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TORIES SCAPEGOAT MIGRANTS

Despite being castigated and forced into retreat over the "hostile environment" and the Windrush scandal on immigration the Tories are now, as Brexit looms, preparing to betray EU migrants present and future.

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Automotive workers betrayed by Unite

Car workers who continue to oppose Brexit face massive job cuts.



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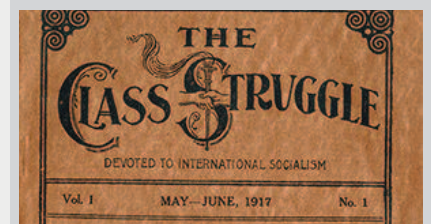
Israel-Palestine: how to reconcile



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Join Labour!

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Labour conference
2018

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Hezbollah: state ban not the answer Threat in Brazil

By Ira Berkovic

The Tory government plans to ban the political wing of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Islamist political party with a well-armed paramilitary wing. This armed wing is already proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the British government, but Hezbollah's political wing is not specifically banned.

The proposed ban is motivated in part by a desire to exert diplomatic pressure on Iran, a key state ally of Hezbollah, in the context of its continuing imprisonment of British-Iranian charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Despite their clerical-fascist political programme, support for Hezbollah as a progressive force against imperialism and Zionism has been common on the left. In 2006, marchers protesting Israel's war with Lebanon marched under placards and banners proclaiming "we are all Hezbollah", effectively supporting one of the two war parties, rather than opposing the war on both sides. Hezbollah flags are

widespread on the annual anti-Israeli Al-Quds Day march, organised by various Islamist and Arab nationalist organisations. The potential for disarray and confusion on these issues within the "Corbyn surge" in the Labour Party is immense, with Jeremy Corbyn himself having previously hailed Hezbollah, and other Islamist groups like Hamas, as forces for peace and progress.

Nevertheless, applauding the Tories' proposed ban is misguided. The left must support the struggles



of socialists, feminists, and other radicals in Lebanon and across the Middle East organising in immensely adverse conditions against the sectarian Islamist terror and reaction that Hezbollah represent. Those are the forces, however currently embattled they may be, that can defeat a party like Hezbollah, and transform the social conditions that allows it to grow, not a British state engaged in a largely symbolic act of geopolitical and diplomatic jockeying. The powers the British state uses to ban Islamist "extremists" could just as easily be turned against left-wing "extremists" in a different context. Class-struggle socialists have traditionally opposed state bans on fascist political parties; that opposition should extend to cover bans on Islamist clerical-fascist parties too.

Opposition to the ban must, however, be accompanied by an ongoing work of political education to persuade socialist activists that Islamism and Iranian sub-imperialism are not forces for progress to be supported in their invective against "Zionism".



By Martin Thomas

As we go to press, the latest polls for Brazil's presidential election on 7 October shows far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro on 31% and Fernando Haddad of the pale-pink Workers' Party on 21%.

In the run-off vote on 28 October, the polls suggest Bolsonaro and Haddad head-and-head on 42%.

Bolsonaro is a Brazilian equivalent of Trump or Orban or Salvini or Erdogan or Duterte, only worse.

He explicitly praises the military dictatorship which ran Brazil between 1964 and 1985. Brazil's constitution would give him, as president, more power than Trump in the USA, though not as much as Erdogan or Duterte in their countries.

The rise of Bolsonaro, lubricated by a bit of social demagoguery, is a consequence of disillusion at the failure of the Workers' Party to cope with the economic crisis which hit Brazil in 2013-4 and continues.

More: bit.ly/br-wp

Unite, backed by Morning Star, betray automotive workers

By Jim Denham

The Unite union's policy conference in July received a large number of motions on Brexit, the vast majority of which were hostile to "no deal". One (from North West/Automotive RISC) called for "continued participation in and access to the European single market."

Several called for a second referendum and one (from West Midlands/Automotive RISC) called upon the union to:

Campaign against any Brexit deal that would harm UK jobs and economy by the introduction of trade barriers.

Campaign against any terms that would have a detrimental impact on UK workers' rights.

Campaign to ensure that the UK public has a binding vote to accept the terms of the UK exit from the EU or reject the terms of the UK exit from the EU and remain in the EU.

In the absence of a public vote on the final Brexit terms, campaign to re-join the EU if the UK leaves the EU with trade barriers that have a detrimental impact on UK workers.

Ensure the union remains fully committed to all EU trade union federations, alliances and organisations.

There was just one motion (London & Eastern / 1228 Waltham Forest Council Branch) calling for a "socialist Brexit".

Inevitably, in the compositing process, the motions were combined, generalised and (in the case of the West Midlands Automotive motion), the more outspoken anti-Brexit sentiments were omitted.

This resulted in an executive statement that began by accepting the result of the 2016 referendum, but which did not rule out a second referendum ("popular vote") on Brexit: "We are also open to the possibility of a popular vote being held on any deal, depending on political circumstances." It's not the main thrust of the statement (which is to force an early general election), but it's there in black and white as a "possibility".

But anyone foolish enough to have depended upon the *Morning Star* for information on Unite's policy emerging from the conference would have got the impression that (to quote the *Star*) "the union said No to a second referendum on Brexit."

Fast-forward to last week's Labour Party conference: over 150 constituency parties submitted motions on Brexit – by far the highest number of motions on one topic ever submitted into Labour's complex "contemporary resolutions" process: the overwhelming majority of these hostile to a "Tory Brexit" and most calling for a "people's vote" / second referendum.

The final motion passed says: "Should Parliament vote down a Tory Brexit deal or the talks end in no deal, Conference believes this would constitute a loss of confidence in the Government. In these circumstances, the best outcome for the country is an immediate general election that can sweep the Tories from power. If we cannot get a general election, Labour must support all options remaining on the table, including campaigning for a public vote."

This text originally said the vote should be on the deal only, but crucially that line was deleted – specifically in order to leave open the option of a new referendum including an option to Remain. Shadow Brexit secretary Keir Starmer confirmed this, including in the debate on the motion. Jeremy Corbyn himself agreed that the motion allows for the possibility of Remain.

But immediately after Starmer's speech, up jumped Unite assistant general secretary Steve Turner, attacking Starmer for leaving open the option to remain: "And conference that ["public vote"] is not a second referendum. Despite what Keir might have said earlier, it's a public vote on the terms of our departure. We need to heal the wounds of Brexit, not reopen them".

In fairness, it should be pointed out that although what Turner said was in clear and obvious defiance of Unite policy, he was only repeating what his boss Len McCluskey had said the previous Sunday, to the joy of Brexiteers, on the Pienaar's Politics show on BBC Radio 5Live: "The referendum shouldn't be on, 'Do you want to go back in the European Union'".

"The people have already decided on that. We very rarely have referendums in this country, the people have decided against my wishes and my union's wishes, but they have decided".

Just a few days later, Marvin Cooke, managing director of Toyota UK, said that the impact of any border delays in the "unprecedented" scenario of a no-deal Brexit would be hugely damaging



for a firm that sources parts from all across Europe and ships them to Britain for assembly. Toyota's factories rely on the smooth delivery of parts from Europe, from where 1,000 lorries a day cross the channel with parts for car manufacturers in Oxford, the Midlands, the north and the north-east.

Cooke said he was concerned for the Burnaston (Derby) plant's future, despite recent investment. Burnaston is one of nine Toyota manufacturing sites in the EU.

Every time there is a new project, the different locations compete for the work.

Cooke said: "In the longer term the burden of import and export costs would add permanent costs to our business, it would reduce our competitiveness. Sadly that would reduce the number of cars made in the UK and that would cost jobs."

Peter Tsouvallaris, the Unite union convenor at the Burnaston plant says his members are increasingly concerned: "What we have here are high-value, well-paid jobs. "And in my experience once

these jobs go they never come back. And that's why we have to do everything possible to keep these jobs in the area."

Toyota employs around 3,000 people in the UK at two sites – the main vehicle assembly plant in Burnaston, Derbyshire, and an engine site in north Wales.

It is just the latest car manufacturer to warn of the impact of a hard Brexit on the sector, following Jaguar Land Rover, BMW and Honda.

The previous week, Honda said it would look to stockpile some components as a contingency measure. Earlier this month, JLR announced 2,000 staff would move to a three-day week at its Castle Bromwich plant – hours after the company was accused of "scaremongering" by moronic Brexiter Bernard Jenkin.

BMW announced it was planning to shut its Oxfordshire plant for a month to minimise the impact of a no-deal Brexit that it fears would cause a shortage of parts.



A coalition of groups including London Antifascists have made a call-out for a unity demonstration against the far right Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA).

Assemble at 12 noon, Saturday 13 October, outside the BBC Broadcasting Centre, Portland Place, London, W1A 1AA



New war on the wharves

By Gerry Bates

Hutchison Ports, part of the C K Hutchison conglomerate, is one of the biggest container terminal operators in the world.

It has launched a new and big offensive against workers in its Australian terminals.

In 2015, shortly after Workers' Liberty supporter Bob Carnegie won the Branch Secretary election in Queensland for the MUA, Australia's port workers and seafarers union, Hutchison summarily sacked almost half its workforce in its two Australian terminals, Brisbane (Queensland) and Sydney.

Australian anti-union law, even more restrictive in Britain, makes all industrial action lawful only at collective-agreement-renewal time, over the terms of that agreement, (and not always even then).

By campaigning including 24 hour community assemblies at the terminal gates, the union eventually got almost all the workers reinstated, on new terms but not much worse.

Since then, in Brisbane though not so much in Sydney, the firm has deliberately and even perversely ramped up its numbers of casuals. Before the 2015 dispute, and even today in the Brisbane Patricks con-

tainer terminal just across a fence on the same shoreline, all workers were permanents.

Now the terminal has more workers than in 2015, but about half are casuals.

It has long been clear to MUA members that the Brisbane terminal's current strategy is unworkable. The company spends a lot on training casuals (inadequately), and then since it can offer them no steady work they go to other employers.

Now Hutchison is on a cost-cutting drive.

They flagged up a new approach in August by trying to sack lead

union delegate Joe Johnston on trivial workplace-misconduct grounds. The union eventually pushed that back to a five-month suspension without pay.

Now, in the negotiations for a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, Hutchison has demanded vast cost-cutting.

All employees to be put on irregular shifts and made subject to being called into work at short notice. Wages cut by about A\$20,000 a year. Work week extended from 30 hours to 35-to-42.

Several key jobs to be "outsourced" to subcontractors. Removal of much of the PPE

(Personal Protective Equipment) supplied by the company, of long-service leave, of the established grievance procedure, of parental leave above the statutory minimum, etc.

Container terminals worldwide are currently prospering a bit better than they have done for most of the time since 2008-9, but if Hutchison gets away with this, it will set a benchmark for cost-cutting by other terminal operators in the new downturn which is inevitable sometime and possibly soon.

The MUA is determined to resist.

• bit.ly/hutchi

The threats that Kavanaugh represents

By Eduardo Tovar

Even before the FBI's investigation into reports of sexual misconduct against Brett Kavanaugh, Donald Trump's nominee for the US Supreme Court, US feminists were regarding Kavanaugh as a serious threat to women's rights.

The fate of Roe versus Wade, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court ruling that made abortion lawful until the point of viability, would hang in the balance if Kavanaugh gets appointed.

Meanwhile the world has watched Dr Christine Blasey Ford, a psychologist and professor of statistics at Palo Alto University, testify that Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her in the early 1980s.

Dr Ford has been subjected to

vile abuse and harassment from people seeking to defend Kavanaugh.

Despite the traumatic nature of her experience, as well as the sheer unpleasantness of the media frenzy around her, Dr Ford spoke before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which oversees the confirmation process. A second woman, Deborah Ramirez, alleges that Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her when they were students at Yale 35 years ago.

Here in the Boston area, these events take on a special significance because Kavanaugh holds a position at Harvard as Samuel Williston Lecturer on Law. He has reportedly been paid \$27,490 for nine days of teaching in 2018.

The local branch of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) called a speakout against Ka-

vanaugh's appointment on 26 September.

Additionally, the student group Our Harvard Can Do Better, which campaigns against rape culture on campus, is lobbying for the university to investigate Kavanaugh fully and fairly before paying him this year, and for Kavanaugh not to continue teaching until the investigation is concluded. With the international spotlight the #MeToo movement has placed on sexual harassment and violence, it is quite possible that these protests will make a difference.

Socialists must come out strongly against the wider threat to the feminist movement's gains that Kavanaugh and other current establishment figures represents, while rejecting liberal illusions that a bourgeois court provides a reli-

able means of protecting and extending these gains.

As Marxists, we think capitalist society replicates class divisions through the family unit. In the US, the class-exploitative role of controlling reproduction is horrifically visible in how the state closely polices working-class parenting through services ostensibly aimed at child support, and in how working-class women, especially those from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, are both sterilised and denied abortion.

It is also worth stressing the significance of the overwhelmingly private US healthcare system, since medical insurance seldom covers abortion. A 2016 study by the Guttmacher Institute found that 53% of patients in the US pay for their own abortion out of pocket.

We know from recent experiences in Ireland and Argentina that even a traditionally church-dominated society can witness a massive surge against restrictive abortion laws. We also know from the strikes called by McDonald's workers over the handling of sexual harassment claims that feminist issues not conventionally framed in terms of workers' rights can be brought front-and-centre in workplace organising.

The key demand that links all these issues together is the right for women to exercise their bodily autonomy.

Socialists should use the present opening to build a strong political will from below to defend and advance women's rights, and explicitly link these to class struggle.

“Feeling the Bern”: prospects for the American left

LETTERS

One of many international-themed sessions at The World Transformed this year, four members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) discussed different perspectives for the American left.

The panel was chaired by *Jacobin* editor Bhaskar Sunkara, who opened by asking the panellists about their political upbringings and how they became socialists. A common thread that ran through all the answers was the realisation that the Democrats and the Republicans were ultimately two sides of the same coin.

Lee Carter, a legislator in Virginia, was motivated to get involved after discovering he had no protections regarding workplace injuries. Julia Salazar, a DSA candidate for the New York State Senate, spoke of her experience organising rent strikes as a college student. And Alexandra Rojas, a director of Justice Democrats, explained her initial involvement in the Bernie Sanders campaign.

The next topic was the use of the term “democratic socialism”. In the UK, the term is often used to refer to achieving socialism through parliament and to distinguish it from “bad” revolutionary socialism. In the USA, it seems to be used to associate the movement with the Democratic Party but also to show it is an independent organisation. Defining yourself as a socialist in America can receive some hostility, but Carter was happy to say he simply calls himself a socialist. His views were summarised well in the phrase: “If it isn’t democratic, it isn’t socialism.”

This socialist revival is still in its early days, and as such there are very few potential leaders. The question of a “Bernie 2020” campaign was posed, and Rojas affirmed that such a campaign would have the same, if not more, energy. Rojas also explained how ‘traditional’ Democrats are now displaying their left-wing credentials, from Elizabeth Warren to Joe Kennedy III. It is a positive step that mainstream opinion is moving to the left, but



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Julia Salazar

the movement must be wary about getting too close to the Democratic Party.

On the subject of the party, there are three main ideas for building the American left further. The first is to create a “Labor Party”, a tactic preferred by some on the far left. The next idea is to flood the Democratic Party and try to transform it from the inside. This tactic has issues in that the party is more a loose structure than anything like a European political party, and has no accountability to the grassroots. The final idea is a combination of the first two, whereby the left continues organising through the DSA with the ultimate intention of breaking from the party. The three panellists preferred the final strategy, extolling the virtues of uniting around common principles and harnessing the power of social media. It is no wonder Momentum in the UK are so keen to work with the DSA.

It is heartening to see socialists winning elections at state and federal level. However, it will take a lot more effort to rebuild the strength of the trade unions and potentially a socialist party.

Steve Allen, Guildford

All states are racist endeavours

Michael Elms in *Solidarity* 478 (“A racist endeavour?”) failed to mention an important and often overlooked part of the text included with the IHRA definition and examples of antisemitism. Doing so would strengthen his overall argument.

The text says that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. [...] Contemporary examples of antisemitism [...] could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:” and then lists the examples.

With this caveat the example discussed has a more specific meaning, and limited applicability. The example was: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.”

The formation, consolidation and perpetuation of modern nation states generally involves dividing the world into people who are automatically members of that nation state, and those who aren’t. This is often based on or encourages ideas of different “races”, and so arguably all nation states are intrinsically racist.

Most people who believe this still generally support the right to self-determination. A

tiny number on the left do not support this principle ever.

As recognised by the caveat above, there is clearly nothing antisemitic about believing that all states are racist endeavours, or denying the right to self-determination for anyone. This would be misguided, but is too general to be antisemitic.

On the left however, Israel is often treated as uniquely being intrinsically racist. Additionally, unlike with almost any other people, Jewish Israelis are denied the right to self-determination.

It is demanded that Israel dismantle itself or subsume itself into a wider state, one in which Jewish Israelis are a minority. Similar demands are not made of Pakistani Muslims, Kurdish or French people, or Palestinian Arabs. Indeed, Palestinian Arabs’ right to self-determination is often privileged over Jewish Israelis’.

Many states have committed horrific racist and colonial atrocities. The response in general is not to deny self-determination. The singling out of Israel has an antisemitic history and leads to antisemitic conclusions.

Mike Zubrowski, Bristol

Complacent Trotskyism

It is a pity that in his unreflective and rather complacent review of my book *Contemporary Trotskyism* Colin Foster did not seek to engage with the weaknesses of his own movement, one of the main themes of the book.

The AWL, for example, in its 52 years of existence has never achieved a membership of more than 250. The British Trotskyist movement that was briefly united in a single body in the late 1940s (the RCP) has over the intervening period fragmented into around 20 organizations. Since the 2008 recession British Trotskyism has made almost no headway in terms of membership or political influence. On the international plane (a topic on which Foster says nothing), the 80th anniversary of the foundation of Trotsky’s Fourth International has been celebrated by no less than 23 Internationals, at least six of which have a significant number of national affiliates. Last, and by no means least, no Trotskyist organization has ever led a revolution or built an

enduring mass party.

One might have thought these and other problems documented in the book merited a more considered and thoughtful response about the policies, activities, structure and leadership of Trotskyist organizations (and his bizarre helicopter analogy is neither). All he offers by way of explanation is the familiar story of environmental determinism: the weight of bourgeois ideology and the baleful influence of Stalinism, particularly the latter, have “mis-shaped the Trotskyist spectrum, and are the basic reason for many of the pathologies which infest it.” But even in a hostile environment, don’t the strategic and tactical choices of organizational leaders make a difference?

And aren’t those choices, including decisions about factions and splits, a significant part of the explanation for the parlous state of the Trotskyist movement?

John Kelly, London



France 68: Big opportunity for the left. Henri Weber (right) was then a leading Trotskyist. Then Weber became a Socialist Party big wig. How can we consolidate our opportunities?

Factions and cure-alls

John Kelly reproaches me for not adducing “decisions about factions and splits [as] a significant part of the explanation for the parlous state of the Trotskyist movement”.

John has read our literature quite assiduously (even if his book shows he got the wrong end of several sticks: we discussed that when John came to our summer school in June).

So he knows that for over 20 years now we have been criticising “Zinovievist” culture in the would-be Trotskyist movement — a model of “Bolshevism” based on Zinoviev’s “Bolshevisation” drive of 1924-5, not on the Bolshevik party which made the 1917 revolution — as an engine of splits, demoralisation, and intellectual impoverishment.

It has become the norm for would-be Trotskyist groups to demand that all members not just cooperate in duly-decided activities (which is reasonable, indeed essential), but also that they pretend in public to agree with the group’s majority view even when in fact they dissent.

Equally, the norm is to license members to form factions only in specified short periods before conferences, and only on an approved range of issues; to deny those factions due representation on broad leading committees; and to foster a culture where disagreement can be interpreted only vituperatively as “deviation” or condescendingly as “not understanding”.

If the argument has escaped John’s memory, he will find it pulled together and sum-

marised in our introduction to our new book, Max Shachtman’s *In Defence of Bolshevism*.

Why didn’t I make a lot of that in my review of John’s book? Because in his book he systematically presents things as if the most caricaturally “Zinovievist” of the would-be Trotskyist groups represent the whole spectrum, and takes no note of the striving to develop a different model by ourselves (and, at times, by other groups).

And because I didn’t want to be facile.

If we had had a good democratic regime in the movement around 1968 and the early 70s, that would have helped enormously and maybe decisively to consolidate sizeable Trotskyist groups from the opportunities then, groups which could in turn have made a decisive difference in those crises of the late 1970s and early 80s which in fact ended with the triumph of neoliberalism.

But it’s *not* true — we activists are bitterly aware that it’s not true — that a good democracy and correct criticisms of the mainstream are enough in themselves to make our groups prosper. There are times when we can progress only inch by inch. Marx knew that well too: at his death in 1883 he had scarce bigger a circle around him than when he joined the Communist League in 1847.

On whether we build what we can in those times, and we keep our political ideas clean and bright — rather than collapsing in despair — a lot depends for the future.

Colin Foster, Islington

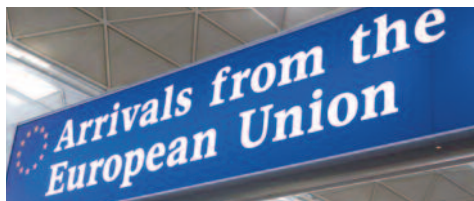
Tories scapegoat migrants

Despite being castigated and forced into retreat over the “hostile environment” and the Windrush scandal on immigration the Tories are now, as Brexit looms, preparing to betray EU migrants present and future.

They plan a new White Paper on immigration policy. We don’t yet know exact details but we do know for certain that it will put the rights of business first and not human need. There will be restrictions on immigration based on skills and wealth.

Currently, any EU national, skilled or “unskilled” can move around Europe to work or to look for work. Under new proposals, visas will only be granted to those classed as skilled workers and only when the skills in question are said to be in shortage. It is also likely that EU nationals will not get preferential treatment in the skills market.

As socialists we are for parity and free movement between all nations, not just a select few. But the proposal to reverse current conditions for EU nationals and introduce a tiered system based on “skills” (de facto on income) and wealth is both wrong in principle, discriminates against the less well off, and it will help underpin strict and hostile



immigration rules for all working-class people from all parts of the globe.

At the same time as restricting the movement of so-called unskilled labour, virtual free movement is to be retained for the better off. Priti Patel, writing in April 2018 argued that “people from the EU who are self-sufficient, and thus not competing for jobs, and entrepreneurs wanting to set up businesses and create jobs should be able to benefit from a presumption in favour of being able to come to the UK”.

The rich have no borders.

In sum, the post Brexit landscape for migrant workers from Europe and beyond has become very uncertain and unclear, even though for now existing EU migrants will be able to stay in the UK.

We expect policy from the Tories to reflect

their priorities. What is difficult to understand is the reticence from sections of the left to take a stand against the biggest single attack on migrants in a generation. The consequences of Brexit for migrant workers is downplayed or obfuscated. Whilst many who support or have supported “Lexit” blast the unfairness of fortress Europe, they fail to explain how a successful Brexit involving the reversion to little-England borders will help to extend freedom of movement to those outside the EU.

In the current lexicon of the left “working-class” and “migrant” are often two separate categories; the working-class in this context means “native” working class and the migrant is classed as a tool of capital, a means to divide the working. The most basic level of international solidarity is missing. The left has long had a poor record of pushing for unions to organise migrant workers.

For the months after June 2016, Corbyn stood firm on the question of migration and free movement, refusing to talk in terms of numbers or caps. That stance has changed; Labour has now more-or-less conceded on the question. While continuing to state that

immigration is not the cause of depressed wages or the strain on public services, Diane Abbott has announced an immigration policy with some of the same basic components as the Tories; a system based on the demands of the labour market and not on the human need to travel to find a livelihood. Even the Tories know that migration does not suppress wages. Theresa May has suppressed nine separate government reports that make this quite explicit.

Labour cannot hope to undermine the Tories racist scapegoating of migrants and refugees whilst pushing policies like “500 extra border guards” or a commitment to retain most detention centres or indeed, a promise to fight illegal immigration – that eternal and mythical “problem”. Labour should welcome migrants and refugees.

We need to keep up our arguments against Brexit and all it brings with it, in defence of free movement and its extension to workers around the globe. Human beings are not illegal. We need solidarity between workers of all nations, not divisions and borders.

Brexit: a feint rather than a victory

Normal procedure at Labour conference is that when there are lots of motions on an issue, then they are “composed” (merged), usually to produce two alternative texts, for voting, to summarise the main variant views.

It is also normal that if one mover wants to refuse to be in a composite, then they can insist their text stand alone. It will get debated only after the composites, but it is on the order paper.

At Labour Party conference on 22-24 September in Liverpool, Labour officials overrode those norms in a way rarely seen under when the party was under the most right-wing leadership.

There were more motions on Brexit than ever before on a single issue at Labour conference. Officials gathered all the delegates with such motions into a compositing meeting, and browbeat them into accepting a single composite, so that there would be *no debate* on conference floor.

The delegate from Stevenage CLP demanded that their motion, upholding free movement from EU countries to Britain and Britain to EU countries, stand outside the composite.

The chair just brushed him aside and closed the meeting.

The composite which conference then had no choice but to vote for featured a number of “warm words” which made many anti-Brexit, pro-free-movement campaigners see it as a step forward.

But really they budged Labour policy not at all. The text did say “a relationship with the EU that guarantees full participation in the Single Market”, but it was deliberately those roundabout words rather than “remain in the Single Market”, and the logical implication of free movement was directly contradicted by reaffirming the “six tests” which are supposed to set the frame of Labour policy on Brexit.

It did say “if we cannot get a general election Labour must support all options remaining on the table, including campaigning for a

public vote”, but the composite’s movers, the GMB, have explicitly opposed any new vote with “remain” as an option, and so did Unite’s Steve Turner and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell.

Labour leaders had already said that they would keep another referendum open as an option, so the warm words were a feint rather than a substantive shift.

Labour’s “six tests” on Brexit are as follows. Instructively, when Tom Watson was interviewed in advance of the Labour Party conference Brexit debate, he tried to avoid embarrassment pre-emptively by telling the interviewer not to ask him what the six tests are. Maybe Keir Starmer knows off-hand. Few others do.

SIX

1. Does it ensure a strong and collaborative future relationship with the EU?

2. Does it deliver the “exact same benefits” as we currently have as members of the Single Market and Customs Union?

3. Does it ensure the fair management of migration in the interests of the economy and communities?

4. Does it defend rights and protections and prevent a race to the bottom?

5. Does it protect national security and our capacity to tackle cross-border crime?

6. Does it deliver for all regions and nations of the UK?

No.6 is a coded version of the Irish border issue. No.5 is a coded version of cross-Europe police cooperation, which the Tories are as keen on as Labour. No.4 is a coded version of: don’t scrap TUPE, Redundancy Payments, etc. But the majority of the Tories, all but the deregulation ultras, don’t want to scrap those (not for now, anyway, and they’ll be happy to promise they won’t).

No.3 is code for end free movement. It leaves open how vicious the crackdown on migrants will be, but you can surmise that “communities” there means “British people”, excluding people in Europe who want to migrate to Britain, or people in Britain who

want to migrate to the EU.

Thus no.2 is the only hard divide between a Labour Brexit and what the Tories are likely to negotiate, if they negotiate successfully. Really, even no.2 scarcely distinguishes Labour from the Hammond wing of the Tories.

The “tests” accept all the market-oriented rules of the EU which the Lexiters cite as the EU’s great evils and their reason for backing Brexit, but reject what from a left-wing viewpoint is a boon of the EU, i.e. free movement.

The “tests” are also undeliverable. The only thing in the short term which can deliver the “exact same benefits” as the Single Market and Customs Union is... being in the Single Market and the Customs Union. That contradicts ending free movement.

The “six tests” serve only as a device to justify Labour voting against any Brexit deal the Tories fix up. Indeed Labour should vote against any such deal. But it needs better positive policies than the “six tests”.

With the “six-tests” policy, the proposal of an early general election to settle the Brexit issue is an empty one. We want to see an early general election. As Labour policy stands, if the Tories have negotiated a deal, Labour’s pitch will be, in effect: we are better negotiators, so can negotiate a deal broadly like the Tories’ one, but better. Doubtful. Certainly giving the electorate no chance to deliver a clear line on Brexit through the ballot box.

Even if the Tories stumble into a “no deal” Brexit and then an early general election Labour explicitly promises the following pitch: we are better negotiators, so we can go back to the EU and make a good deal out of “no deal”. Even more doubtful.

The conference showed a groundswell against Brexit. The job now is to build Left Against Brexit activist groups which will campaign both for proper democracy in the labour movement, and for a substantive shift of labour-movement policy.

• Full text of conference composite: bit.ly/dl-brx

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LABOUR CONFERENCE 2018

Democracy: now dry out the damp squib!

By Martin Thomas

Sadly, Luke Akehurst, honcho of the right-wing in the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), is right about what happened at Labour Party conference on the Democracy Review.

"The Democracy Review was a total damp squib... All the key decisions around youth, student structures and local government have been postponed for a year".

Some positive changes were made by the shreds which got to conference floor from the Democracy Review or by rule-changes submitted by CLPs. But, three years on from the Corbyn shock, none of the basic structural changes made by Blair's coup in 1994-7 have been reversed and replaced by democracy.

This is not just a matter of how Labour conference works. It is a matter of what sort of movement the Labour Party is on the ground.

Blair not only changed rules, but changed the relationship between the Labour Party and the working-class electorate into one mediated much more through the "spin-docs" dealings with the media than through an active membership in dialogue with people around us in workplaces and communities. The big rise in Labour membership since 2015 has changed that to some degree, but left a long way to go.

The average age of Labour members is still old — 53, only a bit below the Tories' average

of 57. More Labour members (29%) are over 65 than are under 44 (28%). Only 4% of Labour members are under 24 — a lower figure even than the Tories' 5%.

Of those who are members on paper, 41% said they had had no face-to-face (rather than electronic) contact with other Labour Party members — although the survey was done straight after the 2017 general election — and only 28% said they had "frequent" face-to-face communication.

Asked how they'd come to join, only 4% said they had joined because approached by someone from their local Labour Party — a much smaller percentage than for the Tories (15%) or Lib-Dems (10%). 93% had approached the Labour Party (i.e., presumably, electronically) on their own initiative (bit.ly/pmp-18).

LEADERSHIP

The most positive changes voted through at the 22-24 September conference were, paradoxically, those which drew most (and well-founded) criticism from the left for their partial character.

Constituencies will be able to have a selection for their parliamentary candidates (rather than a current MP continuing automatically) if either one-third of ward branches, or one-third of trade-union and other affiliates, demand it. The left wanted "open selection" (as for council candidates, people in trade-union posts, etc.), but the



new rule lowers the bar for selections a lot.

Candidates for Labour Party leader will need nominations from 10% of MPs and either 5% of CLPs or 5% of unions to get on the ballot paper. The Democracy Review had proposed that the bar should be 5% of MPs and either 10% of CLPs or 10% of unions.

There will be rules for Young Labour conference (at present Labour HQ makes them up each year as it wishes), and conferences (with rights to submit motions to the main conference) will be set up for black and minority-ethnic and for disabled members. (At present black and minority-ethnic representation in the Labour Party is through a "BAME Labour" "socialist society" which is tiny and dominated by right-winger Keith Vaz).

Labour will "develop systems to allow Young Labour Groups and Youth officers to communicate with Young Labour members" (they can't at present!)

Conference will debate 10 subjects chosen by CLPs, and 10 by unions, each year, rather

than four plus four. The requirement that motions be "contemporary" (refer to something after early August) has been dropped. (87 CLP motions were ruled out this year for not being "contemporary" enough; it's been a lot more in previous years).

There was a vote to repeal the "one-year rule" which says that rule changes from CLPs can be debated only the year after they're submitted. A lot of the other things passed were mostly tidying-up, or vague promises for future change. On many issues the NEC has been authorised to draft and implement the rule change. The NEC was authorised to delegate its powers to suspend members and so on to anyone it wants.

The Democracy Review report is 103 pages, with a lot of useful stuff on at least some issues (8 pages on Young Labour, for example). Very little of that made it to conference.

For 90-odd years the Labour Party was a broad-church organisation. The membership

Why the Labour right praises McDonnell

By Chris Reynolds

The social-democratic worthy Will Hutton, in his heyday the chief advocate that Britain can come good by adopting "Rhenish capitalism" on the German model, is happy about Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell's plan for a bit of worker shareownership, as announced at (but not put for debate to) Labour Party conference.

Hutton's praise is sincere, but double-edged if read by socialists.

"Today John McDonnell has crossed a line: by wanting workers as shareholders and represented on boards, he signals that capitalism can be made to work for the common good. His comrades from the 1970s would turn in their graves..."

"His proposed inclusive ownership funds demand that every [publicly listed] company with more than 250 people progressively allocate 10% of its shares to be held on

the employees' behalf... if you recast it as a compulsory employee stock ownership plan... is trying to achieve what George Osborne's 2013 Enterprise Act attempted but failed miserably to do".

Hutton approves. But a lot of us "comrades from the 1970s" are not yet in our graves, and a lot of new young activists agree with us in fighting for workers' and democratic control, not a 10% "worker" nudge for capitalism.

The worker reps on boards will be a minority, probably tied by boardroom confidentiality, and much more likely to be made a channel for telling workers they must help the bosses succeed than to become a voice for workers' rights.

The £500 per year which workers are due to get can be evaded by companies in several ways. For most workers in big companies, it is not a lot anyway.

Hypothetically, the scheme would give much more to the government — effectively

by a tax on dividends — than to workers. But (if the scheme is legislated) that will probably just mean big firms using share buybacks instead of dividends, routing profits into companies within their empires which have fewer than 250 employees, or taking the shares private, off the public stock exchange.

McDonnell's scheme is loosely based on ideas from the 1970s Swedish Social Democrats (the "Meidner Plan") and the early 1920s German Social Democrats ("Sachwerterfassung").

Both in Sweden and Germany, the Social Democrats never carried through their plans. But the plans were intended to establish majority worker ownership and control of all big industry over time (Sweden) or at least to expropriate a large chunk of big-business assets to pay for social spending (Germany).

McDonnell has watered down the idea so much that it has lost all that was radical in the Swedish and German plans.



Rudolf Meidner

never had real control over the parliamentary leadership, but it could debate, make its views known, and concertedly challenge the parliamentary leadership.

Blair stopped that by drastically shrinking the space for debate at Labour Party conference (and Gordon Brown temporarily “improved” on Blair by banning motions to conference altogether in 2007-9). Blair insisted that when Labour conference voted against its wishes (which it still did), that was of no consequence. Not by rule-change, but by fiat, policy-making was shifted from conference to the “Leader’s Office”.

OPAQUE

The elected National Executive, which had to some extent been the custodian of conference decisions between conferences, was deprived of its political role.

That was shifted to an opaque, highly-bureaucratic, and rarely-meeting National Policy Forum. Setup under Blair’s predecessor Kinnock, (This year’s Democracy Review proposed to restore a NEC “policy committee”, and to reform the NPF, but those proposals were stalled).

All those Blair changes tended to deprive local Labour Parties of life — their votes on policy really could go nowhere — and the Blairites encouraged the trend by saying that motions and votes and debates should be eschewed as “boring”. Procedures were changed to deprive local Labour Parties of any control of Labour in local government.

Since 2015 — actually, since 2009-10 — some life has been regained by adjustments within the Blair-type structures. But unless we use the Corbyn moment to restore real democratic structures, that life can be snuffed out quite fast post-Corbyn.

The conference also failed to reverse some regressions new since 2015. Although Blair was famously and rightly reviled for “control freakery”, his regime expelled nowhere near as many left-wingers as have been excluded without precise charges, and without a hearing, let alone an appeal, since 2015.

Labour HQ has systematically exploited a vague rule saying that support for *any* polit-

ical group other than an official Labour one (CND? Greenpeace?) can be grounds for instant expulsion.

As Dave Levy reports, a rule-change to fix that abuse was defeated.

“It proposed qualifying the type of organisation that might lead to expulsion as one that conflicted with Labour’s aims and values and placed the process by which such exclusion would be undertaken under auspices of the disciplinary process... The current rule allows a secret decision and no appeal...”

The Conference Arrangements Committee got away with mistitling the rule-change “membership of other parties”, which, as Dave Levy points out, “isn’t what the rule is about; its current words make ‘support for organisations other than official Labour organisations’ an act that renders one liable for exclusion”. (And “support”, too, can be interpreted as broadly or tightly as the apparatchik wishes).

The Corbyn Labour leadership is not changing the Blairite structures (as distinct from modifying them, nudging things within their limits, etc.)

We need a rank-and-file campaign to democratise Labour:

- **Making conference really the supreme policy-making body**
- **Restoring the political role of the NEC as the custodian between conferences of conference decisions. Scrapping the NPF**
- **Ending administrative expulsions, introducing due process, re-establishing Labour as a “broad church”, open to all socialist currents as long as they back Labour in elections**
- **Enabling Young Labour to develop by allowing it to have a constitution of its own**
- **Democratising Labour students.**

- Full Democracy Review report: bit.ly/dr-full
- Detailed account from conference: <http://davelevy.info/blog/>
- Documentation from conference: <http://wiki.davelevy.info/labour-conference-2018/>

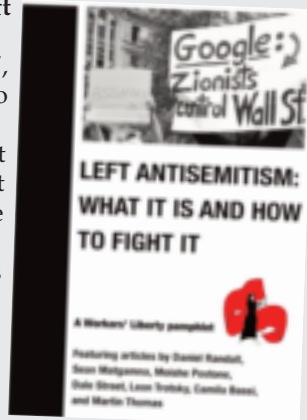
Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it

Since Jeremy Corbyn became leader of the Labour Party a number of political storms have taken place in which Corbyn and the wider left have been accused of antisemitism.

Some on the left contend such accusations are “smears”, with no basis in reality, fabricated by right-wing forces to impede the rise of the left.

We disagree. We have argued for many years that certain aspects of the political common sense dominant on the far left, particularly in terms of how it views the Israel/Palestine conflict have antisemitic implications.

This pamphlet republishes a selection of articles written by members and supporters of Workers’ Liberty, along with an interview with the late Marxist theorist Moise Postone, and an article by the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky. It is a contribution to the political debate and education which we believe is necessary.



- Available for £3 from www.workersliberty.org/as-pamphlet
- A further selection of articles can be found here: workersliberty.org/left-as



The Israel-Palestine debate

Diary of a delegate

As with many things at Labour conference, the setup for debates is at best strange and at worst actively unhelpful. The session on “International issues and Security” covered discussion on the Brexit motion, a motion on Windrush and a motion that dominated the debate on Israel/Palestine.

Prior to the debate Workers’ Liberty activists ran a stall outside the conference centre and The World Transformed to highlight the issues. We argued to back Corbyn’s position for two states in Israel-Palestine, against Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaigning, for direct links and solidarity, and called on people to acknowledge that antisemitism is a real issue in Labour.

At least 50 copies of our new pamphlet *Left antisemitism and how to fight it* were sold to conference and TWT attendees. We got a largely positive reception and willingness to discuss the issues quite out of line from what you’d expect from social media noise.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Labour Against the Witch hunt had given away a lot of Palestinian flags. When the delegate from Harlow got up to move the composite (denouncing US stopping of aid to UNRWA and UK arms sales to Israel), they were greeted with enthusiastic flag waving. The formal ban on delegates waving flags was apparently dropped for this session, although, in fairness, it would have been difficult to stop.

The delegate’s speech was largely unobjectionable except for what he didn’t say, rather than what he did say. He followed Emily Thornberry in championing Labour’s role in Cable Street (actually it was the ILP which did most of the work) and missed out the role played by the Jewish community.

When he ran out of time he told the chair, Rhea Wolfson, that he would continue as he was speaking on behalf of the Palestinians. This provoked chants of “Free Free Palestine” and “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free!” Whatever others thought, those who *started* the chant are well aware that mean Israel being wiped off the map by a conquering army moving from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea.

To my mind and for a minority of delegates, the atmosphere changed quite dramatically at this point.

Subsequent speeches supported the motion. Most were unobjectionable (as was the motion itself), but they were all followed by the same mass flag-waving. When one delegate, Stephen Lapsley from Derby South, called out the hypocrisy of much of the left in only focusing their solidarity efforts on Palestine rather than on what is happening in Idlib, and called for more to be done about antisemitism in the Party, he was met with bemusement.

Eve Wise, however, decided to use her speech to discuss the “false antisemitism witch hunt” and advised people to watch Al Jazeera’s “The Lobby” (see critical review here bit.ly/2IvT8pT).

Corbyn was present for the motion being moved not for the debate, but he did catch all of Emily Thornberry’s speech just before it.

Thornberry’s speech was rambling but she said; “There are sickening individuals on the fringes of our movement, who use our legitimate support for Palestine as a cloak and a cover for their despicable hatred of Jewish people, and their desire to see Israel destroyed. These people stand for everything that we have always stood against and they must be kicked out of our party.”

These people are not just on the fringes of our movement. I sat just behind the honourable member for Derby North — a man who is happy to peddle the idea that the whole anti-semitism issue is really a matter of it being “weaponised” by the right to harm Jeremy Corbyn. Extreme Holocaust denial may be on the fringes, but antisemitism in the form of wanting to see Israel destroyed, as shown by the chanting at Labour conference, is not.

In a disgusting attack “Labour Party Marxists” in their *Red Pages* bulletin took exception with Rhea Wolfson being allowed to chair the session on Palestine! She has pro-Palestinian views? Ah, she is a member of the Jewish Labour Movement and a Zionist! They raised no objections to anyone else chairing sessions.

That sort of dog-whistle antisemitism from LPM coupled with the glowing reception two members of Neturei Karta got when leafleting shows that some Labour members have a long way to go on managing to make solidarity with Palestinians without falling into the trap of antisemitic actions and views.

Israel-Palestine: ways to reconciliation

Hussein Agha is senior associate member of St. Antony's College, Oxford, and co-author (with Ahmad Samih Khalidi) of *A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine*. He has been involved in Palestinian peace negotiations for three decades. We reprint here with permission from *Fathom* journal, an extract from an interview with *Fathom* editor Alan Johnson.

HA: Looking back, I have concluded that Oslo was more than anything else an attempt by Israel to resolve its security predicament by making the Palestinians responsible for Israel's security in the territories and saving Israeli money allocated for basic services in these areas. That required giving up some already-Palestinian areas that they were not interested in keeping, like Gaza.

The idea was that instead of Israel being in the front line of containing Palestinian violence, it would be the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). It didn't work out perfectly, but that was the idea.

I don't think Rabin had clarity about a Palestinian state. He sometimes hinted it would be a state, sometimes less than a state, sometimes a very limited form of sovereign state – it was never clear. There were some Israelis around the Oslo process who really did want a Palestinian state, but I think for the majority of mainstream Israelis it was not about ending the conflict, but about defusing the violence that they feared the First Intifada would develop into and saving resources spent to upkeep Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza. Rabin's concern was above all Israel's security and not a historical resolution of the conflict. He was not averse to it, but only if Israel's security was the focus. All other historical outstanding issues were of lesser importance to him.

I believe the Palestinians entered Oslo with good intentions, hoping for an independent, sovereign state. After the assassination of Rabin, Arafat felt that was no longer going to happen...

AJ: Reading your essays, a dominant theme is that the peace process was fixated on the "1967 file", but no secure peace was possible without taking up the "1948 file". This was Oslo's basic design flaw, so to speak. You have written: "Oslo sought to trade 1967 against 1948 — that is, to obscure the historical roots of the conflict in return for a political settlement that offered a partial redress that focussed solely on post-1967 realities. Current circumstances have begun to undo this suppression. Oslo could not bypass history, and its limitations have only highlighted the difficulty of ignoring the deeper roots of the struggle over Palestine."

What's inside "the 1948 file" — much more than simply the right of return, if I understand you correctly — and why must a successful peace process find a way to open it up, in your view?

HA: Oslo pretends that 1948 never took place, but ask yourself what is the origin of this conflict? It was not 1967 or the absence of a Palestinian state. I was a school kid in Beirut before 1967 and everywhere you looked and everything you heard constantly reminded you of the conflict and the suffering of the Palestinians. The Palestinians were present on the territory between 1948 and

1967 and they did not create a state. Their focus was on "liberation" and "return". To try to find a solution that fantasises that these '48 issues do not exist, well, it's problematic at best, because it does not address the core of the conflict. Resolving "occupation" does not resolve "dispossession" and "dispersal". Am I calling for the destruction of Israel? No! I am calling for recognising both historical and current realities and acknowledging the nature of the beast, rather than hiding behind one's finger. That is the only way to reach a genuine peace and coexistence.

In every negotiation the Israelis say to the Palestinians, "Oh, we can't go back to 1948!" Israel was willing to resolve the issues of 1967 and occupation on its own terms but didn't want to touch the ghosts of 1948. It is something very difficult for Israelis to come to terms with. They want to delete the memories of what happened from Palestinian consciousness. It cannot be done. For, in a sense, that is what defines a unified Palestinian nation.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

...I have started to become attracted to something I have always not found relevant: a "truth and reconciliation" process... In all the negotiations I was involved in I argued that Israelis had their narratives and Palestinians had their narratives and we shouldn't waste time disputing them.

My thought was "let's find out the arrangement that will make these two cherished narratives irrelevant to a solution." I now think that approach does not work. You keep being pulled back into the original issues and so into narratives, identities, feelings, psychologies. The only way to deal with all that is not just through elite-level negotiations but through a more public process, perhaps a truth and reconciliation process.... I do not know yet how such a process can be put together or begin, whether it is a prerequisite for a settlement or a parallel process or something that can only take place after a peace agreement has been reached. In all cases, like reality, it's going to be messy. By providing a "neat" model, Oslo distorted the untidy and chaotic reality.

...The right seems to understand the issues better than the left. The original historical right, the Herut and its ilk, did not believe in separation. I remember a fascinating meeting I had with the late Eliyahu Ben-Elissar, a member of Irgun, a Likudnik who became Ambassador to Egypt, the US and France. This is what he told me: "I have no problem being in a state with you guys. As a matter of fact, Jabotinsky once said that Israel could have a Jewish president for one term, then an Arab president for another term. I know this is not possible in the current circumstances, but this is where we come from. The Israeli left are racists who look down on you and just want to separate from you by giving you territory. I want to fulfil my Jewishness but I do not want you to suffer because of it. For me, Hebron is much more important than Tel Aviv. For someone on the left, Tel Aviv is more important, and they are willing to give up on Hebron. They are not the true carriers of the flame of the Jewish people."

It was fascinating to hear that. Lots of people told me later that he just said it to impress me. I don't know, but it was intriguing. What he clearly understood was that the Palestinians, like the Jews, can never "give up" on the whole of Palestine. People on the left, by con-

trast, say "Yes, the Palestinians have reconciled themselves with the 22 per cent." There may be something worth engaging on between the Israeli right and the Palestinians. I am trying to find out exactly what. This is important because Israeli society has shifted to the right and to engage it one has to be sensitive to the new sensibilities. I know that the current climate

is not conducive to that and the right feels triumphant and believes that their total victory is at hand. But once they realise that that is not the case and costly chaos and dear uncertainty are around the corner; maybe there will be a possibility to consider some positive consequences of their ideological roots. I am not sufficiently naïve not to recognise that although some of the right, sometimes, talk about "equal rights", à la President Reuven Rivlin, they will not compromise on the need for the state to remain in Jewish hands.

It is unfortunate that the awareness of the centrality of the 1948 issues is often used by the right-wing in Israel to highlight the impossibility of reaching an agreement....

By contrast, the left's approach is to deny our feelings. You see, the Palestinians feel an attachment to the whole land. Whether you're a two statist or a one statist, or whatever, the attachment is still there... The eternal challenge remains whether there are ways to reconcile both peoples' attachment to the totality of the land through a mutually acceptable peaceful arrangement. Please do not misunderstand me; I am not calling for a one state solution. It is much more complicated. I can even foresee how a two-state solution could be a more appropriate route to this objective.

AJ: Of course a major part of the '48 file is the question of 'the right of return'. You have discussed this with nuance. On the one hand you have said it is a right, therefore the demand is principled. On the other hand, you point out it has been a difficult issue to deal with in terms of a "two states for two peoples" solution... can you talk about what you think the best approach is?

HA: In the past ten years I have tried to avoid, sometimes successfully, a discussion of rights. I don't want you to recognise my rights; don't expect me to recognise your rights. Let's leave rights aside and try to solve the problems. A consideration of rights inevitably leads to complex philosophical, historical and legal deliberations that are not always conclusively settled. Although of utmost importance, such debates do not always lead to workable realistic outcomes; let's put those aside and let's talk about a problem we have, which is how to pragmatically address the plight of the refugees.

Second, there are certain things that can't be ignored. If a person has documentation that a property is theirs, and meanwhile nothing has legally negated that deed, but that plot has gone to someone else, then that issue has to be resolved on a legal basis. There should be recourse to a neutral body to which the first person can say, 'This is my land, these are the deeds.' Yes, the other person will then say, 'That was many years ago. I am there now.' OK, so now we have a legal



Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton and Yasser Arafat meet in Oslo

dispute between two parties over a property that has to be settled by an acceptable and legal authority. Private property is an essential pillar of modern society and ought to be protected.

Third, if you agree on two states, a Jewish state and a Palestinian state, then any resolution of the refugee issue, of the right of return, has to be consistent with the existence of these two states. So you cannot have Jews in a Palestine overwhelmingly taking over a Palestinian state, just as you cannot have Arabs or Palestinians doing the same in Israel. We do not know how demographics and laws will change in 50 years and who will be the majority and where, but for the time being, if you accept two states for two peoples, it should be the guiding principle.

Fourth, in the two states case, the refugee must be offered alternatives. One possibility is some form of psychological restitution and material compensation. But to feel comfortable with the idea of reparation you need a public recognition that a wrong was committed in the first place... The second thing is that the person must have the freedom to choose; it should not be decided on his behalf and shoved down his throat.

Rather than be treated as the wretched of the wretches, the refugee should feel himself / herself to be a positive contributor to humanity. His forgiveness and generosity of spirit in agreeing not to summon the past for the sake of peace and a better future should be publicly commended and highly valued. I think such an approach will reassure the refugee of a humanity he/she has been denied and encourage him/her to be more flexible in response to concrete material proposals. This has not happened before. If you resolve the refugee problem in a manner that is agreeable, albeit grudgingly, to the refugees; you would be extracting the poison of 1948 and going far in truly ending the conflict.

Right now we are not dealing with this issue. Until we do, talk of "end of conflict" is bogus. Many are totally focused on the text of an agreement.... Of course, signing a document could help facilitate an end of conflict. There are many steps that after the signing would be much more possible than before the signing. But, if one only relies on the agreement to end the conflict; sadly, he or she will be disappointed.

An agreement does not end the conflict, but could be the first step in a long and often painful course to achieve that goal.

Abridged and reprinted from fathomjournal.org/oslo25-we-must-liberate-our-thinking-from-the-oslo-straitjacket-an-interview-with-hussein-agma/

The No-Party people

An extract from Sean Matgamna's introduction in Workers' Liberty's new book, *In Defence of Bolshevism*, by Max Shachtman

During the 1980s, a lot of people who thought of themselves as Marxists [grew] indifferent or hostile to any project of building a Marxist organisation.

This tribe, and it was quite an important component of the Labour left, marched or ambled, in so far as it expressed itself explicitly, under the idea: we will develop the influence of Marxism by promoting left-wing ideas in the existing broad labour movement, trade unions and Labour Party. No socialist organisation beyond the Labour Party and its coteries and careerist cliques was needed. The existing structures were sufficient.

This view was not often expressed in coherent argument, yet it was a most important current of thought or half-thought in the labour movement, the "position" of numbers of ex-WRP, ex-SWP, and ex-Militant people who turned the sectarian fetish of "building the party" inside out, and of younger activists who took their cue from them.

This is an important question again now, in the days of the Corbyn surge. Routine labour movement activity is counterposed to the creation of a Marxist movement that is politically and organisationally independent, has a distinct job to do, and rhythms and short term concerns "of its own".

The structures and ethos of either the Labour Party or the trade unions can not substitute for the specific structures required for all-round Marxist — Bolshevik — activity on the three fronts of the class struggle, the trade-union, the political front, and the battle of ideas. You cannot meaningfully develop the "influence of Marxism" as a revolutionary force without building a revolutionary party. In the 1920s Trotsky thought that such a party, the Communist Party then, might slot into the existing framework of a union-backed broad Labour Party. "The Communist Party will occupy the place in the Labour Party that is at present occupied by the Independents".

At the end of the day, both formulas — spreading Marxism and campaigning to invigorate the labour movement in general, and building a revolutionary organisation — mean one and the same thing. At a certain point in the process they will have matched up and merged into one: a mass revolutionary party at the head of the broader labour movement. It is a matter of working out concretely at a given moment which is best of the possible ways the organised collective of Marxists, be they more or less numerous, can relate to an existing mass reformist labour

movement and to ongoing working-class struggles.

More. The Marxists organise themselves so as to fight the class struggle on all three fronts — now. It is ridiculous to suggest that Marxists must wait until the movement is transformed before immersing themselves in the immediate class struggle, trade-union struggles, for example, and doing that effectively, that is, as an organised force. Equally ridiculous is the related idea that an organised collective of Marxists able to act coherently as a fighting organisation is useless in the class struggle here and now. Or any idea that we can transform the labour movement apart from the class struggle.

In 1984-5, the miners' strike could have been won with solidarity action by dockers and other key workers, or had what remained of the local government left, notably Liverpool, opted to fight and coordinate its activity with that of the striking miners. A network of rank-and-file activists in key positions across industry, even if only a few thousand strong, might have won solidarity for the miners — that is, made the difference between possible victory and the all-too-real defeat for the miners, and for the whole working-class movement.

WHO IF NOT?

Who will build that sort of movement if not the Marxists organised as a militant, distinct (for now) minority?

If not now, when; if not us, who? Without revolutionary organisation we can only babble or maintain a preaching sectarian aloofness, muttering whatever self-consoling excuses we can foist on ourselves.

This is the answer to those who conclude from a bad experience with the kitsch-Bolshevik organisations that everything a small Marxist organisation does, beyond routine labour-movement activity, is futile and sectarian. Moreover, individual Marxists naturally vary in knowledge, experience, and aptitude from person to person and area to area. One purpose of a Marxist organisation is to raise the level of the Marxism which the Marxists educate for to the highest level the collective can achieve.

The organisation needed to do the things that the Marxists must do, and only Marxists can do, has to be built over years of smaller struggles, in advance of the big struggles and crises. It has to sustain, and educate itself, by formulating and checking adequate collective responses to political events. That cannot happen without the continual interaction of the Marxist organisation with the working-class struggle and the mass working-class and other movements. A "Marxism" lacking

embodiment in a militant organisation which strives for leadership in economic and political struggles would be like the clock with neither battery nor spring nor digits: an absurdist joke.

Two short quotations from basic Marxist texts sum up the Marxist position here:

"The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement" — Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.

"To base one's program on the logic of the class struggle... these are the rules" — Leon Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism*.

Socialists who know the ABCs of Marxist politics do not wilfully try to "build the party" apart from the labour movement and the working class. But, equally, they do not sink the revolutionary group into the rhythms and norms of a labour movement which is not yet revolutionary and which at best involves only a minority of the working class. That is as much a recipe for suicide as the antics of the sectarians — by an overdose of tranquilisers rather than an excess of one or other of the sectarian hallucinogenics.

The labour movement now has another chance to transform, sharpen, and rebuild itself in politics. That transformation cannot happen spontaneously, as a spin-off of trade union class struggle. Nor can it happen as a by-product of political reform-socialist efforts (for example through the Labour Party under Corbyn). Unless the Marxists are strong enough to shape events we get fiascos and muddle and confusion as in the Bennite left of the 1980s. And catastrophic defeats and regressions. Marxists know that as well as evolution there is devolution, regression, defeat. That was true around 1980. It is true now. The politics of the Corbyns and their Morning Star stink not only of their own wrongheadedness but also, already, of the new defeats they may well bring down on the labour movement.

The last thing the working class needs is another pseudo-Bolshevik "revolutionary

party". But it does need a democratic, rational, non-sectarian Bolshevik organisation to fight the class struggle against the bourgeoisie and for Marxist ideas and class struggle militancy in the labour movement. Again: if not now, when; if not us, who? We must build a democratic Marxist organisation, not a pseudo-Bolshevik sect counterposed, or half-counterposed, to the mass labour movement — a coherent three-front class-struggle Marxist organisation. We must do that, as slowly as necessary and as quickly as possible.

A Marxist organisation, to be effective, to be Marxist in any solid sense, must be an organisation where regular activity with the organisation and regular socialist self-education are conditions of membership.

It must have coherent, coordinated, planned, collective activity. It must have a structure of democratically elected and accountable committees and organisers capable of deciding and carrying through prompt political responses. It must supervise its members who gain official positions in the movement.

To proselytise, to promote its ideas, it must publish and distribute newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, books, leaflets, workplace bulletins, resolutions. No systematic development of Marxist politics, any more than of any other substantial connected body of ideas, is possible without systematically defining, studying, and criticising ideas in print. It must use the internet systematically, too. These requirements for a Marxist organisation are liable, in today's left, to be censured as "sectarian". They are in fact part of what we must learn from the real history of Bolshevism in its great days. They are necessary today if the labour movement is really to be transformed.

Gregory Zinoviev wrote to the IWW in January 1920, as the Communist International was gathering its initial forces: "History does not ask whether we like it or not, whether the workers are ready or not. Here is the opportunity. Take it — and the world will belong to the workers; leave it — there may not be another for generations..."

Democratic centralism

"Democratic centralism", for the Bolsheviks as for other Marxists of their time, was as Lenin described it in 1906: keen, open debate, linked with prompt collective effort in action.

"Universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the unity of an action decided on by the Party".

The term "democratic centralism" had in fact been coined by the Mensheviks in 1905,

as they adapted to Russia more vigorous organisational ideas agreed by the German Social Democrats at their Jena congress in September 1905.

When the Social Democrats abjured "democratic centralism", after World War One, what it mostly meant was that their parliamentarians and officials were shielded from democratic control, and that most of the membership was organised as a passive, only quarter-engaged mass, easily manipulated by demagoguery.

In Defence of Bolshevism

Max Shachtman



Edited by Sean Matgamna

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Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Events

Monday 8 October

Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it
6.30pm Multifaith Chaplaincy, Bristol BS8 1AU
bit.ly/2DO1vyD

Tuesday 9 October

Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it
7pm, St Hilda's College, Cowley Place, Oxford
bit.ly/2DO1vyD

Tuesday 9 October

Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it
9 October, 7.30pm, The Black Prince pub, 15 Abington Square, Northampton NN1 4AE
bit.ly/2DO1vyD

Saturday 13 October

Unity demo to oppose the far-right in London
11am, London meeting place TBC
bit.ly/2OyLe1o

Saturday 20 October

People's Vote March
noon, Park Lane, London
bit.ly/brx20

Tuesday 30 October

Rise of the Precarious Workers — National Demo
8am, Transport for London, 197 Blackfriars road, London SE1 8NJ
bit.ly/2D543bi

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Workers' Liberty



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Canvassers for hire?

LABOUR

By Steve Allen

The prolonged debate about "One Member One Vote" (OMOV) within Labour Students flared up again over the summer, as the National Chair removed all mentions of the policy from their social media accounts.

It is right to criticise the National Chair for this apparent cover-up, and to criticise their three predecessors who were also elected on platforms to implement OMOV.

A new constitution was adopted at the 2016 "Extraordinary Conference" and ratified at National Council later that year. It included the premise of OMOV, which the National Officers were mandated to deliver. National Officers would be elected by an online ballot of all students in the Labour Party, as opposed to the current system of election by delegates at the Labour Students National Conference.

We have seen the benefits of OMOV in the recent Labour Party leadership elections, where hundreds of thousands of people joined to vote for Jeremy Corbyn. But OMOV is not a silver bullet. Some on the Labour Students left believe OMOV can make a National Conference obsolete. Although the conferences are currently very

inaccessible, this does not mean we should do away with our sovereign decision-making body. Instead we must demand proper representation for all Labour clubs and call upon Labour Party financial resources to ensure nobody is priced out of democracy.

This thinking on the left is also evident in Momentum, which abolished all democratic structures in January 2017. Instead of empowering members, it has placed huge barriers in the way of deciding Momentum policy. It is designed to ensure that the office can control Momentum and make it a humble servant of Corbyn. The left cannot criticise the lack of democracy in Labour Students without getting its own house in order first.

Over two years after the constitution change, Labour Students still don't have OMOV. National Officers have pleaded innocence, hiding behind the bureaucratic cover of Labour Membership Services. They claim there is no way to accurately ascertain which Labour Party members are students. This led to the farce of individual students having to submit proof of their student status in order to be able to vote in Labour Students elections, whenever that time comes. Unfortunately the Democracy Review does not indicate how Labour will get past this impasse.

Irony is not lost on Labour Students. Since the government intro-

duced individual (rather than household) voter registration in 2014, the organisation has rallied against this disenfranchising system. Now they expect students to go through the same process in order to participate in their internal democracy. A more efficient system would be for all Labour clubs to provide their membership lists to Labour Students. But given around half of clubs are either voluntarily or involuntarily disaffiliated, there would still be a huge democratic deficit! Further, a swathe of Labour clubs were barred from voting at the 2017 "Transitional Conference" for a wide array of reasons. They ranged from supposed breaches of the new constitution, to one committee member's membership being in arrears!

What is clear is that Labour Students have been comfortable presiding over the movement, dealing with political opposition by bureaucratic expulsions.

Labour Students are failing their main purpose: to set up more Labour clubs and connect the student wing of the Labour Party across the country. They should be more than just "canvassers-for-hire" when there is a by-election.

Labour clubs should be active campaigning groups on and off campus, fighting for free education, a real living wage and proper affordable housing.

"Glasgow Labour has much work to do..."

By Ann Field

"Glasgow Labour has much work to do to regain the trust of our communities, and to be given the chance to form an administration again... Over the coming years, Glasgow will face enormous challenges."

That's what the publicity said for an all-members conference organised last weekend by Glasgow City Council Labour Group. After 40 years in control of the City Chambers, Labour had gone into opposition after losing last year's local authority elections.

But there was no sign at the conference that the Labour Group understood why it had lost office.

In fact this was the after-effect of the suicidal decision to collaborate with the Tories in "Better Together" in the 2014 independence referendum. But the opening keynote speaker at the conference was the Labour candidate for Glasgow East, Kate Watson — who had worked for "Better Together".

Nor was there any acknowledgment that Labour's own record in power had alienated swathe after swathe of traditional Labour voters. The Purcell-led Labour administrations (2005-2010) had ditched municipal socialism in favour of municipal neo-liberalism. For Purcell, the function of the City Council was one of market-orientated

entrepreneurial governance.

It was Purcell who created Glasgow's arms-length companies (ALEOs), rightly denounced by Unison as: "Nothing but a combination of tax wheezes, a chance to hammer workers' terms and conditions, and an attempt to minimise equal pay claims."

Being friendly to big business but hostile to workers' rights inevitably alienated core Labour voters.

So too did what the *Herald* described as "the cronyism at the heart of Purcell's council" and his "elaborate system of political patronage": "The wages bill for the dozen or so ALEOs set up by Purcell ran to almost £400,000 over what it would have cost to pay councillors had the services remained in-house."

Tory-Lib-Dem austerity began to kick in after 2008. Successive Labour administrations passed on those cuts. The pattern of passing on cuts continued through to Labour's election defeat in May of last year.

Implementing cuts in jobs and services inevitably brought the Council into conflict with the Council trade unions. As a GMB statement explained:

"The 'Transforming Glasgow' programme is about job cuts, and cuts to terms and conditions to balance the £121 millions budget cut."

Yet in the financial year 2015/16: the Chief Executive's salary went

up to £180,000; the City Building Executive Director's pay increased to £146,000; the Culture & Sport Glasgow Chief Executive's salary went up to £135,000; and total pay for senior staff in ALEOs rose to £1,480,000.

This de facto policy of "For the Few, Not the Many" was made even worse by the conscious strategy of successive Labour administrations to deny the equal pay claims of council female employees. In the period 2007-17 the Labour-controlled council spent over £2.5 million fighting those equal pay claims — £1.8 million on legal fees, and £700,000 on 'internal staff costs'.

Party activists need to organise to:

- Put democracy and accountability at the heart of the relationship between Party members and councillors.

- Call to account those responsible for the politics and policies which have alienated Labour voters and youth voters.

- Build a campaigning alliance with local authority trade unions against SNP and Tory cuts, using industrial action to stop further cuts.

- Reorientate CLPs: Away from labour movement routinism, and towards community and workplace campaigns and struggles.

Tube drivers' strike rocks bosses

By Ollie Moore

Drivers on London Underground's Piccadilly Line brought the line to a standstill with a discontinuous strike across 26-28 September.

The strike saw different shifts of drivers striking across 26-28 September, with Night Tube drivers striking on Friday 28 September. This was the first strike involving Night Tube workers since the service was launched in 2016.

The strike, organised by the RMT union, was a sequel to one planned for 11-14 July, which was suspended after union reps agreed a last-minute deal with Piccadilly Line bosses. Several activists criticised the suspension, arguing that the bosses couldn't be trusted to uphold their commitments; these voices were vindicated after agreements about staffing levels were renegotiated almost immediately.

The dispute involves a range of issues, many stemming from what union activists call an overly-disci-



plinary culture of petty authoritarianism amongst Piccadilly Line bosses. Staffing is also a key issue, with the union demanding that London Underground increases staffing levels at Piccadilly Line depots.

The strike was totally solid, and saw well supported picket lines at depots at both ends of the line. Night Tube pickets ran from 8:30pm until midnight, leading to the complete suspension of the Night Tube service.

Members of the driver-only union Aslef, which is a minority union amongst Piccadilly Line drivers but a majority amongst

drivers across the Tube network overall, respected RMT pickets.

One union activist described how Piccadilly drivers feel ground down by constant attacks. "You can only push people so far", they said.

Some activists are now arguing for the union to name further dates to keep the pressure on management. An RMT rep told *Solidarity*: "Muscles atrophy if you don't use them. It's been some time since we had significant strikes amongst operational workers on the Tube; you have to go back to the stations strike of January 2017, or the network-wide strikes in summer 2015.

"The Piccadilly Line strike should shake us up, as well as shaking up the bosses. It reminds us how powerful we can be when we organise to take action. The issues faced on the Piccadilly Line are not unique to that line, or to drivers.

"We have to make it a spark for more action across the whole network."

UberEats wildcat

By Gemma Short

UberEats couriers blocked roads outside the company's London HQ on Thursday 20 September in a protest over pay.

Supported by the IWW and IWGB courier branches, workers effectively held a wildcat strike for several hours during the day.

UberEats had cut the pay rate per delivery from £4.26 to £3.50 the day before. But couriers are demanding more than the reinstatement of the old rate — they are demanding a minimum £5 per delivery in London.

Similarly to pay structures in Deliveroo which has led to a number of wildcat strikes, UberEats' pay structure often leaves workers earning well below the minimum wage outside of the busiest parts of the day.

UberEats workers will be taking part in the 4 October food workers' strike.

A significant number of customers own shares and were shocked about the way the management run the place. The workers appropriated the slogan from when the pub originally became community owned — 'Save the Ivy House'.

It's a small dispute but it tells you a lot about the nature of capitalism, and about the power of workers' struggle.

- More at: twitter.com/ivyhouseunion and facebook.com/ivyhouseunion
- Donate to the strike fund at go-fundme.com/savetheivyhousestaff



Fast food's 4 October

By a McDonald's worker

4 October will see coordinated strike actions by fast food workers in McDonalds, by Wetherspoons (Bakers' Union), TGI Fridays (Unite union) and Uber workers (IWW, IWGB, GMB and UPHD).

About a year ago McDonalds locations went on strike demanding union rights, £10 an hour and secure hours. Now the fast food rights campaign has expanded to more McDonalds outfits and Wetherspoons.

Fast food work is hard and undervalued work. Workers deal with abusive customers and dismissive managers, understaffing and infrequent breaks, low wages and virtually no sick pay. The "McStrike" action gave voice to these workers in the labour movement, when they are frequently ignored and dismissed as being too hard to organise.

Excitement over the prospect of a Labour government is giving hope to fast food workers. Corbyn's promise to raise the minimum wage to £10 an hour for all workers would meet the major demand of the campaign.

Some want to wait until there's a Labour government to better lives of low-paid and precarious workers. But the workers' movement should never wait until there are

better laws; we need to create a bottom-up and lasting campaign of workers in their unions that fights both smaller and larger issues within their workplaces. The goal is ultimately workers' control. By empowering individual fast-food workers through union activism we are starting to move in that direction.

Like many other low paid industries, a large number of fast food workers are migrants. The future for EU migrants is unclear. Anything short of a full commitment by Labour and the unions to defend and extend freedom of movement will be letting these workers down.

The wider labour movement cannot fully support the McStrike campaign while if it also regards immigration as "social dumping" and champions the call for more border guards. Workers need to be ready to pressure their union and the Labour leadership to defend the rights of migrant workers.

The wider fast-food rights campaign will hopefully be able to learn from the experiences of Uber Eats and Uber drivers who will be joining the action on 4 October.

In a short period of time couriers were able to build a strong network of militant activists who aim to win their demands purely through workers' action.

Hopefully we'll see an alliance of these workers which goes beyond the strike action.

Defend these dinner ladies!

By Patrick Murphy

Nine lunchtime supervisors at a Primary School in Grimethorpe, Barnsley, struck on 12, 19, 20, 25, 26, and 27 September to defend their jobs.

The Headteacher and Board of Governors of Ladywood Primary School (Grimethorpe, Barnsley) want to make all nine School Meals Supervisory Assistants redundant.

The school's proposals affect their colleagues who work as Teaching Assistants, as the plan is for get TAs to supervise children at dinnertime. The school's management have said they do not believe the supervisors have the skills to support the children.

All the staff are women and members of Unison which is campaigning to save their members jobs. The redundancies will be devastating for these workers who

are locally-based and low-paid. It will also put additional pressure on the already over-worked Teaching Assistants to pick up this important job.

According to Unison the proposed saving of £23,625 by making the redundancies has nearly been achieved through staff leaving, or reducing hours, and not being replaced. The change in job role is also likely to increase salaries for the teaching assistants and further money would be saved by not paying the teaching assistants to cover dinnertimes.

In a statement urging the school to withdraw the proposal the union says, "The dedicated dinner ladies are at the heart of school life and have been supporting the children for generations. Unison does not believe the school has to make these redundancies because of budget cuts".

Concessions on DOO at Merseyrail

By a train driver

The ACAS talks between RMT and Merseyrail in the dispute over proposals for Driver Only Operation (DOO) have produced a major concession.

There will remain a second safety-critical person on every train the company runs in passenger service. This is fundamental as it preserves the union's industrial strength. In future if RMT guards strike, trains will not be able to run.

However, there are no other details of what the settlement will mean for guards at the franchise. A joint press release talks of extra money being provided by Merseytravel, the local transport authority, and concessions to the RMT on what the guards' duties will be.

It must be disappointing to Merseyrail traincrew, as well as traincrew at other franchises

where DOO is being proposed, that so little detail is provided after months of secret talks. But the guarantee of a second safety critical person is a hugely important step forward.

Meanwhile, at South Western Railway, the RMT reports that the employer continues to refuse "serious" talks to resolve the DOO dispute there. The next round of industrial action by SWR guards will be a 48 hour strike on 5 and 6 October.

At Northern, RMT has taken strike action for five consecutive Saturdays starting on 25 August and continuing all through September. No new strike dates have been announced, despite the employer apparently refusing to engage with any seriousness in ACAS organised talks.

The company has accused the union of moving the goalposts in the talks.

Workers prove they not the committee run the pub

By Sacha Ismail

Workers at the Ivy House pub in Nunhead (South London) went on strike after the morning of 30 September in a dispute about four sudden, unexplained dismissals, zero hours contracts and union recognition.

They wanted reinstatement or at least suspension with pay and a proper process for reviewing the cases; secure, fixed hours contracts; and recognition of their union, the BFAWU.

The workers' Facebook page is reporting a complete victory on all their demands.

During the strike the pub remained completely shut down, meaning that its normal extensive Sunday lunch crowds got not their normal meal but conversations with the pickets — who got overwhelming support, as they have from the community more generally.

There were a number of unusual things about this dispute, in particular the fact that pub workers have organised and gone on strike at all, and the fact that they've simply walked out and shut the place down.

In addition, the Ivy House is a "community owned" pub which projects an "ethical" image.



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Labour needs a new critical left wing

By Keith Road

More than 12,000 people attended Labour Party conference 2018, with local parties sending noticeably larger delegations than in previous years.

There was less of a focus on Corbyn as “a celebrity” — an improvement — and proceedings involved less political grandstanding. But the level of political debate was still, overall, quite low.

We were told that Corbynism has matured into something that is now “mainstream.” The leadership wants Labour to have profile as a serious “party of government” who can capture the “national mood.”

Press coverage seems to agree that Corbyn has partially succeeded in this. The Tory press now either talks of Corbyn’s ideas as being dangerously near to being implemented or “reveals” how moderate they really are.

At a Trade Union Co-ordinating Group fringe John McDonnell said that an incoming Labour government will have to work with the unions on a list of priorities, a plan for what we want to achieve and

how we want to get there. The audience could certainly interpret this as a call to lower expectations on some big ticket issues such as the repeal of all the anti-union laws (which is conference policy but never promoted by the Leader’s Office).

This year Momentum’s presence was more low-key than in 2017, both on conference floor and around the venue. Momentum produced an app with advice on how to vote, but there were far fewer Momentum badges and t-shirts on display and the Momentum stand was small and less visible.

CLPD also had a weaker presence, and despite known tensions with Momentum appeared as a sidekick to it, not a critic.

Apart from as yet small groups like The Clarion and Workers’ Liberty, there wasn’t much profile for a left independent of Momentum.

Most of the real political debate came up at The World Transformed (TWT). It is welcome that TWT continues to provide a forum, but intensive debate and discussion really needs to be brought onto conference floor.

On conference floor, in the fringe

meetings and outside, Brexit was the single biggest political issue.

Some analysis and reports following the conference argued Labour took a decisive decision to campaign for a People’s Vote and move towards an anti Brexit position. Sadly this is not the case.

The mood around conference was very clearly against Brexit and the majority of local parties that submitted “People’s Vote” motions wanted an explicit commitment from Labour to campaign against Brexit. However the composited motion which conference passed was a fudge that should please no one but the Labour leadership.

While Keir Starmer clearly had the room when he announced that Labour would not rule out a second referendum, there is no solid commitment in the motion’s text.

The reality is that if Labour were unable, and this is very likely, to get a general election, and there was a public vote, then Labour would be campaigning against remain.

Keir Starmer’s announcement at the beginning of the compositing meeting that he wanted one single motion to come out of the meeting set off alarm bells for more experi-

enced delegates. This stopped delegates from exercising their right to submit text as separate motions or to have an agreed preamble with extra text submitted as amendments, in order to give conference a clear choice of policy alternatives. But no alternative was moved and Labour can once again get away with saying nothing new on Brexit, other than that they have better negotiating skills than the Tories.

As with the Democracy Review (see centre pages) the unions played a conservative role, but the visibility of this role would have come as a jolt to many activists, who may have understood the unions to be embodied as key allies of Corbyn. But the supposed betrayal of union leaders is not an argument to downgrade the trade union link.

Instead we propose the democratic transformation of the unions, to make them more radical and responsive to the day-to-day struggles of their members at work, and also to democratise their relationship with the Labour Party, while staunchly defending the Labour link as key to bringing class struggle into the Labour Party.

Labour left members need to use the enthusiasm, the expanded level of engagement to push for conference to be a true parliament of the party. When policy is voted for it should be carried out by the leadership.

The Brexit debate did prove this year that it is possible on to be defenders of the Corbyn leadership against the right and remain critical thinkers. Blind deference for the leadership is both inoperable and bad politics.

The Labour left we advocate is one of pluralism and open debate, to be critical of the leadership when necessary and to fight for maximum democracy across the movement. There is a space for such an approach.

A more critical Labour left must also seek to address the democratic deficit within “Corbynism”, which has largely retained the top-down, Blairite approach to policy making.

Policies are formulated by technocratic specialists in shadow ministers’ offices and handed down to the party membership fully formed, with no opportunity for scrutiny or revision.

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