

**ISSUES AND IDEAS  
FOR STUDENT  
ACTIVISTS  
PUBLISHED BY  
WORKERS' LIBERTY  
FOR NUS CONFERENCE 2015**

**EDUCATE  
AGITATE  
ORGANISE**



**INSIDE:-** STUDENTS AND SOCIALISM / GREEN OR LABOUR? / THE NHS  
RECLAIMING 'RADICALISM' / FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS / CAPITALISM  
AND CLIMATE CHANGE / MIGRANT RIGHTS / THE STORY OF 'PRIDE'  
INTERSECTIONALITY AND CLASS / LONDON OCCUPATIONS / FROM  
SABB TO TRADE UNION MILITANT / FEMINISM AND FREE EDUCATION  
INTERNATIONALISM: GREECE, KURDISTAN, PALESTINE

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# EDUCATE AGITATE ORGANISE

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**If you want to find out more about who we are and what we do:**

**Come and find our activists around the NCAFC stall and have a chat**

**Leave your contact details and subscribe to our weekly paper Solidarity**

**Come to our summer event Ideas for Freedom in Birkbeck university in London, from 2-4 July – check out [workersliberty.org/ideas](http://workersliberty.org/ideas) for details**

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# STUDENTS SHOULD FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

**The problems and challenges the student movement faces have a common root: capitalism.**

This is not to say everything we need to do can be reduced to “anti-capitalism”. But capitalism, the system in which the owners of workplaces produce for profit by exploiting wage workers’ labour, is at the root of our problems – cuts, poverty, spiralling inequality, oppression, war, environmental destruction and a lot else.

Part of NUS and student unions’ failing is a lack of willingness to organise and fight. Underlying that is a lack of broad political vision, about what’s wrong with society and how it could be instead.

We need an inspiring vision of a different kind of education system – as part of a different world, in which society’s wealth is used to end dangerous climate change and provide a decent life, free time, leisure and education for everyone. That is only possible through collective ownership and democratic control and planning of productive resources like the banks, corporations, offices and factories – socialism.

In a socialist society, instead of economic and political decisions being made by rich people and the bureaucrats and managers who work for them, they would be made democratically by organisations of workers, students and communities. That would allow rational planning of economic resources, in place of the profit motive. It would allow the goals of society to be sustainability and increasing quality of life – above all free time and the ability to enjoy it – for everyone, not just an elite.

How could that come about? The force that can shake up this society and prepare the way for a new one is the organised working class.

Teachers or train drivers, nurses or factory workers,

social workers or cleaners, workers have the capacity to challenge the capitalists, win changes and – when big enough numbers get self-organised, educated and mobilised enough – replace capitalism.

Right now, unlike say in the 70s, the workers’ movement is fairly weak. But that does not mean the working class has disappeared. Most people in Britain are workers, and there are more workers all over the world than ever before. And in Britain, as in Greece and the US and China, it is still the organised working class that the rich and powerful fear. When were the Tories pushed onto the back foot? During the mass public sector strikes of 2011.

The worker’ movement will rise again.

Students can play a crucial role in supporting and even sparking workers’ struggles – like in the French general strike of 1968. The 2011 strikes were encouraged by the huge student movement of winter 2010-11. On campuses, students and workers standing together is the key to turning the tide of cuts and marketisation.

We should also join trade unions, to organise in our own jobs now, around issues like low pay, zero hours contracts and bullying at work – and to get ready for the future when most of us will be workers.

But as well as building this kind of movement, you need an idea of where you are going. Our movement can’t win if all it does is fight defensive battles. We need a positive vision of the kind of society we want, and we need to go out and convince people of that vision.

Arguing for socialism (whether that’s in writing, online, in mass meetings, or discussing in ones and twos) is an urgent task for our movement. After years of the right-wing running rampant in our society – and further back, the memory of the totalitarian “socialist” regimes in Russia and elsewhere – most people no longer believe that a socialist society is realistic or even desirable. Rebuilding a movement not just to struggle on this or that question, but for a whole new society – a movement for socialism – is an urgent practical task. That bold vision of what we positively want can inspire our movement in the here and now.



# HOW SHOULD THE LEFT VOTE IN THE GENERAL ELECTION?

**In the 2010 general election, many students voted Lib Dem. Not so many this time! In 2015 the largest number of students will vote Labour. Many, particularly student activists, will vote Green. Some activists will vote for smaller left-wing parties like Left Unity. Here Workers' Liberty member *Daniel Randall*, a railworker and RMT union activist who was on NUS NEC in 2005-6, explains why we are calling for a Labour vote.**

**In almost every constituency, Workers' Liberty favours a Labour vote in the general and council elections in 2015. But the Labour Party is committed to maintaining austerity. So why vote Labour?**

It's not true that there's no difference. While Labour's current policy would leave the framework of neo-liberal austerity intact, it has been forced to shift on issues like the NHS, zero-hours contracts, the Bedroom Tax, and even public ownership of the railways. On all of those issues, its policy is far less radical than socialists would like, but it is not "just like the Tories". The Tories are committed to extending anti-union laws; Labour aren't.

**Those policy differences are empty promises. We've been here before.**

Working-class social pressure is the key factor. If they do not feel under any pressure, Labour's leaders probably won't implement even the minimal policy commitments it has already made. If there is enough pressure from their trade-union base, they will move.

Although its leaders have always had pro-capitalist politics, Labour is not simply a capitalist, or "bourgeois", party. It has historic roots as an attempt by a section of the industrial labour movement to create a political wing that would act for workers in politics as the Liberal and Tory parties acted for employers, and a continuing structural link to the majority of unions in the country.

The Labour-affiliated unions (most of the big ones) can pretty much at will change Labour policy by putting proposals to Labour conference and voting them through. Mostly they don't. Or they do, but stay quiet when Labour leaders ignore the policy. We should call for the unions to use that political clout, not to walk away and give up.

Some on the left like to imagine that the history of the past few decades has been one of Labour-affiliated unions struggling hard for working-class policies, but finding themselves blocked at every turn by the Labour leaders. In fact, union leaders have blocked themselves by consistently failing to stand up for their own policies within the Labour Party.

Union delegates on the Labour Party executive, including the RMT's Mick Cash (now RMT general secretary), failed to vote against the launching of the Iraq War in 2003. More

recently, delegates from Unite (the biggest union in the UK, and supposedly left-wing) to Labour's National Policy Forum helped defeat a resolution that would have committed Labour to an anti-austerity platform.

**Surely it's better to give up on Labour and try to build something new?**

Destroying the link between the Labour Party and the unions is a long-held dream of the Blairites. Why allow them to fulfil it without a fight?

Our perspective is to transform the entire labour movement. That is, to make our unions fighting, democratic organisations controlled from below, which are responsive to our day-to-day struggles at work and in the community. If it's possible to make our unions more industrially combative, then it's possible to make them more assertive in the political sphere too.

The never-affiliated unions are in general no more left-wing or militant than the affiliated ones. Demanding that the unions disaffiliate, rather than demanding that the union leaders fight using every avenue available to them, lets the bureaucrats off the hook.

We in Workers' Liberty we are building something new! Only, we do that within the struggle to change the whole labour movement, not by opting out.

**Even if you want a Labour government, why not at least encourage people to vote for better candidates like TUSC or Left Unity where they can?**

Socialist propaganda candidacies can be important in building up the activist minority which can then act as a lever to transform the wider labour movement. But then they have to be judged on the basis of the quality of their propaganda, whether they do build up a minority, and whether that minority is a positive factor in the movement. TUSC and LU candidates will mostly make propaganda not for working-class socialism but much blander anti-austerity politics.

If TUSC or Left Unity:

- were democratic and lively, with good local groups
- explicitly socialist, foregrounding policies about expropriation, social ownership, and the fight for a workers' government and working-class power
- in the case of TUSC, had decent policies on migrants' rights and Europe
- were clear about the need to get a Labour government to kick out the Tories, and therefore did not stand in marginal seats

... then Workers' Liberty would be involved. We are not against standing against Labour in elections. We helped initiate the Socialist Alliance which existed from 1998 to 2003. But, on the whole, the TUSC and Left Unity campaigns fall short.

**You're telling left-minded people to vote against their own beliefs, for a Labour Party with neo-liberal politics.**

A Labour vote for many working-class people on 7 May will not be a vote for Labour's neo-liberal agenda, but a vote against the Tories, and for a party they see as at least minimally connected, if only in a historical sense, to working-class people and our interests. We should not be cynical or aloof.



Defeats and setbacks have led increasing numbers of us to see politics (which, for many, is basically reduced to elections) as an essentially individual, atomised process, a consumer choice. We want to change that. We want politics to be a collective experience, which people engage in an ongoing and collective way, through mass organisations – such as trade unions.

Getting a Labour government on 8 May will be the beginning, not the end, of a renewed fight for working-class political representation. If, in the campaign to win that government and kick out the Tories, socialists have been able to build up a network of workplace and community activists who want to push Labour much further than its neo-liberal leadership wishes to go, we will have used the election time to good purpose.

## THE GREENS, LABOUR AND SOCIALIST POLITICS

This is an excerpt of the first part of a four part debate on the left, Labour and the Greens, between Peter McColl, Scottish Green Party parliamentary candidate for Edinburgh East – and *James McAsh*, a former President of Edinburgh University Students' Association who is an activist in the Labour Campaign for Free Education and the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. For the full exchange see the SCLV blog or the Bright Green Scotland blog.

**There is no reason to believe that, having taken power, the Greens would pursue a left-wing programme.**

Green manifestos are currently to the left of Labour. But this is not a like-for-like comparison. A party's policy is shaped by a range of factors, internal and external. The external pressures tend to be right-wing: for instance the need to finance campaigns or to win positive coverage from the right-wing media. As the Green party grows these pressures will intensify.

To counteract these pressures the left relies on internal democracy. But here too the Greens are deficient. The Greens' party organisation has nothing like Labour's link to the trade unions so the only 'check' on leadership power is the membership. As this grows, the more radical members will surely find themselves in an ever-shrinking minority.

This is not mere speculation. The record speaks for itself. The two most successful Green Parties in Europe are in Ireland and Germany. The former implemented austerity and the latter took the country to war in Afghanistan. Closer to home, the only Green-led council in the UK, Brighton, has slashed jobs and public services. A common rejoinder to this is that the Labour Party fares no better in government. I agree: the left should be critical and put pressure on the Labour leadership. But if a Green administration is not substantially to the left of Labour then why waste the energy needed to elect it?

The defeat of the Labour Party by the Green party would be a serious blow to the labour movement and to working-

class political aspirations. In the narrow demographic sense, Labour is the party of working-class people, while the Greens are a party of the middle-class intelligentsia. But more significantly, Labour remains the collective expression of the trade unions. The unions hold just under 50% of votes at party conference, and provide the great bulk of the party's income.

Even after numerous attacks from the Labour right, the party's link to the labour movement is still significantly stronger than anything even proposed by the Greens. In fact, the 2010 Green manifesto included a pledge to prevent trade unions from donating to political parties. As it stands, trade unions have little influence in the Green Party and greens have little influence in the unions.

Ultimately, these class interests are the decisive factor. A further rise for the Greens would be a blow against collective working-class politics. One of the greatest tragedies of neo-liberalism is the emphasis on supposed individual rights over the collective. Electing a Green government, however charitable and philanthropic its leadership, would undermine the labour movement and the collective organisations of the working class.

Joining the Greens is a tempting option. You are surrounded by people with fairly left-wing politics and you will not be embarrassed by an unpleasant record in government. By contrast, the work in the Labour Party is often not rewarding. You have to engage with unpleasant ideas like dog-whistle immigration policies, the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, and military adventures overseas. But these reactionary ideas are current amongst the population in general and socialists must challenge them.

## SUPPORT THE SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOUR VICTORY!

Workers' Liberty is supporting the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, which combines fighting to throw out the Tories with seeking to mobilise the labour movement to fight on issues like cuts, low pay, insecurity and privatisation, and arguing for class-struggle socialist politics. A big part of its focus is the struggle for migrants' rights. For more information:

[socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com](http://socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com)  
[socialistcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:socialistcampaign@gmail.com)



# RECLAIMING “RADICALISM”

By Martin Thomas

**Something strange has happened to the word “radicalisation”. Schools are now officially instructed that they must police their students against being “radicalised”.**

It is taken for granted that “radicalisation” means a drive to slaughter civilians in the name of imposing clerical-fascist tyranny.

For 200 years until recently, “radical” had a different meaning. The Oxford dictionary defines radical, in politics, as dating back to 1802: “One who holds the most advanced views of political reform on democratic lines, and thus belongs to the most extreme section of the Liberal party”.

The first politicians called “radicals”, in the late 18th and early 19th century, were outliers from the Whigs, people who supported civil liberties and extension of the right to vote beyond a small minority. By the late 19th and early 20th century, the name “Radical Party” was used in many countries by bourgeois groups who wanted a modern, reforming image.

Now the government uses “radical” to mean clerical-fascist terrorism against civilians. They want to ally with “moderate” Islamists, so they avoid the term “Islamist”, and the old tag, “extremist”, is too vague.

For now, no-one proposes that the ban on “radicalisation” should criminalise radical liberals or even radical socialists.

But already Shilan Ozcelik, an 18-year-old Kurdish woman from north London, is in Holloway Prison, refused bail on terrorism charges because of “having attempted to join the YPG”, the Syrian-Kurdish forces fighting ISIS (with air support from the US!)

The presentation of “radicalism” as criminal chimes in all too well with the Tories’ election claim to offer “competence not chaos” and “a plan that works”.

After five years of miserable cuts which have still left government debt soaring, and the biggest pushing-down of real wages, and with the promise to bring yet more cuts plus anti-union laws to stop resistance — after all that, they say that any radical alteration means “chaos”.

While the fall-out from one of capitalism’s greatest economic crashes continues, the Tories cite 100 profiteers, tax-evaders, and exploiters as the voice of authority which we should all respect.

The Labour leaders, intimidated, limit themselves to marginal, detailed criticisms — nothing radical.

The flipside of this, and the lack of public protest against the demonisation of “radicalism”, is widespread depoliticisation. In 2005 only 38% of 18-24 year olds voted. The percentage recovered only a little in 2010. The link is obvious between this low turn-out and the fact that the Tories’ cuts have hit the young much more than over-60s (who vote in greater numbers). Yet for 2015 there’s no chance of the young-voter turnout returning in 2015 to 1964’s 76% (almost the same, then, as the all-ages average).

Among older people who vote, too, political disillusion is rife.

There are three reasons for this. The first is that capitalist competition is faster-moving and more global. Govern-

ments need more vigour, and more push from below, to do things which may displease “the markets”. The limits of consensus politics are narrowed.

The second is the bureaucratisation of politics, and especially of the Labour Party. The Labour Party has always had many mechanisms to insulate its leaders from rank-and-file pressure, but it is worse since Blair.

Very few MPs do public meetings any more. Ed Miliband rarely speaks except to pre-booked audiences, and even senior mainstream Labour MPs can’t get through his office door to talk to him. Literally everything he knows about current politics comes via, and filtered through, the large team of careerists in his office.

In 2010, only 9% of Labour MPs came from manual-worker jobs, but 20% from jobs as MPs’ aides, researchers, etc. Ed Miliband and Ed Balls have never done anything outside wonk-world other than brief spells as an academic (Miliband) or journalist (Balls).

In 1945, Robert Tressell’s socialist novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* was credited with winning the election for Labour. The Tories’ plan to counter its influence was a mass printing of Friedrich Hayek’s book *The Road to Serfdom*.

Most people read neither book. But many people voted because they had been convinced in conversation of a philosophy which the person convincing them got from one book or another.

Back in 1960 the Labour right-winger Tony Crosland, arguing for a shift in approach after Labour had lost its third general election in a row, declared: “The élan of the rank and file is less and less essential to the winning of elections. With the growing penetration of the mass media, political campaigning has become increasingly centralised, and the traditional local activities, the door-to-door canvassing and the rest [i.e. activities which involved actual political conversation] are now largely a ritual”.

It took a while, but now Crosland’s argument has been adopted widely enough to make mass politics a macabre ritual. In pre-1991 Russia there was a joke: we pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us. In mainstream politics in Britain, the voters pretend to listen, and the politicians pretend to offer ideas.

The third reason is lack of pressure from below. It is not just that Crosland’s programme took time to filter through. From the mid-60s to the early 1980s, things went in the opposite direction, towards livelier politics, because of high class struggle and a socialist radicalisation of young people.

The walling-off of politics by apparatchiks and by market pressures seems unbeatable only because it keeps people demobilised. Just as the bureaucrats in pre-1991 Russia seemed unbeatable.

## THE NHS VS CAPITALISM

**There is growing student campaigning around the National Health Service. Here Pete Campbell discusses how the NHS was created and the significance of the fight to save it. Pete is a junior doctor who was recently active in the student medics’ group Medsin.**

The post 1945 Welfare State, of which the NHS was the crowning achievement, was the fruit of 150 years of work-



ing-class political activity. By way of that Welfare State the labour movement created barriers against extremes of poverty, against prolonged homelessness, against the grinding down and “stigmatising” of the poor. Indeed, after 1945, the very term “the poor” — not to speak of the Victorian notion of the “undeserving poor” — disappeared from common parlance for more than three decades.

Capitalists still robbed and exploited workers and tyrannised over them at work. But outside work the labour movement had won new rights for the working class. People who were old or sick or unfortunate no longer starved to death, or slept in large numbers on the street. And nobody died because they could not pay for medical treatment.

The working-class principle of an equal right to life was proclaimed by the labour movement and embodied in a National Health Service in which money could not buy, and the lack of money could not deny you, the best available health care.

The rich still could and did buy advantages, but nobody now defended the view that poor people were not equally entitled to the best possible health care. That is a viewpoint that emerged from the fever-ridden political swamps of the Tory ultra-right only in the 1980s.

Perhaps for the first time in human history — revolutionary working-class Russia in 1917 was too poor for it — the principle of equality in one important sphere of social life, in health care, came close to being fully realised.

There were of course, great flaws and contradictions in the labour movement’s achievement. This no means-test Welfare State was set up in a society that was still a class society, and therefore it brought the educated middle classes and even the bourgeoisie immense advantages too; they could use it with more skill and expertise than working class people did. But this “class-blindness” ensured its universality, where means testing would have led to the creation of substandard provision and “welfare ghettos” for the poor.

And the labour movement, in 1945 and after, committed the great and fatal error of leaving the capitalist class in control of the commanding heights of the economy and the state. Nevertheless, the reformists who led that movement could truly lay claim to great achievements.

Fifteen years on from the 1945 Labour election victory that made that Welfare State possible, the Labour leaders could convincingly claim lasting achievements, too. The To-

ries, when they came back to government in 1951, did not dare attack the Welfare State, so overwhelming was the support, even among the middle classes, for what the labour movement had done after 1945.

But today the Welfare State is in ruins. We had eighteen years of rule by the filthiest gang of Tory barbarians this century. By way of a thousand lacerating cuts, the Tories bled the Health Service — the heart of the Welfare State Labour built. Like an insidious disease they worked away, undermining, sapping, destroying the Welfare State, and its crowning glory, the Health Service.

And the Labour Party? After 1997 we had a New Labour government which, though it threw money at the NHS, opened up the process of privatising it. It took up where the Thatcherites left off, and prepared the way for Cameron and Hunt.

What the Tories and Lib Dems have done since 2010, most people in Britain do not want. But the issue goes much deeper than the question of political democracy. It raises the question of human equality, at the most basic level.

The Coalition has, deliberately and cold-bloodedly tried to replace the NHS system with one — market regulated healthcare — in which life and quality of life are things money, and only money, can buy. In which the lack of money condemns the sick to stark inequality — to lack of access to the best medical underpinning of life and quality of life.

That outrages the feelings and beliefs of most people in Britain. That is why the Tories have gone about privatising the NHS by stealth. They know they will not get away with it, if there is sharp, stark public awareness of what they are trying to do.

We have already seen major resistance — for instance the successful campaign against the closure of Lewisham Hospital in South London, which mobilised many thousands on the streets. If the labour movement steps up this resistance — with the help of students! — we can get support from a sizeable majority of the public, and win. It is not too late!

**For more on campaigns to save the NHS, see**  
[keepournhspublic.com](http://keepournhspublic.com)

[labournhslobby.wordpress.com](http://labournhslobby.wordpress.com)

**To get involved in student NHS campaigning, email**  
[pete.campbell.4@gmail.com](mailto:pete.campbell.4@gmail.com)



# UNIVERSITIES, CAPITALISM AND FREE SPEECH

**For centuries, university campuses have been, relatively speaking, a haven within capitalist society for free debate and criticism.**

A high point, for much of the 20th century, was the right which universities in Latin America won to keep the police off their campuses and have university officials elected by staff and students. That began with the University Reform Movement in Córdoba, in northern Argentina, which opposed a focus on learning by rote, inadequate libraries, poor instruction, and restrictive admission criteria, and spread across the subcontinent.

The student radicalism which spread across much of the world in 1968 started, in 1964-5, with a Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. The central avenues through campus had become a lively scene, with street stalls and political gatherings; the university authorities tried to clamp down, and were eventually defeated.

Today free debate and criticism on campus is under threat from several angles. The government wants universities to ban speakers from their campuses who would be quite legal elsewhere.

University administrations ban meetings, even without government prompting, when they think they might cause trouble or uproar.

Campus space is increasingly commercialised and franchised-out, and university bosses try to stop student poster-ing, leafleting, and campaigning affecting the “commercial space”.

Student unions are increasingly run by people who think that a spell as student union president will look good on their CV when they apply for a managerial job.

University lecturers’ careers depend on how many articles they get published in “leading” (i.e., in almost all fields, orthodox) journals. Over generations of academic turnover, this produces university departments filled with staff who have been selected by capacity to get wordage into those journals, and who in turn will go on to run those journals, oblivious to critiques or alternative approaches.

This narrows the range of teaching and debate on courses.

Finally, and paradoxically, the shutting-down of debate is sometimes promoted by student activists who consider themselves left-wing. A chief example is the bans on the Socialist Workers Party imposed by Goldsmiths and Edinburgh University student unions, and attempted elsewhere.

## The process of narrowing

This excerpt is taken from a report published in 2014 by critical economics students at Manchester University, and sums up how thought has been narrowed within the lec-

ture halls and seminar rooms.

“As little as 15 years ago the Economics Department at Manchester had a considerably wider range of professors who self-identified with different economic paradigms and had very different research agendas.

“This led to a far more eclectic undergraduate syllabus with modules such as comparative economic theory, comparative economic systems and alternative perspectives on developing economies being available for students to study. The Economics Department has radically changed in composition in the last 15 years and it is these changes that are the root cause of many of the problems we outlined.

“The Research Excellence Framework (REF) and academic journals have the power to define what is and isn’t economics and within that, what is good economics and bad economics. REF determines how much research funding each university gets and is a label of research prowess.

“Every four years a panel of leading academic economists grade departments on the basis of individual publications whose academic quality is inferred from the status and ranking of economics journals. The problem is that there are no recognisably heterodox economists on this panel and that the grading is done behind closed doors with only departmental ratings published.

“The outcome of the REF rating process is to elevate the neoclassical framework to the standard by which all economics research is judged. Departments and individual lecturers are forced to respond to the definitions of economics set by these bodies...

“Academic economists must work with neoclassical assumptions and methodology if they wish to secure academic tenure and advance within the leading economics departments... As nonmainstream Manchester professors have retired from expanding departments they have been replaced by young recruits [who] represent a narrow range of mainstream economists who had been published, or were more likely to be published, in the mainstream American journals (Big 5: AER, Chicago etc).

“This homogeneity puts the Department in the position of not having the capability to teach other schools of thought or history of economic thought.

“This narrowing process reinforces itself; now many young lecturers and teaching assistants aren’t able to facilitate critical discussions including alternative economic perspectives in tutorials because their economics education has lacked those elements.

“This monoculture also makes it easier for professors to believe that their way is the only way to do economics or at least that it is the only valid way, which in turn justifies its status as the only kind of economics taught at our university...

“Non-mainstream economists at Manchester have been stripped of their titles as economists and pushed out to peripheral positions in development studies and suchlike while various kinds of heterodox political economy have taken root in the business school, politics, geography and history departments.”





## KEEPING CAMPUSES “CLEAN” AND CONFORMIST

By Monty Shields, Queen Mary University of London

**In November 2014, I was promoting the national demonstration for Free Education at Queen Mary University of London.**

The posters I put up around campus kept disappearing within hours. Then I was “caught” outside a student café by a member of senior management, who told me that they had been taking down the posters, they wanted to keep the campus looking “fresh” and “clean”, and what I was doing was prohibited.

When poster for a left-wing discussion group, I found that no student is allowed to advertise events anywhere on campus outside the student union. Then, when campaigning for the union elections, I was confronted by a member of senior staff who told me that I was in a “commercial area” where no posters were allowed. I replied that I was exercising my right to freedom of expression. In response, they took the posters down in front of me.

Within the student union, all posters that have not been approved by the unelected administrative staff at the union reception are removed. And posters can only be placed in “designated areas” — a small selection of boards, each capable of holding one A3 poster, in which it is difficult to find free space. Thus, most student societies cannot use posters to advertise their events without breaking the union’s rules.

Earlier this year, I received an email stating that the soci-

ety I help organise would be punished if we carried on poster in the union café, which is not a designated space.

During the student union elections, the union’s unelected administrative staff reportedly told some students that there would be “repercussions” if they published an article for a student newspaper about the accountability of sabbatical officers.

Not so long ago, university campuses were one of the few places where a colourful, lively diversity of views could be advertised.

We must fight against the marketisation of universities and the conformism of student unions which have driven the shutdown on free expression.

## UCLU VOTES FOR FREE SPEECH

By Omar Raii, UCLU External Affairs and Campaigns sabbatical officer

**In mid-March University College London Union voted to support freedom of speech and organisation on campus.**

The arguments against came not from the right, but from self-defined leftists who argued that it may be necessary from time to time to stop speakers with objectionable views (for example misogynists, supporters of UKIP etc.) from coming on to campus, in order to protect oppressed groups. We replied that freedom of speech is especially important for oppressed groups, who are the most vulnerable when it comes to government censorship.

Already the state and university managements are determined to clamp down on any debate that may lead to rowdiness or controversy. Student unions should not add to the censorious atmosphere by banning speakers or societies.

### Here is the motion

#### “Freedom of speech and organisation on campus”

UCLU notes

- That there has been a rise in instances of meetings, debates and publications being suppressed on university campuses, whether by campus authorities, the Home Office/police or sometimes by student unions themselves.
- That in one particularly alarming case recently a university management (at Birkbeck) closed down a conference because a far-right racist group threatened to picket it.
- That the government’s proposed Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill risks challenging freedom of speech on campus by allowing the government to insist that universities ban speakers that it disapproves of from speaking.
- That this year is the 50th anniversary of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, when students at the University of California, Berkeley demanded that their university management lift the ban of on-campus political activities and acknowledge the students’ right to free speech and academic freedom.

UCLU believes

- That the right to free expression is a fundamental human right, one that is most crucial for the student movement and the most oppressed in society. Freedom of speech



rainbow international  
lgbt activist solidarity fund

# SUPPORT RAINBOW INTERNATIONAL!

The Rainbow International LGBT Activist Solidarity Fund is an internationalist charity that raises money to support LGBT activists in countries where LGBT people are persecuted. Every penny it raises goes to grassroots campaigns and support groups, mainly at the moment in East Africa. NUS LGBT Campaign has just voted to support Rainbow International. If you'd like to get involved, get in touch: [raquel.n.palmeira@gmail.com](mailto:raquel.n.palmeira@gmail.com)  
[www.rainbow-international-fund.org](http://www.rainbow-international-fund.org)

and organisation are essential for any struggle against oppression to be successful.

- That for freedom of expression to be genuinely established on campus, it must extend to those whose views may be regarded as objectionable.
  - That if a precedent is set that free speech can be curtailed on campus, whether by the state, college authorities or students, that precedent can be turned against the student movement, campus protests and liberation struggles.
  - That student unions should generally champion free speech and organisation, and advocate their curtailment only in extreme circumstances, such as when speakers incite violence.
  - That fascist organising and presence on campus must be opposed and stopped, not because it leads to offensive speech, but because it contributes to violent, organised attacks on students, especially oppressed groups.
- UCLU resolves
- To campaign for freedom of speech and organisation on campus and in broader society.
  - To continue to advocate "No platform for fascists" as an exception to this general approach.

## CAPITALISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Review of Naomi Klein's *This changes everything*, by Paul Vernadsky, London Met

Another climate moment is upon us and Naomi Klein appears to have captured the zeitgeist again with her new book.

Klein participated in the recent New York climate demonstration, which drew over 300,000 people, alongside over two thousand solidarity events in 162 countries. She has spoken to thousands of people in London recently and her book has been sympathetically reviewed by the bourgeois press.

Klein's intervention into climate politics is eloquent and impassioned. She squarely names the enemy as capitalism and especially the pernicious influence of fossil fuel capital. Picking up the theme of her first book *No Logo*, she argues globalisation trends within the latest, neoliberal period of capitalist development have made it much harder to tackle the climate crisis and mean an evolutionary, gradualist approach is now almost impossible. She points out that both the 1992 Rio declaration and the 1997 Kyoto agreement include the caveat that climate action will not interfere with the workings of global free trade. Capitalism will not provide the solution.

Klein pulls apart the modest neoliberal efforts to contain climate change, through small adjustments to the price mechanism such as the European Union's emissions trading scheme. She quotes the Carbon Tracker research that fossil fuel firms have five times the carbon reserves on their asset sheets to bring about climate catastrophe. Either we tackle these giants or they will burn this carbon in pursuit of profit and make large parts of the planet uninhabitable.

Klein eviscerates Richard Branson's promise to fund climate action with \$3 billion. In fact he has paid out only a fraction of that sum, and largely to greenwash his own businesses. At the same time he has promoted his vanity project Virgin Galactic and expanded his airline. Cynically he wants someone to develop a lower-carbon fuel to keep his aviation business in profits. Klein argues for "reversing privatisation" and promoting public ownership as the way to wrestle power from business and tackling climate change.

The book is littered with powerful arguments against shale gas fracking and other forms of extreme energy.

Fracking has numerous ecological problems, from water pollution, toxic chemicals and earthquakes. Principally it involves fugitive methane emissions that are hugely damaging to the climate in the short term. Most of all, unconventional sources will give a new lease of life to precisely the fossil fuel giants that have contributed most to greenhouse emissions. Klein is right to oppose fracking and right to give short shrift to the geoengineering fantasies of some scientists and policymakers. She says such "solutions" will almost certainly make the climate more unstable and in some regions, more damaging.

The book catalogues a wide range of climate struggles, from oil wars in Argentina to the indigenous struggles in North America, illustrating the intricate interdependencies of climate struggles in different places and there connections of other immediate struggles over land rights, food prices and environmental damage.

The book makes a welcome critique of actors within the social movements. She rightly takes apart the way many large environmental organisations — what she calls “Big Green” — have sold out to business, by way of sponsorship, policy and even drilling for fossil fuels on protected land. Many Greens point to the total numbers of people supporting conservation organisations in various countries, but it is clear that these groups are far too diverse and often in hock to business and states to form a coherent counter-power to capital.

Similarly, Klein criticises supposedly left-wing governments including Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia, that espouse ecological discourse but promote fossil fuel capitalism with an “anti-imperialist” face. If only much of the revolutionary left were as honest about these limitations. Klein also rightly criticises Stalinists past and present, from the USSR and Eastern Europe to China for their appalling environmental record and their bureaucratic, anti-democratic forms of state ownership.

The book is however limited both on structure and agency. Klein does not have a Marxist conception of capitalism, defined as the exploitation of wage labour by capital. She does not expose the deep structures within capitalism that simultaneously lead to the exploitation of waged workers (and the market coercion of other exploited groups

such as peasants and the self-employed) alongside environmental degradation. As a result she does not articulate a socialist alternative to capitalism. Her conception remains the New Deal or World War Two Keynesian, a mixed economy model of reformed capitalism. Klein never nails the systematic alternative to capitalism that socialist planning and workers’ democracy would entail.

Klein does not identify the agent with both the power and the interest to supersede the waged labour-capital relation — the working class. Far from being outside the logic of the process, it is precisely the location of workers within capitalist relations of production that provides the unique capability to modify and stop capitalist production, the interest due to exploitation to oppose it (and ultimately to overthrow it), along with the political and organisational structures to replace capitalism with socialism.

Klein does see the organised labour as an agent in this climate movement, but only as one actor among many. Indigenous struggles are far the most prominent in the book, yet her writing is testimony to the weaknesses of most indigenous communities opposing capital. Of course indigenous fighters are valuable allies in the climate struggle, but they are neither sufficiently universal nor sufficiently powerful to constitute the fulcrum of a revived climate campaign.

This is the role of the global workers’ movement. It is organised labour, shorn of its own business unionism and bureaucratic structures, which can coalesce a new climate movement. And this defines the role of socialists intervening in the latest debate — to put socialist climate answers at the heart of the reviving movement.

**For workers' climate action:  
climate change, capitalism  
and working-class struggle**



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# SOCIALISM AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

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## A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON FREE EDUCATION

By Kelly Rogers, activist in Birmingham Defend Education and International Socialist Network member

**On International Women's Day NCAFC Women organised an occupation of Senate House at University of London, to force a discussion around a feminist perspective on free education politics.**

Let's take a closer look at the demands that have formed the centrepiece of our occupations, demonstrations, and campaigns over recent years:

- Education should be free with living grants for all
- The reintroduction, and improvement, of EMA
- Halls accommodation should be provided as an in-house service, not for profit, and should be provided in house.

While it goes without saying that if implemented these demands would benefit both women and men, to declare these demands genderless is to obscure the very real reality of poverty felt by women, because they are women.

The gender pay gap is still a critical problem. In 2012, comparing all work, women earned 18.6 per cent less per hour than men. "Women's work" [1] tends to be devalued and low paid: almost two-thirds of those earning £7 per hour or less are women. Women also tend to take on part-time roles, partly due to the disproportionate burden of caring responsibilities.

These roles offer lower pay, fewer opportunities for promotion, and typically comprise more precarious contracts. Discrimination still rests at the heart of the labour market, especially for women of child-bearing age (a category into which the majority of graduates fall). All this means that when women leave education they are faced with a hugely inhospitable job market.

Women are faced with a set of obstacles that make it far more likely they will end up living in poverty. The labour market is even more inhospitable to women of colour, disabled women, lesbian, bisexual, queer and trans\* women whose intersecting oppressions mean they face discrimination from many corners.

The threat of a lifetime of debt hangs most heavily over

women, and the benefits promised to graduates, in the form of economic freedom and social mobility, fall largely into the laps of men.

Living costs while in education are also a gendered issue. Women take on the brunt of caring roles – to children and/or elderly or disabled relatives. During the 2010/11 academic year, 1,500 (5.5 per cent of total student population) declared themselves as having caring responsibilities, with the majority having dependent children. The majority of these, as in wider society, are women.

These responsibilities necessarily carry with them financial burdens which will only be made worse by the expensive costs of education and living imposed by our institutions, which rake in vast profits and enjoy multi-million pound yearly surpluses. The NUS found that the second largest barrier to lone parents entering higher education was financial problems relating to childcare costs and fees. 92 per cent of lone parents are women.

Any demands relating to living costs, then, are intertwined with these aspects of the real lives of women; raising the number and generosity of bursaries and living grants could really offset the financial problems facing students, and dissuading women from entering higher education [2].

• Better pay and conditions for staff: 5:1 pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid staff and an end to casual, precarious contracts.

- No outsourcing of services
- A Living Wage for all workers
- Closure of the gender pay gap

Our Higher and Further Education institutions suffer abysmal gender pay gaps, relating not only to discriminatory pay but to the roles that women and men occupy. The overall HE full-time gender pay gap is 18.5 per cent and the part-time gender pay gap is 22.5 per cent, both of which are higher than average public-sector pay gaps. At 12.7 per cent the gender pay gap between full-time HE teaching professionals is higher than all other teaching professional groups. Women are far more likely to be working part-time than men in most occupations within HE institutions. Finally, women are also under-represented in senior positions; only 19 per cent of full-time professors and 14.4 per cent of university vice-chancellors are female.

The implementation of the Living Wage for all staff in all institutions would be going some way to making the lives of women staff better. Reducing the gap between the highest and lowest paid to 5:1 would see a vast reduction in the pay gap. If this is achieved by topping up the incomes of the lowest paid, using the savings shaved off the highest paid, we would witness a net shift of wealth vastly in



favour of women [3].

In most cases women are the first to be made redundant, the first to have their hours and contracts hacked, and the most likely to be paid less than subsistence-level wages. Defending education workers is a feminist project.

- An end to the intimidation and victimisation of students: no disciplinaries for protest, cops off campus, no co-operation with migration enforcement and ejection of their officials from campus, no co-operation with spying programmes such as Prevent.

Last academic year saw a frightening shift in the level of repression that university managements are prepared to use against their students, and this year we only have to look to the University of Warwick, with police deploying tasers and tear gas, for this point to be demonstrated. Once again, however, liberation is central to the issues at hand.

There are numerous reported cases of harassment and degradation of women by police when in custody and of the denial of basic needs, such as the provision of sanitary products; of brutality and violence against disabled protesters — the awful treatment of those under “suicide watch” and the denial of medication, of racial profiling and violence towards black individuals both in and out of custody; the deportation of dissident migrant citizens; and trans and genderqueer individuals being misgendered, mistreated and harassed as a result of their gender identity. Freedom to protest is also a right that is most often enjoyed by the privileged, even when our freedom is being eroded and withdrawn.

- Directly democratic education with all decisions made by, or accountable to, staff and students

- Education for the public good: for financial transparency and accountability, against the influence of profit in education and research, against league tables, and for ethical investment and procurement

Demands for democracy too have benefits specific to women and to those from marginalised groups. For equality to exist in our education institutions, it is necessary that power, as well as wealth, is distributed more equitably.

Democratic structures that give students and staff meaningful oversight over decisions over restructuring of departments, for example, are crucial in a context where young women academics tend to be the first to be made redundant, or to have their contracts casualised.

Democracy often involves affirmative action that deliberately platforms and affords greater power to those belonging to liberation groups. It is necessary that democratic reforms incorporate means of engaging and platforming women, so that we can begin to address the overwhelming silencing of women taking place in universities and all workplaces day-to-day.

- We demand equality and an end to discrimination in education.

The above analysis only scratches the surface, especially with regard to the intersecting identities and oppressions that women in Higher and Further education embody and experience, and yet even this limited analysis makes it clear that the demands being put forward by education activists are certainly not genderless, and have, at

their heart, liberation. Learning to consider the campaigns we organise for, and the slogans we shout, from a liberation perspective is an important step in ensuring that our activism is truly liberating.

We are letting our education institutions and our government off the hook. Deep-seated discrimination and inequality between genders, races, disabled and non-disabled people, people with different sexual orientations, and British and migrant student and workers is going unchallenged.

The NUS Women’s Campaign statement justifying their withdrawal of support for the 19 November Free Education demo states, “Our priority as a campaign is the welfare and safety of women and the right for women to organise and campaign in the ways that they feel the most comfortable”.

Their priority not change, but safety. NUS’s u-turn was a particular blow, at a time when a very small number of hard-working students, nearly all of them women, were organising a demo that was later attended by over 10,000 students. But it reflects a trend where safer spaces politics, a set of politics which in theory and often in practice is laudable, is being misapplied and co-opted. In the context of this trend, it is worth asking the question: what does it take to make women safe?

There appears to be a prevalent idea in the student movement, at present, that we can make the entire world safe by, first, organising within safer spaces, second, rigorously (and often undemocratically) policing those spaces, and third, legislating the rest of society into also being safe. If society, or x institution/organisation/group of people refuses to comply with safer space rules, then it is the obligation of all right-on feminists to advise other women not to participate in those spaces.

Let’s consider an alternative: when we say “our priority is the welfare and safety of women”, we mean is it our priority to organise radical campaigns that fight for a future without debt, a future with good working conditions, and a future where education is free, and every woman can be educated for the sake of education, and the sake of the pub-

lic good. A radical overhaul of the education system, from school level to university level, from which progressive ideas and generations of socially-minded activists will be born, is a necessary step to a society in which women are always safe. This sort of change isn't going to be legislated into existence, because it requires a real challenge to a powerful state-corporate nexus, and the prevailing neoliberal ideology, and it involves coming up against managements, government and police. All of these sites of resistance mean being distinctly unsafe. A significant number of women activists over the past two years have been kettled, arrested, disciplined, suspended from university — and none of these things were safe, or comfortable.

So why, as feminists, are we teaching women to avoid these fights, and to retreat to safer spaces? Safer spaces are absolutely necessary, but they should strive to be havens where women, and other oppressed groups, regroup, collectively heal, educate themselves and organise so that when they go back onto the streets they are able to make the change they need, and engage in resistance that is truly empowering, because it is effective.

#### Notes

[1] By which I mean work than women typically do — women are disproportionately employed in carework, and other social reproductive roles such as cleaning.

[2] There are many other aspects of women's lives that should be noted here, although this list is (of course) not exhaustive: lesbian, bisexual, queer or trans\* women are far more likely to be estranged from their parents, offering numerous financial pressures. Women of colour often come from lower-income backgrounds, compared to white women, meaning that parents are less able to offer financial support, and that many of them live in poverty, or would do if they chose to enter higher education. The numerous and varied disabilities that many women at university live with also often mean that those students have far higher living costs than non-disabled students, a fact only set to get worse with continued government attacks on disability benefits. Now let's imagine how these different identities might intersect and a much more complex image emerges. The lived realities of students from liberation groups involves multiple and complex oppressions and needs, that much is very clear.

[3] The same applies, of course, to BME staff and especially women of colour — the gap in pay, in opportunities and the division of work type is gendered and racialised both.

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND CLASS POLITICS

This is taken from a reply to NUS Women's Officer Susuana Antubam's blog "Intersectionality is class politics" on her Disturbing the Patriarchy blog — by Esther Townsend and Sacha Ismail. Also see Sheffield Hallam academic Camila Bassi's blog [anaemiconabike.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/on-privilege-theory-and-intersectionality](http://anaemiconabike.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/on-privilege-theory-and-intersectionality)

It is certainly possible to take an "intersectional" ap-

proach to understanding and fighting oppression that integrates class analysis.

In fact, there is more than one possible variant of such an approach: hence some of the most interesting debates and discussions around the concept of (or different concepts of) "intersectionality". Marxism, at its best, takes a profoundly "intersectional" stance which conceives of the "intersections" between class exploitation and various oppressions in a particular way...

Not all workers are poor and not all poor people are workers. That is not to say that we should not be sympathetic to, supportive of and involved in the struggles of non-working class poor people. But when we talk about the working class, revolutionary socialists mean something different.

Even those who approach "intersectionality" with greater intellectual seriousness seem to often define "capitalism" and "class" in a much looser way: capitalism as social, cultural, political and economic relations, and class as a cultural construct, defined through the lens of identity and experience.

For Marxists, definitions of class in terms of privilege, culture, income, etc, are far from irrelevant — they can help explain real and important divisions within the working class as we understand it. But they are not adequate.

Our definition is not a matter of preference, but of looking at the world around us and explaining its dynamics. Class is a matter of the social relationships which drive capitalism. The majority of the population, in order to live, must sell their labour power (ability to work) to an individual or institution in possession of means of producing wealth (material goods but also services, etc), for a wage. The workers produce commodities more valuable than the wages they are paid to reproduce themselves — hence, capitalist profit. This relationship of exploitation creates or constitutes both capital and the working class.

In Britain, the waged working class is a clear majority. On a global scale it is a massive and growing minority.

Capitalists care about the divisions of ethnicity, gender, culture, nation etc among workers because, on the one hand they provide the basis for extra exploitation of some groups, and on the other they undermine working-class solidarity and resistance. However, despite this there remains a real basis for solidarity — the common experience of capitalist exploitation.

Why does all this matter? A Marxist definition of class shows how socialism is more than just a good, or utopian, idea. The wage-labour system of exploitation endows capital with enormous wealth and power — including far greater self-consciousness and self-confidence than its class victim. But it also puts workers in a position to organise, struggle and develop their consciousness so they can begin to act as a class fighting for themselves. More than that, such movements, at a high enough pitch, can develop a dynamic which points beyond the limits of capitalism, to a new society based on solidarity. They can become a rallying centre for all struggles against oppression and exploitation. Of course, this process is not automatic — hence the role of socialist educators and activists.

Understanding class in this way shows not just that the world can be changed, but how to change it. That is why Marxist politics is fundamentally "about" the working





class, in all its incredible diversity.

# “PRIDE”

## HOW MINERS AND LGBT ACTIVISTS STOOD TOGETHER

Workers' Liberty supporter *Clive Bradley*, who was on NUS NEC in the 1980s, was also active in the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners group. He did this interview with our paper *Solidarity* when the film *Pride*, about LGSM, came out last year.

### What was LGSM and what did it do?

It was a group that was set up of lesbians and gay men set up to support the miner's strike. It has to be said it was initially mainly gay men, but more and more women got involved over the time. Practically it raised money for the miners who were on strike for a year. Mainly by standing outside lesbian and gay pubs rattling buckets, it raised quite a lot of money. This was sent to a particular mining community in South Wales, in the Dulais valley, with which connections had been made.

### Why did this get started, and how did you get involved?

It was the idea of two people in particular, Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson. Both are dramatised in the movie. They

put out a call at Pride in '84 and organised a meeting at “Gay Is the Word” bookshop in London. At that time I was just moving to London from Manchester and was a member of Socialist Organiser [forerunner of the AWL]. It's not rocket science to see how I got involved.

I went to the second ever meeting of LGSM. I was active in supporting the miners and thought it was a brilliant initiative. It proved to have a very powerful effect on lesbian and gay men and on the miners. The NUM went on to lead the pride demonstration in August 1985. The NUM, a traditional union, not famous for its view on matters such as lesbian and gay rights, became quite prominent in the changing policy on gay rights in the Labour Party.

### What impact did it have in the gay community, and what arguments did LGSM make about why gay people should support the miners?

The strike lasted for a whole year and divided the country, divided everybody. A lot of people supported the miners and didn't need to be persuaded, but we argued that we needed the miners to win. If the miners lost then the Tory government would be going for everybody, and these lesbian and gay communities would be an easy target. People would put a lot of money into the bucket to show solidarity — presumably a lot of money they didn't have in many cases. LGSM was the first really concrete example of how an “autonomous” movement of the “specially oppressed” (as we used to say) could struggle alongside the organised working class, and transform working-class consciousness in the process.

### Were other left groups involved in LGSM? What was their attitude to it?

Some members of different left groups were personally involved, even members of Militant [forerunner of the Socialist Party] and the SWP, whose organisations were more hostile to the project. Militant, for example, generally argued that any kind of autonomous organisation was necessarily divisive. LGSM and Women Against Pit Closures, etc.

showed that quite the reverse was true.

**How was LGSM received in the mining communities?**

The film does this quite cleverly. It is basically a rom com between two communities. The film shows you both acceptance and hostility, but a growing acceptance. That isn't far off what actually happened.

I went to South Wales twice, the second time when the strike was actually finishing in March '85. That was very emotional for all of us. My own experience was that people couldn't really have been more welcoming.

The first time we went down, there was a minibus load of us, we were being put up in people's houses, that was the deal. We all went down to the miner's welfare in the evening to sing songs and get drunk. It was completely fine, no hostility at all.

The reality was we were raising money for them. The miners needed solidarity, and I'm sure if people were at first dubious about where the solidarity came from, need overcame that. And, of course, as you make contact with people you realise that you have more in common than you initially thought. Why the suspicions broke down, as I'm sure there were some, is no mystery. It was the nature of people meeting each other and the power of solidarity.

**What do you think members of LGSM learnt from the experience?**

For many people it was their first time going to that sort of working-class community, though certainly not for everyone. We were a mixed group and certainly there were people from working-class backgrounds, it was not all middle class lefties. The vast majority were just people who wanted to do something.

When you have a big confrontation between a section of the working class and the government you have to take sides, more than just in your head.

**Do you think there was rolling back after the defeat of the dispute, both in the gay community and in the mining community?**

The miners were beaten and most of them lost their jobs. Generally speaking in the class struggle, the defeat of the miners had a hugely bad effect. We're still living with the consequences of it.

I doubt miners' attitudes rolled back too much with regards lesbian and gay rights. You started to get stories of miners coming out. At reunions we get visits from miners. We often hear "it turns out my son is gay".

Ex-miners and their families came up from South Wales for the film premiere.

In the lesbian and gay community, struggle wasn't rolled back. You got growth of the lesbian and gay movement after 1985. Not long after was "Section 28" [the Tory law which prevented the "promotion of homosexual lifestyles"] against which you had enormous demonstrations. The pride parades in the early '80s were relatively small, but by the late '80s and certainly the early '90s they were enormous.

**What do you think about the film?**

It gets an awful lot incredibly right. It's in the broad ball park of something like *The Full Monty*, but much more political. Over the credits you have someone singing *Solidarity Forever*. It takes for granted that the strike was right. It's absolutely about the importance of class struggle and solidarity between communities. The portrayals of the real

people are very close and a good tribute.

Its good that for the anniversary, this particular act of solidarity will be remembered.

# MARCH ON PRIDE 2015 WITH LGSM!

By Raquel Palmeira and Ben Towse, UCL

**Activists in the LGBTQ caucus of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts are working with Lesbian & Gays Support the Miners for London Pride 2015!**

30 years after their work supporting the Miners' Strike, with the release of the film 'Pride', LGSM have re-formed and are organising again! LGSM are not simply part of a proud past, however: they come to London Pride this year to lead it and to re-politicise this largely corporate affair, showing by example that liberation and class struggle must go hand in hand. We are fighting for the future of our movement and this is a fantastic step!

## JOIN THE MARCH: SATURDAY 27 JUNE

The bloc is open to people of all sexualities and genders. Meet near the junction of Orchard St & Oxford St at 10:30am. Everyone needs to be there by 11am at the latest or you won't be able to join the bloc! (LGSM will be at the front – exciting!).

Help LGSM to build the bloc! Invite all your friends to the Facebook event. And we want to see as many student unions and campus LGBTQ groups getting involved as possible. Why not ask your union or LGBTQ group to officially support the bloc, and let us know about it? You could use this model motion. We need to estimate numbers so please contact [raquelpalmeira@gmail.com](mailto:raquelpalmeira@gmail.com) if you are bringing a group. We also want to march on Prides around the country – get in touch if you want to get involved!

What we're fighting for

Right now, LGBTQ people, along with Women, Black and Disabled people, are being hit hardest by brutal cuts and privatisation, which are an attack by the rich and powerful on students and workers. There is enough wealth in our society to build a better, freer world for everyone, but it's kept in the hands of the few. We can change that!

### FREE EDUCATION

Abolishing tuition fees and getting a living grant for every student, from further education to postgrad, will help everyone access education – especially LGBTQ people, whose families may be unsupportive or who are forced to stay in the closet to keep their support.

### HOMES FOR ALL

LGBTQ people, particularly LGBTQ youth, are disproportionately likely to be homeless, and we are all facing a housing crisis. We need controls to limit rents, better rights and security for tenants, and more council and social housing!

### MIGRANT RIGHTS

The rich and powerful are using racism and xenophobia



to play divide-and-rule. We oppose all immigration controls and racist discrimination. And bigoted courts and officials cannot be allowed to demand that LGBTQ asylum seekers “prove” their sexuality or gender identity.

#### **END AUSTERITY AND SAVE + FUND THE NHS**

Working-class people are being forced to pay for a crisis we didn’t create. Low wages, unemployment, and cuts to young people’s benefits leave us dependent on families who don’t always support our sexuality or gender. Healthcare for trans\* people is in crisis, not just due to financial concerns but also due to a lack of understanding and training for medical professionals. Additionally, mental and sexual health services that LGBTQ people particularly rely on are being cut, and anti-trade union laws are an attack on our ability to organise and fight.

We need to fight back as a collective movement, demand radical change and stand in solidarity with all workers’ and liberation struggles. At Pride 2015 and beyond, let’s rebuild our movement!

## **PALESTINE: SOLIDARITY, NOT BOYCOTT**

**Workers' Liberty supports the Palestinian struggle but, unlike many on the left, opposes boycotting Israel. Omar Raii from UCL explains why.**

#### **What is the conflict about?**

When it comes to international issues, perhaps none is more widely discussed on the left than the issue of Israel and Palestine. This long-standing conflict (which officially began in the 1940s but in reality started even earlier) has

led to a situation where currently many millions of Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank live under Israeli military occupation (as well as having much of their land slowly being taken away by settler colonialism) and just over a million live in Hamas-controlled Gaza, a place that is effectively under siege by Israel. Justice for these Palestinians, along with the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who suffer daily discrimination and racism within Israel, as well as for the many millions of refugees and their descendants that were expelled and made to flee their homes in 1948, has rightly been championed by the left for many years.

#### **What should we say?**

From this, socialists and democrats should promote a clear position of the right of nations to self-determination. The Palestinian people and the Israeli people are nations that have their own distinct languages, culture, symbols etc. and as such both have the right to self-determination and to rule themselves. The Israelis currently exercise their right and do indeed have their own state. The Palestinian people evidently do not and are in fact prevented from doing so by Israeli occupation and oppression. This oppression is the root of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

#### **The importance of the working class**

Socialist support national self-determination as a democratic goal in itself, and also in order to develop and promote workers’ unity and struggle. Our goal must be to make solidarity with and support the Israeli and Palestinian workers’ movements and help them fight for unity between the nations and for overthrowing the ruling classes of Israel and Palestine. Organisations like the Workers’ Advice Centre-Ma’an, a grassroots independent labour organisation that organises Jewish and Arab workers in Israel-Palestine, including Palestinian workers in the settlement, should be supported in order to strengthen the work-



**Palestinian workers striking at the Salit Quarry, organised by the WAC-Ma’an union - NUS NEC refused to support!**





ers of Israel-Palestine, as an essential part of winning peace and justice in the Middle-East.

#### **The student movement and boycotts**

This is why it was a tremendous disappointment that at the end of last year the NUS NEC voted against supporting WAC-Ma'an and against supporting Palestinian workers who work in settlements in the West Bank, presumably on the basis that boycotting Israel was a higher principle. The level of confusion displayed by supposedly "left-wing" NUS NEC members is quite astounding.

Boycotts of Israel in the first place must be seen as tactics, not principles, and as tactics go it is a very self-defeating one. A blanket boycott of all Israeli things (whether it's food, products or universities) simply because they are Israeli does nothing but strengthen the right-wing in Israel. The Israeli nation has a right to self-determination and therefore has a right to a state (what it does not have a right to do, is deny that right to another nation, namely the Palestinians) and therefore making no distinction between products that come from Israel only plays on the fears that Israelis have for those who do not recognise its right to exist. The right-wing in Israel exploit this massively and end up gaining support by promising to be tough on what they perceive to be Israel's "enemies".

#### **The comparison with South Africa**

What ended apartheid in South Africa was not the boycott, but the mass mobilisation of the (overwhelmingly Black) South African working class, who fought to make a system that relied on the exploitation of black labour unsustainable.

As part of a mass solidarity movement, it was nonetheless right to support the boycott of South Africa, but South Africa was very different what exists in Israel-Palestine. While South Africa saw a small White Afrikaner minority rule over and exploit a large Black majority, without which the system couldn't survive, in Israel-Palestine the conflict is mainly between two nations of roughly equal size that should both have a right to self-determination.

#### **Support Palestinian liberation and independence**

The student movement must actively work to support those forces in Israel and Palestine that are fighting the occupation and the oppression faced by the Palestinians so that both peoples achieve their rights. Boycotting Israel, and therefore the Israeli left and working-class, cannot help us achieve this.

**If you agree, or disagree and want to argue or discuss,**

**get in touch: [omarrai12@gmail.com](mailto:omarrai12@gmail.com)**

## **BIG ISSUES LESS DISCUSSED: GREECE AND KURDISTAN**

**By Daniel Cooper, NUS NEC**

**Often the debate in NUS over international solidarity is reduced to one issue and one country: Palestine. It is of course right to make solidarity with the Palestinians, but there are other big issues going on in the world. We want to highlight two.**

**In Greece**, after five years of militant struggles, millions have voted to elect a radical left party, Syriza, which promised to reverse cuts and austerity. Now Greece is under threat from the ruling bureaucracy of the EU, who are demanding it continues cuts. The struggle continues, and international solidarity is vital.

**In Kurdistan**, a struggle for national self-determination has combined with a multi-ethnic movement resisting the murderous assault of ISIS. Women have played an enormous role in this movement, from military fighting to organising in the community for equal rights. The people of Kurdistan need our support!

Greek and Kurdish students aside, the student movement in the UK has done very little about either of these issues. We change that, starting with a vote to take strong positions at this conference.

**On May Day (1 May) we will be marching in solidarity with Greece. If you'd like to come, please get in touch: [dancooper13@hotmail.com](mailto:dancooper13@hotmail.com)**

## **YARMOUK, THE BRITISH LEFT AND PALESTINE**

**In the summer of 2014, at the height of Israel's last war in Gaza in which over 2,000 Palestinians were killed, numerous demonstrations took place around the world including in London.**

Many tens of thousands of people marched weekly to oppose Israel's collective punishment of the people of Gaza. However in April 2015, when a demonstration was called to support the Palestinians living in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, who have for over three years been under

siege by the Assad government and are currently under control by ISIS fighters, the turnout was much lower (close to 40).

The huge disparity in turnout highlights how much of a mix the British left has got itself over the issue of the Palestinians, who have been denied their self-determination for so long. We are rightly outraged when thousands of Palestinian civilians are killed by Israel but it seems it is more difficult to generate outrage when many more are killed by Assad or by ISIS, and when many hundreds of thousands of them are under siege.

## LONDON: OCCUPYING FOR FREE EDUCATION

By Andy Warren, Kings College London occupier (written during the occupation)

Inspired by and in solidarity with occupations at LSE, Goldsmiths and University of the Arts, we, an autonomous group of students at Kings College London have occupied KCL's Council Room in protest at the undemocratic marketisation of our institution.

KCL is run in line with the neo-liberal consensus on education, that it is a commodity to be quantified and organised according to market fundamentalist principles. We believe in free education accessible to all and demand greater accountability and democratic involvement by students and workers.

Other key demands include fair pay and equal rights for all outsourced workers at KCL, divestment from fossil fuel and tobacco companies, liberation and representation for marginalised groups, transparency and accessibility.

After moving in, we barricaded the door and established the KCL campus of the Free University of London. The room filled with dissenting voices and colourful banners. Morale has been high ever since and messages of solidarity

have flown in from occupations from Goldsmiths and LSE to Amsterdam and Geneva. After crashing from sugar lows, we've learnt that oranges are key to a successful occupation.

We have been using the space to run workshops on how we want our university to be run and more broadly what kind of society we want to live in. Union members and cleaners from the Tres Cosas campaign run by the IWGB union spoke about their struggle for sick pay, holidays and pensions, and representatives from Student not Suspect ran a workshop about the Counter-Terrorism Bill, which legally obliges staff members to report signs of "radicalisation". Decisions have been democratically taken in consultation with relevant groups, and we have had students and staff coming in and out bringing necessary voices to the struggle.

Education is a social good that should be available to all. We reject the financial imperatives that distort education and the top-down and bureaucratic decision-making that come hand in hand.

Free speech and academic creativity is being stunted, and we stand in solidarity with all students and workers that oppose this destructive ideology and fight for liberation, free speech, democracy and decent working conditions.

## FROM STUDENT ACTIVIST AND SABB TO TRADE UNION MILITANT

By Jade Baker, teacher and NUT activist

I was involved in the student anti-cuts struggles in 2010-11, and was elected sabbatical VP Education at Westminster University. After university I trained as a teacher and now I teach in a primary school in Lewisham and I'm active in the National Union of Teachers. I just attended, and spoke at, my first NUT conference!

This is an appeal to today's student activists to commit themselves to supporting workers' struggles and to get involved in the labour movement when you leave uni or college and start work.

The workers' movement is the fundamental force that can change the world, but it needs the energy and creativity of young people if it's going to get strong again.

A few years ago the average age of a trade union activist was 47. It will be higher now. We need to get it down!

The trade union movement is very different from the student movement in many ways, but like NUS and student unions it has a politically weak bureaucracy that is a brake on the struggle – something we need a new generation of activists to challenge.

All too often, student union officers interested in trade unions get jobs as full-time, paid union officials. That's not good, and it's not the solution! What trade unions need is a new layer of people organising and educating in the workplace.





# HOW I MET WORKERS' LIBERTY AT NUS CONFERENCE

By Vijay Jackson, Hastings

Two years ago, at NUS NC 2013, as a sixteen year old delegate from Sussex Coast College, I was confronted with an unusual choice. Which fringe meeting should I go to? (Apart from the ones where you can stock up on free snacks, obviously). I was holding two leaflets – one from the Socialist Workers Party, and another from the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.

By a fortunate stroke of fate, I decided to go to the NCAFC event, because it sounded more interesting, and because it was only across the road from the conference venue. The SWP event was on the other side of Sheffield. As luck would have it, I'd unknowingly made the right choice. I got involved in NCAFC and also met comrades from Workers' Liberty.

Workers' Liberty has supported me, and the student movement in Hastings, no end. Growing up as a socialist in the South East was at times a lonely and alienating experience – but as soon as I met the friendly and welcoming AWL comrades, I knew I was home. Since then, I've managed to set up a local NCAFC branch (Hastings Anticuts) and organise several demonstrations and workshops, as well as agitate on the Hastings Youth Council and in the Hastings Independent Press.

This may be your first NUS conference, and you may be wondering just where to start, like I was. So have a chat with one of us, or come along to one of our events!

# WORKERS' LIBERTY: WHAT WE DO AND WHY WE DO IT

Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist organisation. We're a collective of activists who want to get rid of capitalism and replace it with a better society.

We think that we can boil down what we do to two main themes: arguing for socialism; and transforming the labour movement.

## 1) Arguing for socialism

Under capitalism, we are faced with a constant barrage of propaganda, in schools, the media, workplaces, churches and elsewhere, telling us that there is no alternative to the rule of the rich; telling people that the way things are is natural and will never change; and that collective problems like poverty and oppression are the fault of individuals who suffer them.

Workers' Liberty aims to be a collective of educators and persuaders for socialism – to make the case for a better society and to argue against the capitalist ideas that support and normalise exploitation and oppression: through public meetings, writing and distributing literature, and conversations with individuals.

We want to dig up and popularise the history that the ruling class wants to remain forgotten: the history of the workers' movement, so that leftwingers today can learn from its defeats and victories; and the history of the big debates in the socialist movement how our world works and how it can be changed. We also try to constantly update these ideas, by debating and discussing them in the light of new experiences.

We do this by educating ourselves and those around us first and foremost: by running a website, and organising reading groups and dayschools. Every week, we have an







educational discussion in our branch meetings, working through a book or pamphlet together. The aim is to have a group where everyone is confident to make the arguments for socialism. This is important for democracy, too: we don't want some members to be 'experts' and everyone else to defer to them. We think that democracy is vital to keeping a good culture and making the right political decisions.

We organise public activity, too: public meetings; stalls and public sales of our weekly paper, *Solidarity*; and we use posters and political stickers to get our message across as well. We produce workplace bulletins, books, pamphlets, and our website, [workersliberty.org](http://workersliberty.org), and organise national events, like this year's socialist-feminist All the Rage conference, or our annual summer event, Ideas for Freedom (see below).

## 2) Transforming the labour movement

**At the moment, the workers' movement in the UK is hardly in a fit state to defend its members over the most basic things, like cuts to services or wages — let alone setting up a government of its own.**

The trade unions are led by pro-capitalist, careerist politicians, who prop up the neoliberal clique that currently runs the Labour Party, and who often draw outrageously huge salaries, far greater than those of the workers they represent.

We think that there is no way around this — we have to fight to clean up the workers' movement. We strive to organise the rank and file to push for greater democracy and grassroots control over their struggles, and for officials to be elected, and paid an average worker's wage.

We produce workplace bulletins, like *Tubeworker* or *Lewisham Hospital Worker*, which we write together with other workplace activists, to provide a socialist voice for the grassroots in those industries and workplaces.

We set up networks of leftwing rank and file activists in different industries and sectors to fight to democratise their unions, and take up the fight where the leadership won't.

In the student movement, we are involved in the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, which we see as doing just that: taking up fights where the NUS leadership won't, and promoting an alternative vision for the union.

### Telling the truth

**In NUS, as in politics more generally, there is a culture of toning down your message in order to be 'taken seriously' (invariably, this means being taken seriously by our movement's enemies: employers and the government), of triangulating your position, and diplomatically dodging difficult political issues.**

In Workers' Liberty, we have a different culture — of saying what we think, and arguing for our positions, even when we are in a minority or considered extreme, even by others on the left.

We think that ultimately, telling the truth and patiently winning people around to clear, socialist positions will bear more fruit than moderating our message for short-term gain.

We base our approach on how the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky set out the 'rules' of what a socialist organisation should be: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives."

# THE LIES AGAINST SOCIALISM ANSWERED

We published this article after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the other Eastern European Stalinist states.

**For most of the 20th century, the common image of "socialism" was the USSR and the other states modelled on it, China, Cuba, and so on.**

There were always socialists who were critical of Stalin's or Khrushchev's USSR, seeing it as an unacceptably bureaucratic version of socialism, and keen to create a more democratic version in their own countries. By the late 1960s or early 1970s, a big majority even in the official Communist Parties was highly critical of Brezhnev's USSR. But most of those who criticised the USSR clung to the idea that some other USSR-model state - China, Vietnam, Cuba.... - was a beacon, a living proof of how humanity could advance beyond capitalism.

Only a small minority of Marxists said plainly that the whole Stalinist-USSR model - a state with a single bureaucratic "party" hierarchy controlling both industry and all the supposed "mass organisations", with no freedom of autonomous trade-union or other organisation for the working class - was not socialist and needed a workers' revolution to sweep it away just as much as ordinary capitalism did.

The collapse-from-inside of that Stalinist USSR model in 1989-91 consequently threw the left into disarray. In the East European states previously dominated by Russia, and Russia itself, the majority of the population, including the working class, rose up and successfully demanded the installation of a capitalist market economy and parliamentary democracy (though often the market economy they got was much more brutal than they had bargained for, and the parliamentary democracy much more limited).

China and Vietnam had already started to embrace global-market capitalism, and quickly pushed further in that direction. Cuba maintained some of the old model, but alongside an increasingly important dollar sector of its economy. The nearest to an unrepentant version of the old supposed "socialism" was (and still is) North Korea, and not many leftists liked that.

Some socialists became demoralised after the collapse of the Stalinist USSR model. Some clung to Cuba (or new regimes which looked as if they might move a bit towards the Cuban model, like Chavez's Venezuela) as beacons.

We believe that the reconstruction of the left demands a clear and through revival of the ideas of those Marxists who always radically rejected the Stalinist model.

In 1991, when the USSR collapsed, we went onto the streets with the headline "Stand up for socialism" and sub-head: "Stalinism was the opposite of socialism". A common response, gleeful or sad, was: "Socialism is dead, darling!"

For decades we'd championed the underground workers' movements and the oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states. We'd waged war on the idea - familiar in the labour movement - that states like the USSR, China and Cuba were socialist in any sense.

Stalinism was as distant from socialism as modern capitalism is - perhaps more so. It was a system of extreme exploitation of workers and peasants, run by a backward bureaucratic ruling class with a monopoly of power. It was the opposite of the ideas of Marx and Lenin. Far from representing the working class, the Stalinist systems relentlessly persecuted working class dissidents, especially those who organised independent trade unions.

Along with the lie that Stalinism was socialism, the triumphant capitalist classes have peddled many other lies.

## Lie #1: Leninism bred Stalinism

Lenin and the Bolsheviks led the workers to power in 1917. They fought ruthlessly against the bourgeoisie and the opponents of socialism. They smashed the walls of the Tsarist prison-house of nations. Far from substituting for the working class, the Bolshevik party, by its leadership and farsightedness, allowed the working class to reach a level of mass action never seen before.

The Bolsheviks based themselves on democratic working class councils (called Soviets). Their goal was working class democracy. They did not believe socialism was possible in backward Russia: only that Russian workers could take power first. They maintained their bridgehead for workers' revolution in the most difficult circumstances.

The Bolsheviks were fallible human beings, acting in times of great crises. Mistakes they made amidst civil war and economic collapse are proper subjects for debate. As their critic (and comrade) Rosa Luxemburg wrote in 1918, the Bolsheviks did not claim everything they did was a perfect model of socialist action for everywhere, at all times.

But what the Bolsheviks were not was the root of Stalinist counter-revolution, which (amongst other crimes) murdered most of the Bolsheviks who had helped make the 1917 revolution, who still alive in the mid-1930s.

When things began to go wrong in the early 1920s the Bolsheviks stood their ground. Workers' risings were defeated in the West. Invasions and civil war wrecked the soviets. The Bolshevik party divided. One section took the road to the bureaucratic counter-revolution. The loyal revolutionaries, led by Trotsky, fought the counter-revolution on a programme for working class self-defence and renewing the party and the soviets.

Trotsky and his comrades went down to bloody defeat. Stalinism rose above the graves of Bolsheviks, just as it rose hideously above the murdered socialist hopes of the Russian and international working class. By the late 1930s Stalin had slaughtered all the leading activists not only from the Trotskyist, but also from his earlier allies, Bukharin's "Right Communist" faction and his own Stalinist faction.

Stalinism was not Bolshevism, any more than it was any variety of socialism. Trotsky put it well when he said a river of working class and socialist blood separated Stalinism from Bolshevism.

## Lie#2: Capitalism is natural and the disintegration of "state socialism" proves this

**In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx credited capitalism with boosting human capacity to change and control our environment and thus creating the possibility of humanity rising above its "pre-history", out of the social jungle into a classless, socialist society. Marxists criticise the waste, irrationality and savage inhumanity of capitalism, but at the same time see capitalism as the necessary forerunner of socialism.**

Capitalism has not become less irrational and inhuman since the Stalinist experiment in "state socialism" failed. Wage slavery and exploitation are still at the heart and root of capitalism. In a world of vast productivity and excess food production, 150 million children (by UN statistics) do not get enough to eat.

The USA is the richest country in the world. Yet millions of people will be homeless at some time over the course of a year. There's no national health scheme, and over forty million people cannot afford private cover. Capitalism is no alternative at all!

Stalinism was not an attempt to go beyond advanced capitalism. It was an experience on the fringes of world capitalism, arising out of the defeat of a workers' revolution and stifling under a bureaucratic ruling elite.

Stalinism was part of the pre-history humankind must



grow beyond. So is capitalism!

### **Lie #3: Only a free market economy can offer democracy. Without it you get state control, and state control inevitably stifles democracy**

**Marxists do not want a bureaucratic state, neither that of a country like Britain, where bureaucracy collaborates with the bourgeoisie, nor that of the Stalinist systems where the bureaucracy is the master of society's wealth.**

We advocate a "semi-state": no standing army, no entrenched bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks wanted that too. They couldn't create it because of the backwardness and isolation of the USSR, but it is possible in a developed society like Britain.

The idea that only the market system can be the basis for democracy is like saying only wage slavery for the masses and increasing concentration of wealth and power at the top of society can be the basis of democracy! It's Orwellian logic: war is peace, lies are truth.

And the limited democracy we do have in the West was not a gift from capitalists. It came about through centuries of struggle by workers. Democracy in capitalism is limited and unstable.

Mass self-rule by the producers, dominated neither by a bureaucratic state monopoly nor by the economic rule of the multimillionaires and their officials, is a better form of democracy. It's socialist democracy.

### **Lie #4: Centralised planning cannot work in a complex economy, therefore capitalism is the only possible system.**

**This argument too rests on the lie that the Stalinist command economy was socialism. State control of everything served the Stalinist elite, not the working class.**

Marxists never believed that a victorious working class could simply abolish the market: in 1921 Lenin set the goal of Soviet government as taking over "the commanding heights of the economy". Small traders, small farmers etc. would continue.

Once workers assume power and abolish wage slavery by taking the major means of production out of the hands of the capitalist class, socialism will operate through a combination of planning and market mechanisms for quite some time.

There's a vast difference between making decisions through democratic planning - which is certainly possible - and leaving it all to the crazy gyrations of the Stock Exchange!

How quickly a workers' planned economy moves towards replacing the market altogether is an open question. We don't know how quickly computer technology will progress, for example.

### **Lie #5: Communist Parties have ditched Marxism and communism: they should know what they're talking about**

**The USSR's Stalinist rulers created an ideology expressed in stereotyped language derived from Marxism. Marxist analysis was no part of that ideological process.**

Communist Parties danced like performing bears to that official "Marxism". Moscow could say on Monday that Britain and France were democratic powers opposing German fascism, on Tuesday that British and French imperialists were ganging up on peace-loving Germany, and on

Wednesday that it was Anglo-French democracy against German fascism again - and the CPs would jump accordingly. (That's what happened from September 1939 to June 1941.)

These charlatans don't speak for socialism or Marxism. As the former Communist Parties have dissolved or changed their names, what has collapsed is not Bolshevism or communism but the grotesque counterfeit of Marxism and socialism shaped by Stalin, and in part, sustained by Stalin's wealth and power.

### **Lie#6: the collapse of Communism vindicates the reformist "social democratic" model of socialism**

**Social democracy defined itself historically not against Stalinism, but against Bolshevism.**

They either supported the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary workers, or hesitated and thus helped the bourgeoisie to win. Social democracy rescued German capitalism in 1918, thereby isolating the Russian Revolution. By betraying socialism outright or dithering in Germany and Italy, the social democrats played the role of stepfather to Stalinism.

The Bolsheviks did not lead the workers to power in the belief that socialism could be rooted in Russia. They were establishing a first outpost for a revolution all across Europe, an outpost which they knew would be doomed if the German, French, and other workers did not soon also make revolutions. Their hopes were not absurd. There were great revolutionary battles in Western Europe. But - with the help of the Western "social democratic" workers' leaders - they were defeated. Errors made by the early Communist International notwithstanding, the international Bolshevik current was entirely right against reformist social democracy.

Reformists' criticism of Stalinism have often, of course, been correct. Right on the same questions that bourgeois democrats have been right on.

Stalinism disintegrated. But it does not automatically follow that reformist social-democracy is the answer - unless we describe Stalinism as socialism and assume from its collapse that capitalism is the best we can hope for.

Reformist social-democracy is not an alternative strategy for achieving socialism. Socialism is the replacement of wage-slavery and the capitalist system built on it by a different mainspring - free, cooperative, self-administering labour. What has that got to do with the modest reforms achieved by the social democrats?

The fight for welfare-state reforms and the defence of existing welfare state provision is indeed necessary for socialists to take up. But socialists can't stop there.

Besides, today's Labour "reformist" leaders are not defending the welfare state. The fight to defend welfare state provision today is a fight directly against the Blair-Brown Labour government and indirectly against the timidity of reformist trade union leaders.

Since the 1920s, social-democratic parties have abandoned even a verbal commitment to socialism defined as something radically different from capitalism. They aspire at most to modifying capitalism, with a few welfare measures. Since the 1980s, social-democratic and Labour leaders in France, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and Italy have implemented pale-pink Thatcherite policies.

The only model of socialism restored to its proper shape and colour by the disintegration of Stalinism is the only model that ever deserved the name - the fight to organise the working class as a conscious force, a class for itself, to break bourgeois state power, abolish wage slavery and establish democratic self-rule throughout society.

**[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)**



# FIGHT FOR MIGRANTS' RIGHTS!

BY **BETH REDMOND**

## WORKERS' LIBERTY STUDENTS AND LEFT CANDIDATE FOR NUS PRESIDENT

With the rise of UKIP, and the "mainstream" parties who created the conditions for it pandering to its anti-immigration agenda, fighting for migrants' rights could not be more urgent. The general election has become a festival of anti-migrant bigotry – driven by UKIP, the Tories, the right-wing press and, shamefully, the collaboration of the Labour Party.

NUS has good policy on migrants' rights – largely proposed by the student left. But as with so many issues, the central NUS leadership does very little about this. The whole movement needs to step up on these issues on three levels:

1. Firstly, we need to get behind the immediate demands being made by the International Students' Campaign, question like tuition fees, charges for the NHS, back-ground checks by landlords, post-study work visas, financial protection for students whose colleges or universities lose their licenses, and opposition to net migration targets. The direction of these policies does just make life much worse for our international student comrades. They are cutting edges in the Tories' xenophobic drive to blame society's problems on immigration. We need to spread these demands throughout the student movement and build the strongest possible campaigns around them in every town and area.

2. We also need to oppose the functioning of immigration controls in our education system. We need to insist our universities and colleges should be providers of education, not watchdogs for the UK's border system. We need to fight the growing collaboration of managements with UKBA, and opposing increasing draconian monitoring and attendance procedures. This is very much bound up with opposing the monitoring of UK

students, particularly Muslim students, through mechanisms like Prevent and the so-called Counter-Terrorism and Security Act.

Last but not least, we should go on the offensive and seek to turn the tide. The student movement needs to build a political campaign to say that there is no problem with immigration, and that migrants are welcome here. Anti-immigration agitation is about the rich and the ruling class distracting attention from the real causes of economic crisis and social problems – them! NUS should have used the

up to the general election to build just such a political campaign. Student activists must demand and organise for the campaign to start now.

We must fight every deportation and detention, and join the fight to close the detention centres. We must build powerful solidarity with the struggles of migrant workers, starting with cleaners and other outsourced staff on our campuses. University of London students' brilliant links with cleaners organised in Unison, the IWGB and the GMB show what is possible.

We need to oppose the whole anti-migrant political agenda which has both allowed and been strengthened by the rise of UKIP. In particular, we must condemn the Labour Party's shameful concessions to this agenda (that mug!), demanding our partners in the trade unions fight back and start holding

labour to account. We must combine support for European unity with opposing 'Fortress Europe' and demanding the opening of Europe's borders.

If we don't stand up and defend our brothers and sisters who have come here from other countries, we are morally worthless and we will not fight and win on anything else either.

3. We must combine support for European unity with opposing 'Fortress Europe' and demanding the opening of Europe's borders. If we don't stand up and defend our brothers and sisters who have come here from other countries, we are morally worthless and we will not fight and win on anything else either.

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