Bolsheviks, because they did what no other party has done since – they led the workers to power.

Paul Vernadsky, London

It is right that Daisy Thomas highlights the mental health epidemic sweeping through the advanced capitalist world, especially among young people (*Solidarity* 452).

It is also good that she highlights possible social causes for this epidemic and suggests a role for smart phones and social media.

However, I think it is important to note Marxists are not technological determinists. We do not think Facebook causes anxiety any more than we think heroin causes heroin addiction. It is our psychologically toxic world, not the communications technologies we use, that cause such harm.

Perhaps a more fruitful place to search for social causes is the research that Oliver James has publicised in *The Selfish Capitalist*. James shows that levels of mental illness are much higher in the Anglophone countries that embraced neoliberalism (what he calls “selfish capitalism”) than among countries on mainland Europe that retained some elements of social democracy (“unselfish capitalism”). He points to other research that shows individuals who embrace the neoliberal values, prioritising the pursuit of wealth, fame and beauty, are more likely to be depressed and anxious.

Another, but complementary, perspective was developed by Marxist psychotherapist Erich Fromm in his work *The Sane Society*. Fromm presents a positive vision of what a sane individual and a sane society might look like. In a section on alienation he rails against “push-button power-feeling: you do nothing, you don't have to know anything, everything is done for you; all you have to do is push the button”. Fromm was working

in the 1950s when these kinds of consumer products were still novelties. Now they are ubiquitous and we are a society of addicts.

It's an idea developed in more recent times in Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism*. Fisher characterised many of the students he taught as being in a state of “depressive hedonia”: “Depression is usually characterised as a state of anhedonia, but the condition I am referring to is constituted not by an inability to get pleasure so much as by an inability to do anything except pursue pleasure... [Students I teach] typically respond to [their] freedom not by pursuing projects but by falling into hedonic (or anhedonic) lassitude: the soft narcosis, the comfort food oblivion of Playstation, all-night TV and marijuana.”

Lastly, Daisy recommends that the mental health crisis might be helped by people talking more, and this is certainly a perspective promoted widely by mental health charities. While nobody should be alone with their despair, Fromm argues that talking in itself is part of the problem.

“Your thoughts, so long as you keep them to yourself, may disturb you — but something fruitful may come out of that disturbance; you mull them over, you think, you feel, you may arrive at a new thought born out of this travail. But when you talk right away, when you do not let your thoughts and feelings build up pressure, as it were, they do not become fruitful.

“It is exactly the same with unobstructed consumption. You are a system in which things go in and out continuously — and within is nothing, no tension, no digestion, no self. Freud's discovery of free association

had the aim of finding out what went on in you underneath the surface, of discovering who you really were; the modern talking to the sympathetic listener has the opposite, though unavowed aim; its function is to make man [sic] forget who he is (provided he still has some memory), to lose all tension, and with it all sense of self.”

Part of the problem we face with the current mental health epidemic is not just that services are overburdened, but that more often than not, they offer little more than tranquilising drugs and a “sympathetic listener”, all delivered with the overbearing pressure of ATOS and benefit sanctions for those who recover.

As a professional “sympathetic listener” who feels helpless in the face of this epidemic, I hope the growing socialist movement can play a role countering the dominant culture and assert a sane Marxist praxis based on solidarity, critical thought, and meaningful travail to change the world.

Todd Hamer, Cornwall



Erich Fromm

Left wins Scottish Labour leadership

SCOTLAND

By Dale Street

On Saturday 18 November Richard Leonard was announced as the new Scottish Labour Party (SLP) leader. In the election contest triggered by the sudden resignation of Kezia Dugdale, he defeated Anas Sarwar by 57% to 43%.

Among individual members Leonard had a narrow majority (52% to 48%). Among affiliated trade union supporters he had an overwhelming majority (77% to 23%). Among registered supporters Anas Sarwar secured a narrow majority (52% to 48%).

A sizeable chunk of Sarwar's votes from individual members would have come from new members who signed up under the special “join the SLP for £1 a month” scheme. It will be interesting to see how many of them remain SLP members.

Even so, the narrowness of the result among individual members, and Sarwar's (narrow) victory among registered supporters, underlines the ongoing strength of the right wing in the SLP.

Sarwar sought to portray himself as a bit of a radical and as an enthusiastic Corbyn supporter. He stood on a platform of policies which he had singularly failed to champion as an MP (2010-2015) and as SLP deputy leader (2011-2014).

His support for Owen Smith in the 2016 Labour Party leadership contest was also brushed under the carpet.

Though he was described in the media as the “centrist candidate”, Sarwar's electoral base in the contest was the resolutely right-wing faction of the SLP and, overlapping with that, the least active elements of the SLP.

Sarwar lined up an array of right-wing “celebrities” to endorse his candidacy, including Alistair Darling, Alan Johnson, Stella Creasy, Jackie Baillie, Ian Murray and Iain Gray. Of those Glasgow Labour councillors who made a nomination, 90% backed Sarwar. (Glasgow Labour Group is a bastion of the right.)

Only 30% of CLPs which made a nomination in the contest backed Sarwar. But the actual vote for him among individual members was around 50% higher than that (48%).

Although the overall election campaign was conducted in terms of “two great candidates, difficult to work out who to vote for”, a victory for Sarwar would have been a disaster for the SLP.

In 2014 Jim Murphy was elected SLP leader. Murphy had been the public face of the SLP-Tory “Better Together” campaign, had supported the invasion of Iraq, had backed the introduction of tuition fees, and was a lifelong career politician.

The message which his election as leader sent to the Scottish electorate was: We don't care what you think. We don't care that he represents everything that is driving you away from the SLP. We take you for granted so much that we assume you'll still vote Labour.

In the following year's general election, Labour lost 40 of its 41 seats in Scotland.

Sarwar's election as SLP leader would have sent out a similar message: Yes, he comes from a millionaire family. Yes, he sends his son to private school. Yes, he was paid £20,000 a year for 13 years on his shares. Yes, the family firm does not recognise a union or pay the Living Wage. But we assume that this will not put you off voting Labour.

In fact, the prospect of Anas Sarwar as SLP leader, together with the sometimes rather moderate nature of the “real change” promised by Leonard, resulted in a layer of right-wingers and real “centrist” voting for Leonard.

This underlines the instinctively right-wing politics of a large layer of the 48% of SLP members who voted for Sarwar in the ballot, despite all the “baggage” which he would be bringing to the post – which would also make him a sitting duck for the SNP.

Leonard is now the ninth leaders in 17 years, and will face an uphill struggle.

Only a minority of Labour MSPs backed him in the election campaign. The SLP still lags well behind the SNP in opinion polls. Unlike in England, there has not been an influx of Corbynites into the SLP. And many CLPs have little or no life outside of often badly attended and boring monthly meetings, designed to drive away new activists.

Three days before the end of the leadership campaign SLP deputy leader Alex Rowley was suspended after his former partner had made a series of allegations about his behaviour, including allegations of bullying and abusive text messages.

For a workers' united Europe!

At the meeting of the European Council — the prime ministers or presidents of the EU countries — on 14-15 December, the Tory government hopes to wrap up the preliminaries of Brexit and get agreement to start discussing post-Brexit transitional periods and trade deals with the EU.

As we go to press on 23 November, the Tories are reported to have agreed among themselves to double their “divorce payment” offer to the EU to £40 billion so as to improve their chances.

Big business is telling them that it needs definite plans for after the Tories’ scheduled Brexit date of March 2019, because two years’ time is “tomorrow” in the large-scale economic planning they do. University bosses say they will face “great trauma” if plans are not nailed down in the coming weeks.

One thing is for sure about those plans. Far from Brexit releasing £350 million a week to the Health Service, it is more likely to suck £350 million a week out of public services as a result of adverse trade effects and a decline in the tax take from migrant workers, who pay more into the public budget than they draw out.

Brexit also means loss of the real if limited

freedom of movement which exists now for people from continental Europe to come to live in Britain, and British people to go to live elsewhere in Europe.

It means unlinking Britain from the pressures from social levelling-up which operate within and through the EU.

It means a step away from European unity and backwards towards the old trade barriers, border posts, and race-to-the-bottom competitive bidding by countries to attract global capital.

Not that the EU is on a smooth road of progress. As we go to press, negotiations for a new government coalition in Germany have broken down because the FDP won't accept even the strictest offers from Merkel's CDU-CSU of new curbs on non-EU migration. France's very pro-EU president Macron is set on destroying his country's labour law. “Flexible labour markets” are the EU's dogma.

Solidarity argues for the labour movement to offer an independent and radical alternative policy — for a workers' united Europe, a Socialist United States of Europe, a federal Europe of democracy, cooperative continent-wide economic planning, and social level-

ling-up.

So: a battle for freedom of movement. A battle to stop Brexit (including insistence that no Brexit deal can go through without a vote in Parliament and a referendum on the specific deal). And simultaneously an effort of solidarity with refugees, non-EU migrants, and workers in France, Germany, Greece, Spain, and other EU countries who face austerity drives concerted at EU level.

So far our new left-wing Labour Party lags on this. Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell talked about aiming for “another Europe” and a “social Europe” in the run-up to the June 2016 referendum, but since then have allowed their horizons to be limited to a “people's Brexit”, whatever that means.

Jeremy Corbyn continued to defend freedom of movement in Europe for five months after the June 2016 referendum, but then retreated under pressure from the Labour right (and much of the Labour left). Now Labour is explicitly against defending that freedom. Sadly, a section of the Labour left helped block debate at Labour conference in September this year on motions supporting freedom of movement.

Labour has started saying that it wants a

deal giving “the same advantages as” the Single Market and the EU Customs Union, and that it wants Britain to stay in the Single Market and Customs Union transitionally, without ever explaining what deal other than the actual Single Market and Customs Union would give those advantages, or why Britain should not remain in those European frameworks longer than transitionally.

On 20 November Labour whipped its MPs to vote with the Tories against a Labour backbench amendment in Parliament which would have mandated the Government to stay within the Customs Union.

The *New Statesman* magazine commented, rightly: “it's reasonable for Remainers to wonder when, exactly, Labour is going to start taking risks or if the party's real position is that they can't really meaningfully shape the outcome so they should steer well clear”.

Europe is not an issue to “steer well clear” from. Capital is global and multinational, whether we like it or not. Nothing can turn back that clock.

The question is whether the labour movement develops a global and international program to match, or retreats into nationalism.

Budget alternatives should focus on control

In a number of speeches in the run-up to the Tory government's Budget on 22 November, shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has rightly indicted the Tories' record since George Osborne began their cuts program back in 2010.

- A 30% increase in food bank usage in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out, as the six-week delay in making the payment pushes thousands into destitution.
- The NHS so cash-strapped that even its top bosses say it will crumble without a big boost. Cuts in per-student finance for state schools for the first time since the 1990s.
- The percentage of children in relative poverty at its highest since records began in 1961.
- Homelessness up 50% since 2010.
- Frozen public sector pay, stagnant wages for all except some of the highest-paid, and under-30s' pay down by almost 10% since 2010.

In one of McDonnell's speeches, refreshingly, he geared his economic message around the need to win environmental sustainability. That, he said rightly, “requires concerted, public action on a scale that meets the challenge... market-led approaches... have failed to deliver”.

He set out five demands:

- Pause and fix Universal Credit
- New funding to lift the public sector pay cap
- Funding for infrastructure
- “Properly fund” health, education, and local government
- A large public house-building program.

So far, so good. However, much of the economic content that won support for Labour's manifesto for the June general election has been missing from McDonnell's prospectus.

The core of the manifesto was a pledge to take some tens of billions of pounds — John McDonnell estimated £50-odd billion — by



taxing more heavily the £1,000 billion a year which currently goes to the rich and the very well-off, or to enterprises under their control. Labour would put those resources into:

- More than £6 billion extra per year for the NHS
- £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 manifesto also pledged public ownership of rail and mail, and of some parts of the

energy industry.

In the new version, the pledge to tax the rich has been dissolved into criticism of the Tories for (probably) cutting corporate tax rates, and not sufficiently fixing tax evasion. Public ownership has faded away.

In their place we have some new gee-whiz technocrat ideas, derived from wonks in some Whitehall office rather than any debate at the Labour Party conference less than two months ago.

“Today [14 November] we have committed to establishing a Strategic Investment Board... This Board will bring together the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Business, and the Governor of the Bank of England plus representatives from the National Investment

Bank and business. It will be charged with delivering a major increase in productive investment across the whole country, focused on technology”.

The indictment of the Tories as serving the rich against the rest of us — as they do — has segued into an indictment of them as managing capitalism incompetently.

“Everyone else just gets on with it, whether it is Japan's new Robotics Strategy, or the huge support given by the German government to promote the ‘industrial internet’... we are... an outlier amongst the developed nations”. McDonnell indicted Tory chancellor Philip Hammond as failing to follow the advice “even [of] colleagues in his own Cabinet”.

Candid scrutiny of capitalist policy in Japan and Germany — or France, or other countries where governments claim to excel at “strategic investment” — shows that it is producing similar ills to British capitalism's. Not exactly the same, worse in some ways, not-so-bad in others, but similar.

The world-wide depression, increased inequalities, and erosion of social provision since 2008 is a phenomenon of capitalism, not of the Tories departing from general capitalist wisdom.

Redistribution requires serious taxation of the rich. Re-gearing economic life requires a shift in control, from the plutocrats who currently rule (and would dominate the mooted “Strategic Investment Board”), to workers and communities.

Changing the trajectory of investment requires public ownership and democratic control of the banks and other institution of high finance, and their integration into a publicly-run banking, insurance, and pension service.

It requires democratic control of where wealth is deployed and invested, rather than technocratic nudges.

Solidarity 456 will be dated 6 December

Unions must tackle sexual harassment

By Rhodri Evans

Unions need to establish effective policies and procedures on sexual harassment at work, in the first place to respond to the growing demand from women workers as the ripples spread out from the Harvey Weinstein scandal, and also to avoid being bypassed by employers.

Five migrant workers won a court case for sexual harassment and discrimination on 10 November against one of France's largest cleaning companies.

They worked at the Gare du Nord in Paris for the contractor H. Reinier. The harassment of four women, by their supervisor, started with kisses and inappropriate touching and got worse: "he would come up behind me in the bathroom when I was leaning over to clean and rub himself against me".

A male co-worker raised complaints and was sacked; he too was awarded damages in the court case.

Women workers in low-wage, often casualised, industries cannot get the media to take up their complaints of sexual harassment as might happen now with complaints against politicians and Hollywood figures. The Paris case shows that a strong code can open the way. France's labour law, more comprehensive and better-policed than most other countries, includes clear provisions on sexual harassment, accessible to all workers.

Unions are entitled to pursue complaints under the code, and French labour law gives workers a more or less automatic right to union representation. However, in this case one of the accomplices of the supervisor was... a union delegate.

Complaints-procedure-by-media can work only for only a few categories of workers, and has an inbuilt risk of arbitrariness and lack of due process. The Welsh Labour minister Carl Sergeant was sacked from his job (i.e. sentenced) without even being told the allegations against him, let alone given a hearing, and committed suicide. Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones still seems to endorse the procedure of summarily suspending or sacking whenever it looks like someone might "embarrass the party".

A TUC survey in 2016 found that nearly 25% of women had experienced unwanted touching at work, and 32% unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature. Only 20% reported harassment. Only 1% reported it to a union rep.

The TUC report made recommendations about reinstating the "statutory equality questionnaire" (abolished by the Tories in 2014) and reversing Tory changes on employment tribunals. It recommended little, however, about improving union activity.

Some big employers in traditionally male-dominated industries, for example the docks, are upping their numbers of women workers. They are doing this not because they think that women, these days, will be particularly more compliant, but because a mixed workforce tends to work more care-

fully and precisely.

DP World, the world's fourth biggest container terminal operator, and Hutchison, the biggest, are both doing that. In Brisbane, Australia, where the dockworkers' union is left-wing, the union has actively welcomed the move to recruit more women, and pressed for the women to be trained in all categories of work on the wharves.

Thanks partly to the union's efforts, the workplace culture on the wharves is better than in posh industries such as finance and IT.

Bronwyn La Rosa, a union delegate at Hutchison, says: "We have over 20 women in the terminal now. There's no sexual discrimination here in the workforce, no bullying". It was different, she adds, in her previous employment — in the armed forces.

At DP World, the global employer has a program called "Our Compass" advertised as improving workplace culture. It is full of warm words:

"We create development opportunities for our people so they have rewarding careers. We recognise positive work, and give regular feedback. We listen to feedback from our people and take appropriate action. We take pride in our results and express gratitude for all contributions..."

Under it, for example, swearing is banned in the workplace. Some strong unionists have no objection. Robert Dodd, a Brisbane DP World wharfie, says: "There's been a lot of swearing in the workplace. The company wants to change that, and I'm fine with that".

No-one disputes the swearing ban as such, but many are more critical of the program. Rohan Wilton says: "It is sold as a drive to create a 'positive culture' in the workplace but in fact is intended to make us compliant and individualistic and not question management".

Others say: "The management have plenty of opportunity to criticise us, but it's made difficult for us to criticise management. But the company ticks all the boxes. They cover their butts".

Workers have faced a stream of minor disciplinary complaints from management, including cases where male workers remonstrating with a few women workers reluctant to get involved with the union have been charged with sexism.

Unions need to formulate and implement codes of conduct which improve their own internal workings, and which enable them to hold the higher ground against management on this question.



Tubeworker: organise against sexual harassment

This month's edition of Workers' Liberty's bulletin Tubeworker has a front page about organising against sexual harassment at work.

Tubeworker says "Sexual harassment happens when power hierarchies in the workplace mix with the power imbalance between men and women in society. Men often have power over women at work. MPs and celebrities have recently been exposed for using their power and influence to act inappropriately to subordinates.

"In our industry, managers and supervisors are often male. We also work in a male-dominated environment, which gives men a kind of 'strength in numbers' and a power to use sexual harassment to make women feel very unwelcome in our workplaces."

***Tubeworker* is produced by tubeworkers for tubeworkers and can be found online at www.workersliberty.org/tubeworker.**



SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

The number of insect species known is about a million, and the number of individual insects alive at any one time is a mind boggling 10 billion billion (10¹⁹), with about 300 times the mass of the human population; estimates of the total number of insect species waiting to be discovered go up to 30 million. (1,2)

It was therefore concerning when recently it was reported that populations of flying insects had declined by between 76 and 82% in Germany over just 27 years (3). The study was carried out in 63 sites in nature reserves between 1989 and 2016. The technique was a simple one: tent traps were set up and the insects caught by these in a certain time were weighed. The decline affected all kinds of insect.

A long-running study in another German nature reserve showed a decline of 40% in moths and butterflies over 150 years. More recently, the European Environment Agency reported that 50% of grassland butterflies had been lost in 20 years in 19 European countries. It suggests loss of managed grasslands, either to scrub or to crop growing, and pesticides on neighbouring farmland as potential causes (4). And a worldwide study of invertebrate species (of which about 80% are insects) showed a 45% decline over the past 40 years (5).

Anecdotally, the British media have commented on the disappearance of the "moth snowstorm" due to which night-time drivers (in the countryside) would have to clean their windscreens of the corpses of splattered moths which had mistaken their headlights for the Moon (2).

SERIOUS

This decline is serious for two main reasons.

The wealth of insect species supports a large number of food chains with most obviously birds, but also fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals (especially bats), at or near the top. Birds affected in Britain include the grey partridge and spotted flycatcher, both having declined by 95%, and the red-backed shrike, extinct since the 1990s, while the house sparrow has also shown a 50% decline since the 1970s (2). Furthermore, a great many plants, including many food ones, rely on insects to pollinate their flowers. These insects include not only bees but also moths, butterflies, beetles and hoverflies. Another may be that if predatory insects decline, populations of prey species that eat food crops could explode, leading to economic losses either from reduced yields or increased use of pesticides.

What is causing the decline and what should be done?

Agricultural practices, such as monocultures, great swathes of just one crop, reduce biodiversity. The removal of hedges, ponds and other refuges for wild life also reduce niches for insects and their food web members.

Pesticides are also a factor, especially when they affect other insects as well as crop pests. Many of the most harmful, such as DDT, have been banned but modern less harmful ones seem not to be entirely harmless. This may be the case with neonicotinoids (see below). The evidence about these is contra-



Insect armageddon

dictory but seems to be coming down on the harmful side (6)

Climate change does not seem to be a factor in the decline at present but as warming accelerates it may become one. If anything, increased temperatures should increase insect biomass. For example, the warmer winters of recent years may have allowed pest species to overwinter more successfully, leading to more crop damage. However, species that rely on particular plants for food may suffer if those plants cannot cope with climate change and become more scarce. Also, increased extreme weather events such as droughts would negatively affect insects.

Changing agricultural incentives to favour greater crop diversity, to keep or restore hedges and so on, to reduce pesticide use, for example by applying it directly rather than spraying it into the atmosphere, are all initiatives that could help. In a rare example of evidence-based policy-making, Environment Secretary Michael Gove says the UK will support Europe-wide ban on neonicotinoids after the German study (7).

What are neonicotinoid insecticides?

These insecticides, developed from the 1970s onwards, have rapidly become popular because, unlike the organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, they have low toxicity to mammals, including humans, while being very toxic to insects. They now amount to about a quarter of the global insecticide market, with one of them, imidacloprid (patented in 1985 by Bayer), being the most widely used insecticide in the world.

Neonicotinoids (“new nicotine”) are similar to nicotine, an alkaloid produced by the tobacco plant (*Nicotiana tabacum*) and other members of the Solanaceae family

(which includes deadly nightshade, potato and aubergine). Presumably it is produced as a defence against insects that would otherwise eat the leaves of the tobacco plant.

In humans, nicotine stimulates the brain’s nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (NACHRs), a class of receptors that promotes the release of dopamine and endorphin, stimulating the brain’s reward system. Nicotine is said to cause feelings of calmness and relaxation, while also making the user more alert. It can reach the brain some 15 seconds after inhalation of tobacco smoke. These effects are often desirable and even useful so it is unfortunate that nicotine intake is usually accompanied by a cocktail of carcinogens. It is even more unfortunate that it produces tolerance, where the user requires more and more to achieve the desired effect, and that it is highly addictive. Nicotine was previously widely used as an insecticide as it overstimulates insects’ central nervous systems, rather than making them feel relaxed, and kills them. It was phased out over its harmfulness to mammals, including people using it or their children. However, it should be noted that it is impossible to get a fatal dose of nicotine from smoking.

Neonicotinoids are chemically different to nicotine: they cannot cross the blood-brain barrier in mammals (and so do not mimic the effects of nicotine), and bind much more strongly to insect NACHRs than to mammalian ones. They are also thought to be less harmful to fish, an important consideration when rain can run off fields into rivers. While nerve gases such as sarin prevent the breakdown of the nerve transmitter acetylcholine (ACh) in humans, neonicotinoids mimic the action of ACh in insects and also cannot be

broken down. The result is the same: nerves are stimulated to fire continuously, causing paralysis and death.

RESISTANCE

Neonicotinoids were introduced after many insects had developed resistance to organophosphate, carbamate, and pyrethroid insecticides.

Predictably, resistance has started to develop to them as well (travellers may wish to note that bed bugs in New Jersey are now resistant).

Neonicotinoids are absorbed by plant roots and leaves and travel to all parts of the plant, where they are taken in by herbivorous insects. Also, they are more persistent, that is they break down more slowly, than nicotine, offering more long-term protection to crops. They are active against a wide range of pests, such as aphids, whitefly, wireworms and

leafhoppers. However, their wide range includes many non-target insects, some beneficial, such as bees (8). In theory, it should be possible to minimise exposure of other insects by applying the insecticide more carefully directly to the roots, rather than spraying. It is common to treat seeds before sowing which is a less dangerous process.

It was reported last year that the use of neonicotinoids on oilseed rape in England from 2002 is linked to an average decline in all bee species of 7%, with the worst affected being those that collected nectar from rape flowers. This is serious news not only for the natural world but specifically for that substantial section of agriculture that relies heavily on pollination by bees and other insects. This is especially so since bee numbers have already suffered a lot from the parasitic mite *Varroa* and the mysterious Colony Collapse Disorder. It seems that neonicotinoids can get into pollen and nectar and thence into the bees. The amounts involved are not lethal but it is suggested that they may cause behavioural changes that make bee colonies less viable. One study shows that bumblebee colonies affected put on less weight before winter and are less able to survive.

In any case, neonicotinoids are found in bees and at least some bees seem to be adversely affected so, on the precautionary principle, neonicotinoid use should be restricted.

References

Some 40% of insects are beetles. The great socialist scientist JBS Haldane, when asked what he deduced about God from contemplating the living world, replied “God has an inordinate fondness for beetles.”

1 <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/bug-info/bugnos>

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/21/insects-giant-ecosystem-collapsing-human-activity-catastrophe> (author Michael McCarthy, originator of the term “moth snowstorm”).

3 <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>

4 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/populations-of-grassland-butterflies-decline>

5 https://e360.yale.edu/features/insect_numbers_declining_why_it_matters

6 https://www.nature.com/news/the-bitter-battle-over-the-world-s-most-popular-insecticides-1.22972?WT.mc_id=TWT_NatureNews&sf159501690=1

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/09/the-evidence-points-in-one-direction-we-must-ban-neonicotinoids>

8 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4284386/>



Street art in London highlighting the falling bee numbers

Distinctions on left antisemitism

Workers' Liberty has been debating theories of racism and their relationship to left anti-semitism. This contribution by Martin Thomas is a response to Carmen Basant (*Solidarity* 454).

Modern political antisemitism consists in damning the very existence of the Israeli state (however modified) as inescapably racist and imperialist, and thus damning all Jews who fail to renounce connection to or sympathy with Israel (however critical) as agents of racism and imperialism.

More traditional racial antisemitism consists in damning Jews, as a hereditary supposed "race", as constitutionally malevolent and disruptive.

There is no Chinese wall between these forms of antisemitism, or indeed between either of them and other forms of antisemitism in history (Christian, reactionary anti-capitalist, etc.) However, there are distinctions, and it is important to understand these if we are to convince left-minded people influenced by strands of antisemitism rather than only cursing them.

I adduce five reasons for distinguishing between political antisemitism and racial antisemitism.

1. The term "racism" has acquired a diffuse width of meaning, and at the same time come to be cognate with crimes and immoralities rather than with erroneous (or hurtfully erroneous) ideologies. When we are arguing with people who have strands or traits in their thinking of political antisemitism, but who (by their own lights) abhor racial antisemitism, to call them "racist" cuts short the argument. It conveys to them that we do not wish to dispute political ideas with them, but instead to brand them as criminal.

2. Antisemitism is much older than racism. It is possible, of course, to stretch the term racism by back-defining it to cover many phenomena from centuries before the term existed. But to do that blurs rather than clarifies. In particular, it blurs the ways in which antisemitism operates quite differently from general racism (or, if you insist on putting it that way, from other racism).

3. It is indeed, as Carmen points out, disorienting to identify racism exclusively or overwhelmingly as an offshoot of European colonialism. But it is equally disorienting to identify it as a characteristic offshoot of nationalism, presumably of irredentist and revanchist Arab nationalism. Political antisemitism has a dynamic different from both nationalism and racism.

4. Being Jewish does not license antisemitic views, any more than being a woman licenses hostility to feminist demands. But the high-profile Jewish political antisemites are clearly not "self-hating Jews", either.

5. If we abandon the distinction between political antisemitism and racism, then that makes us no longer able to point out and denounce where people drift over the line.

1. Widening of the term "racism"

The word "racism" (and its synonym "racialism", more common until the early 1970s) has an odd history.

Xenophobia in various forms is old. The systematic division of humankind into races, and desire to promote or defend one "race" (the vast majority of whose other members are utterly remote to you) against another, is relatively new.

With the development of capitalism, and the consequent decay of social classifications which consigned categories of people to

helotry from birth, like serfdom, racist ideologies emerged as rationalisations for defining "alien" hereditary groups of people (such as dark-skinned people) as excluded from the full human rights now being claimed by others. The heyday of doctrines which sought to consolidate such rationalisations as "science" was from the late 18th century through to the late 19th century.

In the early 20th century, when the world was dominated by European colonial imperialism, "scientific" racism was already much discredited, but looser doctrines had great weight. Karl Kautsky, writing on the question, felt he had to take it as given that there were such things as "races", so as then to show that "in the place of sharply distinct races, unchanged for long periods, we find a constant and increasingly rapid process of race disintegration... natural scientists are by no means agreed on the division of human races, but are obliged to admit that everything is in a state of flux... there is nothing more absurd than the theory of the 'natural' hostility between races".

Yet the words "racist" or "racialist" were rarely used. The left conducted its battles against racism without using the word.

The word "racism" came into wider use from the 1930s, as more and more people (including many themselves tainted by "racial" prejudice) expressed horror at the "racial" doctrines of the Nazis.

AFTERMATH

Its use remained fairly steady until about 1960, and then, in the aftermath of the winning of independence of most of the European colonies, increased enormously.

It increased hugely yet again from the early 1980s, before levelling off around 2000. I take that second surge to reflect the ascent of neoliberalism, under which (as our comrade Danny Reilly showed in articles in the mid 1970s) governments combined drives against racial discrimination within their own countries (reckoned to cause friction and waste of resources) with restrictive immigration policies, racist by implication but not explicitly.

The anti-racist drive of neoliberalism has gone with the grain of many efforts from labour movements and the left, and has had successes. Overt racial discrimination, almost everywhere, is not a question of dispute, but a crime. Even far-rightists today insist that they are not racists.

The use of the term "racism" has widened. Today it has come to mean, not just discrimination, hostility, or subjugation on the pretext of explicit theories about biological "race", but a wider range of disadvantaging. It can include "inadvertent" racism or "institutional" racism.

This widening is a good thing. It means that a wider range of discriminatory or divisive practices get examined and criticised.

It can, however, be abused, by branding critical discourse about ideas and cultures as "racist". A section of the left has defended its complaisance towards political Islam by claiming that any other attitude is "racist". Thus in 2013 we had people on Facebook branding us "racist" because of rough comments on political Islam. This year we had *Socialist Worker* denouncing the "Council of Ex-Muslims" (people "racially" similar to still-Muslims) as "racists" because they joined the Pride march with provocative anti-Islamic placards.

Elsewhere, speedy resort to the label "racist" often serves to close arguments and replace them by exchanges of abuse, rather than to sharpen and clarify them.



The two SWP-linked groups in Australia, Solidarity and Socialist Alternative, differ on the question of "457 visas", visas for certain categories of migrant temporary contract workers. S Alt stresses opposition to 457 visas, in a way that sometimes must come across as suggesting the expulsion of 457-visa workers. Solidarity stresses trade-union organising of 457-visa workers.

A few years ago they held a more-or-less civil debate on the issue. However, the gist of it was each group trying to brand the other's position as "racist". There were more substantive arguments made, but the fundamentals of the debate were played out on the basis of one side being "racist".

It is surely arguable that pushing for British exit from the EU, when it is known that the chief (and desired) result of exit is to block free migration from Eastern Europe, has racist implications against East-European peoples.

However, to denounce pro-Brexit positions flatly as "racism", or pro-Brexit people as "racist", is to widen the use of the terms in a counterproductive way. The pro-Brexit people will see the denouncers not as attempting to have a (maybe heated) argument with them, but rather as accusing them of a crime.

Those who think that free movement from Eastern Europe will bring "too many" people here, undercutting wages, overstretching housing and other social provision, are wrong. You can tease through implications from their argument which are "racist" in terms of ranking Poles or Romanians lower than British-born people. But often, in fact usually, they are really not "racist" in terms of considering Poles or Romanians to be "races" which are by heredity less deserving of rights than others.

Most left-wing people with political anti-semitic views do not at all consider Jewish people to be a "race" which is by heredity less deserving of rights than others. They are sincerely shocked by the idea.

The term "racist" has become a loose one, with a wide range of meanings. In principle it could be extended to cover political antisemitism, too. But the extension would blur rather than sharpen debate.

Much better to say to those with political anti-semitic views: yes, of course, I know you abhor racist antisemitism as much as anyone. I know you think your views are only a political opposition to a sort of politics, Zionism, and a state with that sort of politics.

But here is something special about your political opposition to what you call "Zionism" — a quality different from that of your political opposition to neoliberalism, or radical feminism, or whatever — and that "something special" has implications which may make you want to reconsider...

2. Antisemitism operates differently from racism

Antisemitism is much older than racism.

For most of its history, antisemitism — Muslim, and, much worse, Christian — stigmatised and disadvantaged Jews not as a "race" but as a religious grouping. Jews could and did escape the stigma and disadvantage by converting to Islam or Christianity.

19th century antisemitism built on Christian antisemitism, but gave it a twist, identifying Jews with hated aspects of capitalism. Modern political antisemitism, derived from the Stalinist campaign of the late 40s and early 50s, continues that reactionary anti-capitalist strand, combining it now with a reactionary anti-imperialist strand which identifies Israel as the world's hyper-imperialism.

Thus antisemitism operates differently from racism — or from other racism, if you prefer.

Moishe Postone explains: "The way in which antisemitism is distinguished, and should be distinguished, from racism, has to do with the sort of imaginary of power, attributed to the Jews, Zionism, and Israel, which is at the heart of antisemitism."

"The Jews are seen as constituting an immensely powerful, abstract, intangible global form of power that dominates the world. There is nothing similar to this idea at the heart of other forms of racism... antisemitism is a primitive critique of the world, of capitalist modernity. The reason I regard it as being particularly dangerous for the left is precisely because antisemitism has a pseudo-emancipatory dimension that other forms of racism rarely have".

3. Racism, nationalism and antisemitism

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon wrote about the Ivory Coast:

"If the national bourgeoisie goes into competition with the Europeans, the artisans and craftsmen start a fight against non-national Africans. In the Ivory Coast, the anti-Dahoman and the anti-Voltaic troubles are in fact racial riots. The Dahoman and Voltaic peoples, who control the greater part of the petty trade, are, once independence is declared, the object of hostile manifestations on the part of the people of Ivory Coast. From nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally racism".

Camila is right: racism is not only an expression and legacy of imperialist exploitation, and not only white-against-black. As Fanon describes, rancid nationalism and communalism can flow over into racism, and it can take markers other than skin colour to tag the group to be denied equal rights.

To see the Israeli-Arab conflict as one of "white" against "black", and thus surely racist on the Israeli side, is analytically wrong (even apart from the fact that a large section of Israeli Jews are of Asian and African origin, and often dark-skinned, while many Arabs are by world standards light-skinned).

Our website carries a report of a Labour left meeting in 1990 where a speaker de-

nouncing antisemitism gave as one of her arguments that antisemitism would lead to “more Jews going to Palestine where they will oppress our ‘black comrades’, the Palestinian Arabs”.

However, it does not follow that antisemitism is mainly, or in large part, a product of intensified Arab nationalism, or vicarious Arab nationalism.

Among most people with political antisemitic ideas, sympathy for the Palestinians is a rather secondary or subsidiary thing compared to their hostility to Israel. They scarcely deny that Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and the creation of a really independent and viable Palestinian state would improve things. They denounce “two states”, not because they think it would deflect a better outcome for the Palestinians which would otherwise soon be possible, but because they think a “two states” policy expresses not enough hostility to Israel.

They are indifferent to the argument that insisting on a “maximalist” outcome (all of Palestine in an Arab state) is not only undesirable, but cuts against any short-term redress for the Palestinians.

4. Jewish “absolute anti-Zionists”

Some activists are both vehement absolute anti-Zionists (with the consequent political-antisemitic implications) and very anxious to proclaim themselves Jewish. They are fairly few in absolute terms but numerous enough to be a significant factor within the left.

They cannot be explained by the traditional trope of “the self-hating Jew”: if they think about a Jewish “race” at all (and probably most of them would dismiss the whole concept of “race”), then visibly they feel no shame or discomfort about being part of that “race”.

Nor are they like, say, black conservatives, who, having gained for themselves personally favoured positions in existing society, then express contempt and hostility towards battles for equal rights by other black people.

They feel shame and discomfort about Israel’s real misdeeds, and more acutely so because they consider themselves Jewish. They have picked up some of the ideas current on the left about Israel as the acme of capitalism and imperialism.

And then “absolute anti-Zionism” has seemed to them to square the circle. They can be radically hostile to Israel, and tell themselves that this is only hostility to a particular political strand of Jewish opinion. This seems to me more like the “anti-deutsche” in Germany, leftists who denounce Germany as such, than racism (bit.ly/anti-d).

There is a difference. Germans face no danger of systematic persecution, as Germans, anywhere in the world. Jews do. But that doesn’t make the Jewish people swayed by “absolute anti-Zionist” ideas into racists.

5. Recognising the borders in order to be able to identify and denounce drift across them

Some comrades have argued that in recent years the sections in the Labour left (for example) influenced by left political antisemitism have drifted so that now many of their attitudes are much closer to “old-fashioned” antisemitism. This may be true. There are no Chinese walls between the different forms of antisemitism. If it is true, it is an important development.

That gives a reason for maintaining the conceptual distinction between left political antisemitism and racist antisemitism. If the distinction is kept, then overlap and drift between one form and another can be discerned.

If the distinction is abandoned, then they can’t be discerned: all is racism, racism is all, and there are no more distinctions than there are shadows in a dark night.



Xi Jinping presides over the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party

“New era” but same repression

By Carmen Basant

In October, the 19th national China Communist Party (CCP) congress took place in Beijing. China’s president, Xi Jinping, used the propaganda event to push his distinct brand of CCP rhetoric, which sounded vacuously futuristic and echoed the party’s nationalistic and imperialist past.

To achieve the “Chinese Dream” would be “no walk in the park”, he declared, it would require “more than drum beating and gong clanging to get there” (Xi Jinping, cited in Phillips, 2017).

The CCP announced power in 1949 under the leadership of Mao Zedong. This came after a civil war with the main political rival and party-in-power, Chinese Nationalist Party or Guomindang (led by Chiang Kai-shek). At that moment, the CCP had popular support because of its more consistent and passionate anti-Japanese position (China’s main imperialist threat) and its promise to alleviate pervasive poverty and hardship and end exploitation by landlords. The Nationalist Party fled to Taiwan while proclaiming its intention to return at a future point to retake mainland China, whilst the CCP claimed sovereignty over Taiwan. The present-day geopolitics of this region continue to be shaped by historical tensions between China and US-backed Taiwan and Japan; moreover, Chinese nationalism has both ‘enemies’ close in mind.

Under Mao, the CCP dragged China’s population through various traumas. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Hundred Flowers Campaign was followed by the Anti-Rightist Movement, which purged critics of the state that were first encouraged to speak out, and the Great Leap Forward — a campaign to

launch China as an industrial equal to the West that resulted in tens of millions of deaths. Mao’s initiative in 1966 of the Cultural Revolution was intended to reassert his authority and reflected a fanatical cult of personality (particularly amongst the youth cadre) to eliminate both internal and external critics of the Party, so-called bourgeois elements. China descended into a decade of chaos, destruction, loss of life, and widespread human rights abuses. The Cultural Revolution came to a close in 1976, the year of Mao’s death.

Post Mao, China entered a new period under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, known as opening and reform. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution a spontaneous grassroots space opened up in Beijing for the public airing its emotional trauma and the social and political questioning of the Party, known as the Democracy Wall Movement. This was generally seen to be tolerated by a “new era” Party, but that was a mistake.

Deng Xiaoping’s new era of openness and reform meant a pragmatic approach to the economy: a recognition that China’s economic development would come from moving away from a closed economy and plugging into the global economy. Deng’s vision did not include political openness.

The Democracy Wall Movement, which began in 1978, was shut down in 1979. The balancing act presented by Deng’s CCP then is one that continues: the State opens China’s doors to global capital and acts as the guardian at the door to protect the populous from foreign bad elements.

An earlier example of this is the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign of 1983. The growing desire amongst the students and workers of China’s cities for political change amidst its economic opening and reform proliferated

into the extraordinary grassroots democracy movement of 1989 Tiananmen Square.

The image of a courageous student attempting to block a line of tanks moving in to crush this movement is one of the most iconic images of the twentieth century, and a reminder of what so-called “Chinese socialism” actually is — a gross betrayal of its name-sake.

Xi Jinping announced the beginning a “new era” at the 19th national CCP congress, promising to transform China into a “mighty force” and to rid the Party of corruption (cited in Phillips, 2017); in earlier times, both Mao and Deng pushed the same discourse, seeking economic and imperialist power alongside tight political control.

Director for Asia Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Elizabeth Economy, sums up Xi’s vision well: “Xi Jinping sits on top of the Communist world, the Communist party sits on top of China, and China sits on top of the world” (cited in Phillips, 2017).

Xi’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” never had a grassroots democratic basis, nor did it ever have a parliamentary basis: this was and remains an authoritarian state.

Still today, Chinese political dissidents navigate a precarious existence — amid an insidious second Cultural Revolution — in which the Party can quite simply, as some of my personal contacts in China put it, “make disappear”.

Reference

Phillips, Tom (2017) “Xi Jinping heralds ‘new era’ of Chinese power at Communist party congress”. The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/18/xi-jinping-speech-new-era-chinese-power-party-congress?CMP=share_btn_tw

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Events

Saturday 25 November

National Housing Summit
11am, Hamilton House, Mableton Place, London WC1H 9BD
bit.ly/2iHgPjt

Wednesday 29 November

London Irish Abortion Rights Campaign Pub Quiz
7pm, The William Blake, 174-180 Old Street, London EC1V 9BP
bit.ly/2hIo1eh

Thursday 30 November

Strike for the Living Wage fundraiser gig
7pm, Amersham Arms 388 New Cross Road, London SE14 6TY
bit.ly/2hM4aen

Thursday 30 November

Smash borders, defend migrants Workers' Liberty Newcastle meeting
6.30pm, Bar Loco, 22 Leazes Park Road, Newcastle NE1 4PG
bit.ly/2zjnlmZ

9-10 December

NCAFC winter conference
Liverpool Guild of Students
bit.ly/2zoUNv3

Wednesday 20 December

Build the McStrike
7pm, Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD
bit.ly/2hUQilF

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

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

Unite, Len McCluskey and Jewish Voice for Labour

INSIDE UNITE

By Jim Denham

"I've never recognised [that Labour has a problem with anti-Semitism]. I believe it was mood music that was created by people trying to undermine Jeremy Corbyn."

"In 47 years of membership of the Labour Party, I've never been at a meeting where there was any anti-Semitic language or any attacks on the Jews. They would have had short shrift in any meeting I was at.

"Unfortunately, at the time there were lots of people playing games. Everybody wanted to create this image that Jeremy Corbyn's Labour had become misogynistic and antisemitic because they wanted to bring Jeremy Corbyn down." Len McCluskey (BBC Newsnight 26/9/2017)

Shami Chakrabarti replied: "With the greatest of respect to Len, I was the person charged with investigating this. It wasn't Len... I have seen things which Len hasn't seen. I would ask Len to read my report.

"There are real reasons why someone like Len may not have experienced racism and antisemitism. There is an obvious reason why he may not have experienced it. I was charged with investigating by Jeremy and the National Executive and I set out my findings, warts and all."

In the same week as making those ill-advised comments on antisemitism, Unite general secretary Len McCluskey attended the launch meeting of Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) at this year's Labour Party conference in Brighton.

Describing itself as a "network for Jewish members of the Labour Party," JVL already had the backing of such absolute anti-Zionist outfits as the "Free Speech on Israel" campaign and the "Electronic Intifada" website. At the meeting, McCluskey and Aslef general secretary Tosh McDonald seemed to affiliate their unions to JVL.

JVL chair is Jenny Manson, described in a JVL press release as "a retired tax inspector", the Garden Suburb branch chair in Finchley and Golders Green CLP, an active supporter of Jews for Palestine, and editor of two books (one of them on consciousness: *What It Feels Like To Be Me*).

Manson was one of the five Jewish Labour Party members who submitted statements in support of Ken Livingstone in March of this year. According to her statement: "... These actions by Ken were not offensive, nor anti-Semitic in any way, in my view... In my working life as a Tax Inspector I saw a (very) few instances of antisemitism, such as the characterisation of 'Jewish accountants' as accountants who skated close to the edge. I have never witnessed any instances of antisemitism in the Labour Party.

"Antisemitism has to be treated as a serious issue, which is entirely separate from the different views people take on Israel and Zionism."

The JVL's brief "Statement of Principles" includes the following: "We uphold the right of supporters of justice for Palestinians to engage in solidarity activities, such as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. We oppose attempts to widen the definition of antisemitism beyond its meaning of hostility towards or discrimination against Jews as Jews."

A JVL press release likewise states that the new organisation:

"Rejects attempts to extend the scope of the term 'antisemitism' beyond its meaning of bigotry towards Jews, particularly when directed at activities in solidarity with Palestinians such as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel."

In other words, this "network for Jewish members of the Labour Party" will be campaigning in support of the "right" to boycott the people of the only Jewish-majority state, and by implication to stigmatise



tise all Jews keeping contact (however critical) with those people. It will campaign in favour of restricting the definition of antisemitism so as to exclude the most common forms in which contemporary antisemitism manifests itself. Perhaps this is why McCluskey felt it appropriate to affiliate Unite without having consulted the Executive of the union — supposedly the highest decision-making body of the union.

The JVL website (well worth visiting if you want an insight into the true politics of this organisation), hailed McCluskey's support as a major breakthrough. When I commented "Did Len consult anyone (even the Exec) before stating that Unite supported JVL?" I was admonished by the "JVL's webperson" thus "No need to be snide, Jim. Len knew that it would have to go to Unite approval [sic]. That process is in train". Which would seem to suggest that McCluskey and JVL had done a deal in advance, without consulting the Unite Exec, or any other Unite body.

McCluskey no doubt thought he was doing Jeremy Corbyn a favour by backing an organisation whose main objective seems to be to deny that Labour has any kind of problem with antisemitism, beyond that of false accusations cooked up by right wingers and agents of the Israeli embassy.

Unfortunately, as Chakrabarti's response to his foolish Newsnight' comments, demonstrates, McCluskey's hasty and undemocratic backing of JVL is likely to cause Corbyn a lot of embarrassment.

• Originally published online at bit.ly/2AnkVYt

Labour campaigns to make homes safe

By Gerry Bates

Labour launched a "Make Homes Safer" campaign on the 9 November to pressure the government to put aside money for urgent repairs to old buildings in the autumn budget.

The campaign calls for central government to set aside money for local councils to retrofit sprinklers and other safety systems to their housing. In his speech launching the campaign Jeremy Corbyn said:

"The evidence is clear: where sprinkler systems have already been fitted, injuries sustained from fires have been cut by approximately 80 per cent and deaths from fires have almost been eliminated entirely."

In his speech Corbyn also said Labour was committed to recruiting 3,000 new firefighters, and a full review of staffing levels. He said "In the last seven years 10,000 frontline firefighter jobs have gone; equivalent to one in six positions.

"This is a staggering figure and is

compounded by the loss of fire stations, equipment and the loss of almost a third of fire safety inspectors in the same period, with some areas such as West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, which covers the city of Leeds, having lost as many as 70 per cent of its inspectors.

"Indeed, because of the continual loss of firefighters' jobs, if the fire at Grenfell had occurred outside of London there would not have been enough firefighters in the vicinity to tackle a blaze of that size."

BiFab: direct action works

By Dale Street

Faced with the imminent threat of closure, workers employed by BiFab (Burntisland Fabrications) in the company's yards in Fife and Arnish (Isle of Lewis) staged a work-in and mobilised a 1,000 strong demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament.

News that the company was about to call in the administrators, putting over 1,400 jobs at risk, broke on 12 November. The company faced cash flow problems on a contract for the Beatrice offshore wind farm in the Moray Firth.

The following day workers in the company's two yards in Fife began a work-in. They continued working on the contract, even though there was no guarantee that they would be paid, and also ensured that nothing entered or left the yards without their permission.

On 16 November members of the GMB and Unite (the two unions



with members in BiFab) marched on Holyrood in support of their demand for government intervention to safeguard their futures. Backed up by other trade unionists, the total turnout was around 1,000.

Within 48 hours the companies involved in the contract had

reached agreement to ease BiFab's cash flow problems. The Scottish Government subsequently guaranteed a loan of up to £15 millions to Bi-Fab, if needed.

The message from the dispute, short as it was, is: direct action works.

Vote yes in UCU pensions ballot

By a UCU member

Higher education union UCU is balloting for strike action over university bosses' plans to scrap guaranteed pension benefits from the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

At the moment, higher grade staff in the older "pre-92" universities get a pension based on their average earnings across their career. This is already on worse terms than staff in newer universities and school teachers. But now the employers want to scrap even this deal in favour of making our pensions entirely dependent on the performance of pension scheme investments. A consultative ballot saw over 86% voting that they'd be prepared to take action, even before the worst of the plan became clear.

The backdrop to the employers'

move is a deliberate decision by the Government and its regulators to insist on such "prudent" investing that it's almost impossible for pension schemes like USS to demonstrate they have sufficient funds to pay pensions in the worst case scenario. But the regulator's "worst case scenario" involves an almost complete collapse of the UK university system. If things get that bad, pensions are unlikely to be anyone's main worry. It's an excuse to cut the pay that staff expect to receive in retirement.

University bosses are already making cuts to try and compensate for a likely financial dip due to Brexit and a fall in the number of 18-year-olds. They will fight to keep their pension contributions down. But they have the money. Staff costs have fallen as a percentage of university expenditure. At Southampton University (where on

top of the pensions attack management is trying to cut 75 jobs), the figure was 60% a decade ago and just 53% now. Between 2014 and 2018 English universities increased their capital spending (on buildings, for example) by 60% as they sought to win new students with showy campuses. The consequence of marketisation in higher education is that more money goes on these projects, and less is left for the bread-and-butter costs of running a university.

Saving the "defined benefit" element of USS will not be an easy win. UCU is rightly warning that it will need sustained strike action, not just a day here and there. But this is a fight it is vital to win. Vote Yes!

The ballot opens in the week beginning 27 November.

• More at: ucu.org.uk/strikeforuss

Housing workers made ill by management

By Charlotte Zalens

Housing repair workers in Manchester suffer from high levels of mental ill-health and stress, a survey has revealed.

The survey was conducted by Unite the union as workers go on strike again over pay differentials within the workforce which leads to some workers being paid up to £3,500 less than others for doing the same work.

The survey found that 37% of workers suffer from either depression or anxiety, 89% of those believed that work had contributed to their illness. 91% were suffering

with stress, and 98% believed work had contributed to their stress. 92% said Mears' management didn't take their physical of mental health seriously.

Workers are set to strike for 49 days between now and February, adding to the 40 strike days already taken.

• Send messages of support to col-



inpitt65@hotmail.co.uk
• Donate to the strike fund: Account number: 46034412 Sort code: 60-83-01

University workers strike

On November 21, workers at the University of London struck over outsourced contracts, insecure hours, and pay.

A loud protest organised by their trade union, the IWGB, took place outside the iconic Senate House during the university's Foundation Day — when the Chancellor, Princess Anne, visits. The dispute is made up of mostly security guards, cleaners, porters, post room workers, and receptionists.

The workers in this dispute are not alone. A student campaign, "Justice for UoL Workers", has staged various stunts and protests. Workers from other unions and disputes, including the McDonald's and Picturehouse, have been showing their solidarity in this campaign. Student-worker solidarity and wider community support is what will push the Senate House campaign over the edge. Last year, students at SOAS occupied over cuts to catering staff; they stopped the cuts and now the university has promised to bring all staff in-house. With image-obsessed unis, building the student and community side is how you win.

The majority of the workers at UoL are BME migrants on precarious, low-paid contracts. The IWGB has called the treatment of these workers "racist" as white British staff at UoL are more likely to have secure, in-house contracts. It's no surprise that this is the case. As we have seen, parts of the labour movement is rife with anti-



migrant rhetoric, anything from refusing to organise migrant work places or outright saying "migrants drive down wages".

As we know, this isn't true. A wave of campaigns have started and won which were organised by migrant workers; LSE cleaners, SOAS staff, Uber drivers, tube cleaners and now UoL. What these disputes and wins show is that unlike what the big trade union bureaucrats say, migrant workers aren't "unorganisable" and don't drive down wages. Rather it's the fault of the top-down, soft trade unions that fail migrant workers and the wider movement as a whole by failing to be activist, fighting unions.

Trade unions and the Labour Party need to recognise that our class will not win if we continue to ignore migrant workers. At the end of the day, migrants are leading our struggle and doing the work overpaid bureaucrats should be doing. It's bosses driving down wages, with bad unions and bureaucrats not organising to stop it.

Let's building a militant, fighting movement that organises based on class, not nationality, and push the UoL struggle forward and build others like it.

Unstaffed tube stations

By Ollie Moore

London Underground has informed union reps of its intention to reduce the frequency of maintenance checks carried out on some trains from 24 to 96 hours.

The checks, which involve ensuring the train is safe to run, are carried out my fleet workers in depots across the network.

Tube union RMT has objected strongly to the plans, insisting that they put passenger safety at risk. The union has also accused the employer of wanting to cut fleet workers' jobs.

Fleet staff have recently secured some victories over the bosses, including a campaign on the Piccadilly Line to win permanent contracts for workers who had been employed on a fixed-term basis.

RMT is currently balloting its fleet members in Ruislip depot for strikes over pay disparity between workers performing equivalent work. The ballot closes on 6 December.

Meanwhile, a BBC report has revealed that, despite assurances to

the contrary, London Underground is leaving Tube stations unstaffed on a routine basis.

When ticket offices were shut, LU bosses promised the public that this would make staff "more visible", and that "all stations would be staffed from first to last trains". This has been proven manifestly false.

A station worker and RMT rep told *Solidarity*: "The BBC report confirmed what any of us working on stations already know: that LU routinely keeps stations open without any staff."

"Although legislation allows it to do this at 'non-Section 12' stations — that is, stations above ground — is still represents an obvious safety risk, as well as damaging accessibility."

"The situation is the result of job cuts. Our strike in January forced the company to reverse 325 of the cuts it had made, but we need to push for more."

"Tube passengers have a right to expect staff assistance at their local station. We'll be demanding further increases to the staffing level right across the network."



Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 455 24 November 2017 50p/£1

Zimbabwe's power struggle: no choice for workers

By Mike Chester

The Central Committee of the Zimbabwe's ruling party, ZANU-PF, has succeeded in removing Robert Mugabe as its leader.

There were celebrations in the streets of the capital, Harare, on Tuesday 21 November, after Mugabe resigned, giving way to former Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa to take up the post of President.

The end of Mugabe's 37-year rule follows a fortnight of events which started with Mugabe's removal of Mnangagwa as Vice President and continued in the Zimbabwean Defence Forces taking over TV stations and government installations around the country.

Mnangagwa has long been favourite of the ZANU-PF's old guard to succeed Mugabe. The Vice President has a strong base in the security services and state bureaucracy.

The backdrop to these events is a country sitting in a chronic state of economic ruin, endemic corruption and political repression.

A two-year long factional battle within ZANU-PF has recently been intensifying; this is between the so-called "Team Lacoste" faction around Mnangagwa and "Generation 40" around the country's "First Lady" Grace Mugabe. The dismissal of Mnangagwa and the

worsening economic situation has given Team Lacoste an excuse to act.

Is there any real political difference between Mnangagwa and the Mugabe factions? Mnangagwa has talked about liberalising the economy to deal with the economic crisis. Much is being made about his recent visit to China, a major investor in Zimbabwe, where he allegedly received the blessing of Beijing as the chosen successor to Mugabe and promises of further economic investment. But prior to Grace Mugabe's arrival on the scene Mnangagwa — a veteran of the "Rhodesian Bush War", a war of independence — was widely seen as the "chosen successor".

Chinese economic imperialism in Africa is rife and Zimbabwe, a resource rich nation, is no exception. The Chinese and other powers want political change and economic reforms to improve stability and make the country more open to international investment. The gold and diamond mining sectors are currently marked by high levels of corruption and inefficiency.

Zimbabwean workers had nothing to defend in Mugabe continuing to rule. The notionally pro-worker labour laws, corrupt attempts at land redistribution and anti-imperialist rhetoric are meaningless in a country with 80-95% unemployment, a shortage of

money in the banks, bread queues, and a chronic health crisis.

Mugabe and ZANU-PF have presided over a tyrannical regime which has repressed the free press, rigged elections, murdered political opponents and civilians, plundered the economy for personal gain and caused horrific food and health crises. While his personal downfall should be celebrated, those leading this coup are just as culpable and could continue in the same way.

The largest trade union centre, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, led by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, while calling for an immediate end to Mugabe's rule, also said that Mugabe should not be "punished".

A joint statement released by the majority of trade unions and many civil society organisations on 15 November called on Mugabe to step down. It demanded the army abide by the constitution, that parliament establish a roadmap to free and fair elections in 2018 and liberalise media and press laws by

repealing recent authoritarian legislation.

These minimal democratic demands, refusing to explicitly take sides with the generals, are sensible. Trade unionists in Britain should show solidarity with those making them. However, we should be clear that in the long-term, if it's Chinese capitalists and/or a different group of ZANU-PF bureaucrats plundering the Zimbabwean economy and stitching up the political process, the workers will continue to lose.

Socialists and trade unionists in Zimbabwe should be using this opportunity, especially while international attention is focused on the country, to continue to push for, demonstrate for, and develop a strategy for winning democratic reforms and democratic control of the economy.

In Britain we should demand an end to African debt, an increase in state aid. We should gear up to protest against any further political repression of the people of Zimbabwe.



Subscribe to Solidarity

Trial sub (6 issues) £7
Six months (22 issues) £22 waged , £11 unwaged
One year (44 issues) £44 waged , £22 unwaged
European rate: 6 months €30 One year €55

Name

Address

I enclose £

Cheques (£) to "AWL" or make £ and Euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub
Return to 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

Or subscribe with a standing order

Pay £5 a month to subscribe to Solidarity or pay us more to make an ongoing contribution to our work

To: (your bank) (address)

Account name (your name)

Account number Sort code

Please make payments as follows to the debit of my account:
Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB (60-83-01)

Amount: £.....

To be paid on the day of (month) 20.... (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing.
This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date Signature

Contact us

020 7394 8923

solidarity@workersliberty.org

Write to us: The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

Solidarity editorial: Michael Elms, Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent (editor), Gemma Short, and Martin Thomas

Printed by Trinity Mirror