Reduce borders, don’t raise them!

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

TORIES
SCAPEGOAT
MIGRANTS

Israel-Palestine: how to reconcile
Interview with academic and long-time Palestinian negotiator, Hussein Agha.

Automotive workers betrayed by Unite
Car workers who continue to oppose Brexit face massive job cuts.

Why Marxists must organise
Extract from Workers’ Liberty new book, In Defence of Bolshevism.

Join Labour!
Reports from Labour conference 2018

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Hezbollah: state ban not the answer

By Ira Berkovic

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

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

Despite their clerical-fascist political programme, support for Hezbollah as a progressive force against imperialism and Zionism has been common on the left. In 2006, marchers protesting Israel’s war with Lebanon marched under placards carrying “we are all Hezbollah”, effectively supporting one of the two war parties, rather than opposing the war on both sides. Hezbollah flags are widespread on the annual anti-Israel Al-Quds Day march, organised by various Islamist and Arab nationalist organisations. The potential for disarray and confusion on these issues within the “Corbyn surge” in the Labour Party is immense, with Jeremy Corbyn himself having previously hailed Hezbollah, and other Islamist groups like Hamas, as forces for peace and progress.

Nevertheless, applauding the Tories’ proposed ban is misguided. The left must support the struggles of socialists, feminists, and other radicals in Lebanon and across the Middle East against imperialist and immensely adverse conditions against the sectarian Islamist terror and re-action that Hezbollah represent. Those are the forces, however currently embattled they may be, that can defeat a party like Hezbollah, and transform the social conditions that allows it to grow, not a British state engaged in a largely symbolic act of geopolitical and diplomatic jockeying. The popular front of the Middle Eastern state uses to ban Islamist “extremists” could just as easily be turned against left-wing “extremists” in a different context. Class-struggle socialists have traditionally opposed state bans on fascist political parties; that opposition should extend to cover bans on Islamist clerical-fascist parties too.

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

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

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

Fast-forward to last week’s Labour Party conference: over 130 constituency parties submitted motions on Brexit – by far the highest number of motions on one topic ever submitted into Labour’s complex “contemporary resolutions” process: the overwhelming majority of these hostile to a “Tory Brexit” and most calling for a “people’s vote”/second referendum.

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

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

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

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

The people have already decided on that. We very rarely have referendums in the UK, the people have decided against my wishes and my union’s wishes, but they have decided.

Just a few days later, Marvin Cooke, managing director of Toyota UK, said that the impact of any border delays in the “unprecedented” scenario of a no-deal Brexit would be hugely damaging for a firm that sources parts from all across Europe and ships them to Britain for assembly. Toyota’s factories rely on the smooth delivery of parts from Europe, from where 1,000 lorries a day cross the channel with parts for car manufacturers in Oxford, the Midlands, the north and the north-east.

Cooke said he was concerned for the Burnaston (Derby) plant’s future, despite recent investment. Burnaston is one of nine Toyota manufacturing sites in the EU. Every time there is a new project, the different locations compete for the work.

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

Peter Tsouvallaris, the Unite union convenor at the Burnaston plant says his members are increasingly concerned: “What we have here are high-value, well-paid jobs. “And in my experience once these jobs go they never come back. And that’s why we have to do everything possible to keep these jobs in the area.”

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

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

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

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

Unite, backed by Morning Star, betray automotive workers

By Jim Denham

The Unite union’s policy conference in July received a large number of motions on Brexit, the vote on any of which would have got the impression that “public vote” was a “possibility”. Several called for a second referendum and one (from West Midlands/Automotive RISC) called for “continued participation in and access to the European single market.”

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

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

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

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

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

There was just one motion (London & Eastern / 1229 Walliam Forest / Castle Brommich) calling for a “socialist Brexit”.

Inevitably, in the compositing process, the motions were combined, generalised and (in the case of the West Midlands Automotive motion), the more outspoken anti-Brexit sentiments were omitted for information on Unite’s policy. This experienced on Unite’s policy emerging from the conference would have got the impression that (to quote the Star) “the union said No to a second referendum on Brexit.”

By Martin Thomas

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

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

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

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

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

More: bit.ly/brazil-polls
New war on the wharves

By Gerry Bates

Hutchison Ports, part of the C K Hutchison conglomerate, is one of the biggest container terminal operators in the world. It has launched a new and big offensive against workers in its Australian terminals.

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

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

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

Since then, in Brisbane though not so much in Sydney, the firm has deliberately and even perversely ramped up its numbers of casuals. Before the 2015 dispute, and even today in the Brisbane Patricks container terminal just across a fence on the same shoreline, all workers were permanent.

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

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

Now Hutchison is on a cost-cutting drive.

They flagged up a new approach in August by trying to sack lead union delegate Joe Johnston on trivial workplace-misconduct grounds. The union eventually pushed that back to a five-month suspension without pay.

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

All employees be put on irregular shifts and made subject to being called into work at short notice. Wages cut by about AS$2,000 a year. Work week extended from 30 hours to 35-to-42.

Several key jobs be “outsourced” to subcontractors. Removal of much of the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) supplied by the company, of long-service leave, of the established grievance procedure, of parental leave, above the statutory minimum, etc.

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

The MUA is determined to resist.

• bit.ly/hutchi

The threats that Kavanaugh represents

By Eduardo Tovar

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

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

Meanwhile the world has watched US President Donald Trump’s selection of Brett Kavanaugh to sit on the US Supreme Court. The Senate confirmed the appointment on 26 September.

Kavanaugh’s appointment on 26 September.

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

Socialists must come out strongly against the wider threat to the feminist movement’s gains that Kavanaugh and other current establishment figures represents, while rejecting liberal illusions that a bourgeois court provides a reliable means of protecting and extending these gains.

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

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

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

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

Socialists should use the present opening to build a strong political will from below to defend and advance women’s rights, and explicitly link these to class struggle.
“Feeling the Bern”: prospects for the American left

Letters

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

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

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

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

This socialist revival is still in its early days, and as such there are very few potential leaders. The question of a “Bernie 2020” campaign was posed, and Rojas affirmed that the movement must be wary about getting too close to the Democratic Party.

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

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

John Kelly, London

All states are racist endeavours

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

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

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

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

Most people who believe this still generally support the right to self-determination. A tiny number on the left do not support this principle ever. As recognised by the caveat above, there is clearly nothing antisemitic about believing that all states are racist endeavours, or denying the right to self-determination for anyone. This would be misguided, but is too general to be antisemitic.

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

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

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

Mike Zahroukis, Bristol

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

The AWS, for example, in its 52 years of existence has never achieved a membership of more than 290. The British Trotsky movement that was briefly united in a single body in the late 1940s (the RCP) has over the intervening period fragmented into around 20 organisations. Since the 2008 recession British Trotskyism has made almost no headway in terms of membership or political influence. On the international plane (a topic on which Foster says nothing), the 80th anniversary of the foundation of Trotsky’s Fourth International has been celebrated by no less than 23 Internationals, at least six of which have a significant number of national affiliates. Last, and by no means least, no Trotskyist organisation has ever led a revolution or built an enduring mass party.

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

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

John Kelly, London

Factions and cure-alls

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

John has read our literature quite assiduously (even if his book shows he got the wrong end of several sticks: we discussed that when John came to our summer school in June). So he knows that for over 20 years now we have been criticising “Zinovievist” culture in the would-be Trotsky movement — a model of “Bolshevism” based on Zinoviev’s “Bolshevikisation” drive of 1924-5, not on the Bolshevist party which made the 1917 revolution — as an engine of splits, demoralisation, and intellectual impoverishment.

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

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

If the argument has escaped John’s memory, he will find it pulled together and summarised in our introduction to our new book, Max Shachtman’s In Defence of Bolshevism. Why didn’t I make a lot of that in my review of John’s book? Because in his book he systematically presents things as if the most caricaturedly “Zinovievist” of the would-be Trotskyist groups represent the whole spectrum, and takes no note of the striving to develop a different model by ourselves (and, at times, by other groups).

And because I didn’t want to be facile.

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

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

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

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

They plan a new White Paper on immigration policy. We don’t yet know exact details but we do know for certain that it will put the rights of all business first and just spin migrants as a problem.

There will be restrictions on immigration based on skills and wealth.

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

Socialists are for parity and free movement between all nations, not just a select few. But the proposal to reverse current conditions for EU nationals and introduce a tiered system based on “skills” (de facto on income) and wealth is both wrong in principle, discriminates against the less well off, and it will help underpin strict and hostile immigration rules for all working-class people from all parts of the globe.

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

The rich have no borders.

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

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

In the current lexicon of the left “working-class” and “migrant” are often two separate categories; the working-class in this context means “native” working class and the migrant is classed as a tool of capital, a means to divide the working class.
The most basic level of international solidarity is missing. The left should have a record of pushing for unions to organise migrant workers. For the months after June 2016, Corbyn stood firm on the question of migration and free movement, refusing to talk in terms of numbers or caps. That stance has changed; Labour has now more-or-less conceded on the question. While continuing to state that immigration is not the cause of depressed wages or the strain on public services, Dianna Abbott has announced an immigration policy with some of the same basic components as the Tories, a system based on the demands of the labour market and not on the human need to travel to find a livelihood. Even the Tories know that migration does not suppress wages. Theresa May has suppressed nine separate government reports that make this quite explicit.

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

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

Brexit: a feint rather than a victory

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

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

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

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

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

The chair just brushed him aside and closed the meeting.

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

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

It did say “if we cannot get a general election Labour must support all options remaining on the table, including campaigning for a public vote”, but the composite’s movers, the GMB, have explicitly opposed any new vote with “remain” as an option, and so Unite’s Steve Turner and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell.

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

Labour’s “six tests” on Brexit are as follows.

1. Does it ensure a strong and collaborative future relationship with the EU?
2. Does it deliver the “exact same benefits” as the single market and customs union?
3. Does it ensure the fair management of migration?
4. Does it defend rights and protections?
5. Does it protect national security and our capacity to tackle cross-border crime?
6. Does it deliver for all regions and nations of the UK?

No.1 is a coded version of the Irish border issue. No.3 is a coded version of cross-Europe police cooperation, which the Tories are as keen on as Labour. No.4 is a coded version of: don’t scrap unfairness to TUC, Redundancy Payments, etc. But the majority of the Tories, all but the deregulation ultras, don’t want to scrap those (not for now, anyway, and they’ll be happy to promise they won’t).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• Full text of conference composite: bit.ly/dir-brex

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LABOUR CONFERENCE 2018

Democracy: now dry out the damp squib!

By Martin Thomas


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

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

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

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

The average age of Labour members is still old — 53, only a bit below the Tories’ average of 57. More Labour members (29%) are over 65 than are under 44 (28%). Only 4% of Labour members are under 24 — a lower figure even than the Tories’ 5%.

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

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

LEADERSHIP

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

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

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

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

Labour will “develop systems to allow Young Labour Groups and Youth officers to communicate with Young Labour members” (they can’t at present)! Conference will debate 10 subjects chosen by CLPs, and 10 by unions, each year, rather than four plus four. The requirement that motions be “contemporary” (refer to something after early August) has been dropped. (87 CLP motions were ruled out this year for not being “contemporary” enough; it’s been a lot more in previous years).

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

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

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

Why the Labour right praises McDonnell

By Chris Reynolds

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

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

“Today John McDonnell has crossed a line by wanting workers as shareholders and presented on boards, he signals that capital can be made to work for the common good. His comrades from the 1970s would not turn in their graves...”

“His proposed inclusive ownership funds demand that every [publicly listed] company with more than 250 people progressively allocate 10% of its shares to be held on the employees’ behalf... if you recast it as a compulsory employee stock ownership plan... is trying to achieve what George Osborne’s 2013 Enterprise Act attempted but failed miserably to do”.

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

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

The £500 per year which workers are due by wanting workers as shareholders and presented on boards, he signals that capital can be made to work for the common good. His comrades from the 1970s would not turn in their graves...

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

The £500 per year which workers are due for workers’ rights.

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

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

**Opaque**

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

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

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

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

The conference also failed to reverse some regressions new since 2015. Although Blair was famously and rightly reviled for “control freakery”, his regime expelled nowhere near any control of Labour in local government.

**Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it**

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

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

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

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

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

**The Israel-Palestine debate**

**Diary of a delegate**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eve Wise, however, decided to use her speech to discuss the “false antisemitism witch hunt” and advised people to watch Al Jazeera’s “The Lobby” (see critical review here bit.ly/2ivT8p7).

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

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

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

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

That sort of dog-whistle antisemitism from LPM coupled with the glowing reception two members of Neturei Karta got when leafleting shows that some Labour members have a long way to go on managing to make solidarity with Palestinians without falling into the trap of antisemitic actions and views.
Hussein Agha is senior associate member of St. Antony's College, Oxford, and co-author (with Ahmad Samih Khalidi) of A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine. He has been involved in Palestinian peace negotiations for three decades. We reprint here with permission from Fathom journal, an extract from an interview with Fathom editor Alan Johnson.

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

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

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

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

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

That’s why it is a 1948 file — much more than simply the right of return, if I understand you correctly — and why must a successful peace process find a way to open it up again?

HA: Oslo pretended that 1948 never took place, but ask yourself what is the origin of this conflict? It was not 1967 or the absence of a Palestinian state. It was a school kid in Beirut before 1967 and everywhere you looked and everything you heard constantly reminded you of the conflict and the suffering of the Palestinians. The Palestinians were present on the territory between 1948 and 1967 and they did not create a state. Their focus was on “liberation” and “return”. To try to find a solution that fantasises that these ‘questions’ do not exist is a problem that is at best, because it does not address the core of the conflict. Resolving “occupation” does not resolve “dispossession” and “dispersal”. Am I right for the liberation of Israel? No! I am calling for recognising both historical and current realities and acknowledging the nature of the beast, rather than hiding behind one’s finger. That is the only way to reach a genuine peace and coexistence.

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

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

...I have started to become attracted to something I have always not found relevant: a “truth and reconciliation” process... In all the negotiations I was involved in, the Israelis have their narratives and Palestinians had their narratives and we shouldn’t waste time dismissing them.

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

...The right seems to understand the issues better than the left. The original historical right, the Herut and its ilk, did not believe in separation. I remember a fascinating meeting I had with the late Elyahu Ben-Elissar, a member of Irgun, a Likudnik who became Ambassador to Egypt, the US and France.

This is what he told me: “I have no problem being in a state with you guys. As a matter of fact, Jabotinsky once said that Israel could not have Jewish presence in its territory, Arab president for another term. I know this is not possible in the current circumstances, but this is where we come from. The Israeli left are racists who look down on you and just want to separate from you by giving you territory. I want to fulfil my Jewishness but I do not want you to suffer because of it. For me, an Arab is no more important than Tel Aviv. For someone on the left, Tel Aviv is more important, and they are willing to give up Hebron. They are not the true carriers of the flame of the Jewish people.”

It was fascinating to hear that. Lots of people told me later that he just said it to impress me. I don’t know, but it was intriguing. What he clearly understood was that the Palestinians, like the Jews, can never “give up” on the whole of Palestine. People on the left, by contrast, say “Yes, the Palestinians have reconciled themselves for things they do not even understand.” There may be something worth engaging on between the Israeli right and the Palestinian left. I am trying to find out exactly what. This is important because Israel is not willing to concede to the right and to engage it one has to be sensitive to the new sensibilities. I know that the current climate is not conducive to that and the right feels triumphant but that their triumph is at hand. But once they realise that is not the case and costly chaos and dear uncertainty are around the corner, maybe there will be a pressure to consider some irreversible consequences of their ideological roots. I am not sufficiently naïve not to recognise that although some of the right, sometimes, talk about “equal rights”, a la President Reuben Rivlin, they will not compromise on the need for the state to remain in Jewish hands.

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

Rather than being treated as the wretched of the wretches, the refugee should feel himself/herself to be a positive contributor to humanity. His forgiveness and generosity of spirit in agreeing not to summon the past for the sake of peace and a better future should be publicly commended and highly valued.

I think such an approach will reassure the refugee of a humanity he/she has been denied and encourage him/her to be more flexible in response to concrete material proposals. This has not happened before. If you resolve the refugee problem in a manner that is agreeable, albeit grudgingly, to the refugees, you would be extracting the poison of 1948 and going far in truly ending the conflict.

Rivlin, they will not compromise on the need for the state to remain in Jewish hands. Rather than be treated as the wretched of the wretches, the refugee should feel himself/herself to be a positive contributor to humanity. His forgiveness and generosity of spirit in agreeing not to summon the past for the sake of peace and a better future should be publicly commended and highly valued. I think such an approach will reassure the refugee of a humanity he/she has been denied and encourage him/her to be more flexible in response to concrete material proposals. This has not happened before.

If you resolve the refugee problem in a manner that is agreeable, albeit grudgingly, to the refugees, you would be extracting the poison of 1948 and going far in truly ending the conflict.

Right now we are not dealing with this issue. Until we do, talk of “end of conflict” is bogus. Many are totally focused on the text of an agreement... Of course, signing a document could help facilitate an end of conflict.

There are many steps that after the signing would be much more possible than before the signing. But, if one only relies on the agreement to end the conflict; sadly, he or she will be disappointed.

An agreement does not end the conflict, but could be the first step in a long and often painful course to achieve that goal.
The No-Party people

An extract from Sean Mattigama’s Introduction in Workers’ Liberty’s new book, In Defence of Bolshevism, by Max Shachtman

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

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

The structures and beliefs of either the Labour Party or the trade unions cannot substitute for the specific structures required for all-round Marxist — Bolshevik — activity on the three fronts of the class struggle, the trade-union, the political front, and the battle of ideas. You cannot meaningfully develop the “influence of Marxism” as a revolutionary force without building a revolutionary party. In the 1920s Trotsky thought that such a party, the Communist Party then, might slot back the sectarian fetish of “building the party” inside out, and of younger activists who took their cue from them.

The organisation needed to do the things that the Marxists must do, and only Marxists can do, has coherent, coordinated, planned, collective activity. It must have a structure of democratically elected and accountable committees and organisers capable of deciding and carrying through prompt political responses. It must supervise its members who gain official positions in the movement.

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

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

Democratic centralism

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

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

The term “democratic centralism” had in fact been coined by the Mensheviks in 1905, as they adapted to Russia more vigorous organisational ideas agreed by the German Social Democrats at their Jena congress in September 1905.

When the Social Democrats abjured “democratic centralism,” after World War One, what it mostly meant was that their parliamentarians and officials were shielded from democratic control, and that most of the membership was organised as a passive, only quarter-engaged mass, easily manipulated by demagogy.
Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. The capitalists’ control over the economy and their ruthless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

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

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

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

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

• Independent working-class representation in politics.

• A workers’ movement that fights all forms of oppression. Open borders.

• Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, maximum left unity in action, and democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.

• Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.

• Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

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

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**Events**

**Monday 8 October**
Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it
6.30pm Multifaith Chaplaincy, Bristol BS8 1AU
bit.ly/2D01vyD

**Tuesday 9 October**
Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it
7pm, St Hilda’s College, Cowley Place, Oxford
bit.ly/2D01vyD

**Tuesday 9 October**
Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it
9 October, 7.30pm, The Black Prince pub, 15 Abingdon Square, Northampton NN1 4AE
bit.ly/2D01vyD

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**Thursday 13 October**
Unity demo to oppose the far-right in London
11am, London meeting place TBC
bit.ly/2D543bi

**Saturday 20 October**
People’s Vote March
noon, Park Lane, London
bit.ly/brx20

**Tuesday 30 October**
Rise of the Precarious Workers — National Demo
8am, Transport for London, 197 Blackfriars road, London SE1 8NJ
bit.ly/2DS43bi

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**Below**

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**Canvassers for hire?**

**By Steve Allen**

The prolonged debate about “One Member One Vote” (OMOV) within Labour Students flared up at the National Executive Committee at an OMOV National Chair removed all mention of the policy from their social media accounts.

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

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

We have seen the benefits of OMOV in the recent Labour Party leadership elections, where hundreds of thousands of people joined to vote for Jeremy Corbyn. But OMOV is not a silver bullet. Some on the Labour Students left believe OMOV can make a National Conference obsolete. Although the differences are currently very inaccessible, this does not mean we should do away with our sovereign decision-making body. Instead we must demand proper representation for all Labour clubs and the whole party upon Labour Party financial resources to ensure nobody is priced out of elections.

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

Over two years after the constitution change, and 10 years since we didn’t have OMOV, National Officers have pandered to ideology, hiding behind the bureaucratic cover of Labour Membership Services. They claim there is no way to accurately ascertain which Labour Party members are students. The fact for individual students having to submit proof of their student status in order to be able to vote in Labour Students elections, whenever that time comes. Unfortunately the Democracy Review does not indicate how Labour will get past this impasse.

Iony is not lost on Labour Students. Since the government introduced a de facto policy of “For the Few Not the Many” was made even worse by the conscious strategy of successive Labour administrations to deny the equal pay claims of council female employees. In the period 2007–17 the Labour-controlled council spent over £2.5 million fighting those equal pay claims — £1.8 million on legal fees, and £700,000 on ‘internal staff costs’.

Party activists need to organise to:

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

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

• Support the Labour Students campaigning alliance with local authority trade unions against SNP and Tory cuts, using industrial action to stop further cuts.

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

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**“Glasgow Labour has much work to do...”**

**By Ann Field**

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

That’s what the publicity said for all members-conference organised last weekend by Glasgow City Council Labour Group. After 40 years in control of the City Chambers, Labour had gone into opposition after losing last year’s local elections at the polls. But there was no sign at the conference that the Labour Group understood why it had lost office.

In fact this was the after-effect of the suicidal decision to collaborate with the Tories in “Better Together” in the recent referendum. Unison as: “Nothing but a combination of tax wheezes, a chance to hammer workers’ terms and conditions, and an attempt to minimise equal pay claims.”

Begging friendly to big business but hostile to workers’ rights inevitably hostile to workers’ rights inevitably 

Yet in the financial year 2015/16: the City Building Executive Director’s pay increased up to £180,000; the Culture & Sport Glasgow Chief Executive’s salary went up to £355,000; and total pay for senior staff in ALEOs rose to £1,480,000.

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

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• Reorientate CLPs: Away from labour movement routinism, and towards community and workplace campaigns and struggles.
Tube drivers’ strike rocks bosses

By Ollie Moore

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

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

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

The dispute involves a range of issues, many stemming from what union activists call an overly-disciplinaried culture of petty authoritarianism amongst Piccadilly Line bosses. Staffing is also a key issue, with reports from Piccadilly Line personnel that London Underground increases staffing levels at Piccadilly Line depots.

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

Members of the driver-only union Aslef, which is a minority union amongst Piccadilly Line drivers but a majority amongst drivers across the Tube network overall, respected RMT pickets.

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

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

- The Piccadilly Line strike should shake us up, as well as shaking up the bosses. It reminds us how powerful we can be when we organise to take action. The issues faced on the Piccadilly Line are not unique to that line, or to drivers:
  - “We have to make it a spark for more action across the whole network.”

Concessions on DOO at Merseyrail

By a train driver

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

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

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

It must be disappointing to Merseyrail traincrew, as well as traincrew at other franchises where DOO is being proposed, that so little detail is provided after months of secret talks. But the guarantee of a second safety-critical person is a hugely important step forward.

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

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

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

Workers prove they not the committee run the pub

By Sacha Ismail

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

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

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

UberEats wildcat

By Gemma Short

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

Supported by the IWG and IWGB branch leaders, workers effectively held a wildcat strike for several hours during the day.

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

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

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

Fast food’s 4 October

By a McDonald’s worker

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

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

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

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

Some want to wait until there’s a Labour government to better lives of low-paid and precarious workers. But the wider movement should never wait until there are better laws; we need to create a boat-up and lasting campaign of workers in their unions that fights both smaller and larger issues within their workplaces. The goal is ultimately workers’ control. By empowering individual fast-food workers through union activism we are starting to move in that direction.

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

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

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

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

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

Defend these dinner ladies!

By Patrick Murphy

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

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

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

All the staff are women and members of Union which is campaigning to save their members jobs.

The redundancies will be devastating for these workers who are locally-based and low-paid. It will also add additional pressure on the already over-worked Teaching Assistants to pick up this important job.

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

In a statement urging the school to withdraw the proposals the union says, “The dedicated dinner ladies are at the heart of school life and have been supporting the children for generations. Unison does not believe the school has to make these redundancies because of budget cuts.”
Labour needs a new critical left wing

By Keith Road

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

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

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

Press coverage seems to agree that Corbyn has partially succeeded in this. The Tory press now talks of Corbyn’s ideas as having come up at The World Transformed (TWT). It is welcome that TWT continues to provide a forum, like The Clarion and Workers’ Liberty or Momentum. But the supposed sidekick to it, not a critic.

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

The Labour left we advocate is one but the Labour leadership who may have understood the analysis and reports followed the conference argued Labour took a decisive decision to campaign for a People’s Vote and move towards an anti-Brexit position. Sadly this is not the case.

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

While Keir Starmer clearly had the room when he announced that Labour would not rule out a second referendum, there is no solid commitment in the motion’s text. This is as with the Democracy Review (see centre pages) the unions played a conservative role, but the visibility of this role would have come as a jolt to many activists, who may have understood the unions to be embodied as key allies of Corbyn. But the supposed betrayal of union leaders is not an argument to downgrade the trade union link.

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

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

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