



# & Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## Labour: stop Brexit, reverse cuts, scrap anti-strike laws



## PREPARE FOR A SNAP ELECTION

On the streets and in the workplaces is where we must defeat the plans of Boris Johnson and his "special adviser" Dominic Cummings to force through a "no deal" Brexit by overriding Parliament. And that's the best way to prepare for a likely snap election.

Cummings's latest plan (3 August) is to respond to Parliament voting no confidence in Johnson – which it may well do on 4 September – by delaying the subsequent general election to after Brexit has become accomplished fact on 31 October.

This is a revised version of Johnson's earlier speculation about "pro-roguing" (suspending) Parliament to get himself a free hand on Brexit. Maybe third or fourth versions will be devised in coming weeks.

These are coup plans – plans by entrenched authority to override democratic safeguards. Parliament opposes "no deal" Brexit. Polls have repeatedly shown large majorities for Remain as against "no

deal", which was not even an option in the June 2016 referendum.

Jeremy Corbyn has called on the head of the civil service to stop the coup. Rebel Tory Dominic Grieve talks of getting the courts to rule against it. But democracy is made, improved, defended, in the first place by the people, and by the labour movement as the leading activist force to rally the majority.

We call on Labour and the unions to mobilise for a huge turnout on the "People's Vote" demonstration on 12 October, as the alternative to "no deal". We advocate that Labour get on the streets with stalls and protests now. We demand that Labour say now that it will respond to a "Brexit coup" by piling onto the streets and supporting strikes to force Johnson to resign. And that it goes into election mode, with radical policies in line with Labour conference.

If and when the official Labour machine won't move, activist groups like Labour For a Socialist Europe must take the lead.



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## Workers' Liberty summer camp 2019

**50 friends and supporters of Workers' Liberty gathered in the hills of West Yorkshire for our annual summer camp on 8-11 August.**

Although storms were forecast, socialists of all ages enjoyed wild

swimming in a nearby waterfall, hiking, trips on the canals and steam railways of the surrounding valleys, football, and our annual pub quiz and talent show.

Longtime socialist Bruce Robinson ran a presentation on African

Jazz; we learned about the history of Esperanto in the European workers' movement; and we enjoyed talks from Deliveroo strikers, Nama'a al-Mahdi the Sudanese revolutionary activist, and youth climate strike organisers.

# The split in the Socialist Party

By Pete Boggs

**The Socialist Party (the group publishing *The Socialist*, and previously known as Militant) has split after a special congress on 21 July. So has the CWI, the international network of groups of which the SP was the pivot.**

SP delegates voted 173-35-0 to "refound" the Committee for a Workers' International by calling an international conference in 2020. The congress also declared that people continuing to support the existing CWI would place themselves outside of Socialist Party membership, effectively expelling the minority in Britain who support the (apparent) majority internationally within the CWI ([bit.ly/cwi-26](http://bit.ly/cwi-26)).

The split concludes months of bitter and increasingly public fighting within the Socialist Party (public due to lack of computer skills by some, rather than to any spirit of open debate).

The faction led by longstanding SP leader Peter Taaffe accused their opponents of "capitulating to petit bourgeois identity politics". The opposition contended that Taaffe's standoffish approach to feminist or other broader political mobilisations takes away the opportunity to fight for working-class politics in these movements.

Those who were expelled were clearly unsurprised at this outcome, and held a rally of their supporters from across the CWI on the same day as their expulsion. They have founded a new organisation in Britain, Socialist Alternative.

As this article goes to print, Socialist Alternative members are attending the CWI International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting in Belgium. A provisional committee of the CWI IEC majority has been formed, including representatives from Ireland, Belgium, USA, Brazil, Britain, Austria, China, Greece, and Sweden.

The CWI sans Taaffe claims a majority of groups (Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Hong Kong, Israel/Palestine, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Quebec, Romania, Russia, the Spanish state, Sudan, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, Tunisia, and the USA, alongside a majority of members in Germany and South Africa) compared to seven held by Taaffe. These assertions tell us little about numbers across the world, however. Outside of Britain, Ireland, and the USA most sections of the CWI are tiny.

Taaffe's grouping has managed to retain the vast majority of the CWI's possessions, keeping hold of most social media accounts, plus hundreds of thousands of dollars.

According to a statement on its website, Socialist Alternative claims to have taken the branch majorities in Manchester, Salford, Merseyside, Leicester, Sheffield, Huddersfield, and Brighton. Other areas, particularly London, have remained loyal to Taaffe.

We do not yet know what the balance on either side is among their student members and of their union activists: of particular interest will be what happens in the civil service union PCS, where until recently the SP dominated the union leadership. Some deeper political issues have been revealed by the finalisation of the split.

A statement from Socialist Alternative ([bit.ly/salt-stmt](http://bit.ly/salt-stmt)) accuses the Taaffe leadership of conservatism as regards struggles against gender, or race, or sexuality-based oppression, and saying that they have drawn an arbitrary distinction between these movements and class struggle. This is certainly true, and whilst this has been obvious to many on the left for half a century, it is better that these comrades have come to this realisation late rather than never.

However, we now have a situation where there are two organisations in Britain which are almost indistinguishable to any observer. Hopefully over the coming months these differences will be clarified and debated within both groups. There needs to be a sharp reevaluation of the approach to the Labour Party, though that is yet not evidenced to have been much of a thought during the internal debate.

In the SP's report of the 21 July congress ([bit.ly/hs-21j](http://bit.ly/hs-21j)), Hannah Sell makes the laughable claim that the Socialist Party have been able to "orientate effectively to those mobilised in support of Jeremy Corbyn, campaigning for the removal of the Blairites and the transformation of Labour into a workers' party with a socialist programme". In reality, the Socialist Party have stood at the sidelines.

In some ways, the statements which have come out from Socialist Alternative are not particularly encouraging. They say nothing of the Socialist Party's sectarian approach to the Labour Party or its utterly reactionary pro-Brexit stance (a big theme with the SP since its 2009 "No 2 EU" campaign especially). Any public criticisms of the Socialist Party's bureaucratic role in the trade unions (not uniformly, but starkly in PCS) are so oblique as to be unnoticeable.

However, they are now in a position to discuss these issues in a more open environment, and should seek to do this seriously both among themselves and with the broader Trotskyist left.

**For those seeking a detailed assessment of the Socialist Party's parallel woes within its PCS work, a blog post by SP and PCS veteran John McNally is illuminating: [bit.ly/jmc-in](http://bit.ly/jmc-in).**

**For debate with and criticism of the SP and Militant, over a range of issues dating back to the 1960s, see [bit.ly/mil-sp](http://bit.ly/mil-sp)**



**Friends and supporters of Workers' Liberty show their support for Iranian worker militant Esmail Bakhshi and activist Sepideh Golian, jailed by the regime following the courageous Haft Tappeh sugar cane strike.**

## £9,960 raised, £15,040 to go

**Our current fund drive total stands at £9,960. We are working to raise £25,000 by 9 December.**

The most recent donations total £145 this week. Our treasurer has also been given two coin jars, with a total weight about 4kg.

The online calculator we can find is based on US coinage, but it suggests that we've got something like £50 there.

Our income from regular supporters' contributions and litera-

ture sales covers our basics: rent, utilities, office supplies, stipends for some of our office staff.

The fund drive covers the rest: bought-in technical help for our website, organisers' fares to travel to meetings, printing new leaflets, pamphlets, and books.

In the coming months of Brexit crisis and Boris Johnson offensive we'll need that "rest of it!"

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

### Alliance for Workers' Liberty conference 7-8 December

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which provides the person-power behind *Solidarity*, has scheduled our yearly conference for 7-8 December.

We take stock, debate, vote, and elect new committees. The pre-conference discussion period begins soon. More: email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org).

### Solidarity 515 will be out on 4 September

*Solidarity* 515 on 4 September. After that we will return to our usual weekly schedule (no.516 on 11 September, and so on).

The variation in July-August is because some of our staff are out of London in that period, and because our circulation depends heavily on labour-movement and campus activity, which is sparser in July-August.



# Take action on 20 September



## Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

**School students globally have been called on workers to join their "Climate Strike" on Friday 20 September, and trade unionists, socialists, environmentalists are mobilising hard to make the most of it. This will kick off a week of action – everyone based in a workplace or active in a trade union should build for it.**

Youth climate strikes so far have helped propel climate change, and the urgency of tackling it, back into public consciousness again. The politics and demands of the movement in the UK is, unsurprisingly, very mixed, but it has strong left-wing currents, including or especially among leading young people.

UK Student Climate Network, UKSCN, calls for a fairly bold "Green New Deal" – one which would tackle social inequality and end austerity, votes for 16, and more. This network is strongly associated with the youth strikes.

To tackle climate change, to shift and ultimately overcome capitalism – the systemic engine driving environmental destruction – requires working-class agency. Work-

ers perform the labour that recreate society, are capable of wielding immense leverage through the disruptive power of strikes, and through gaining power at the point of production – and beyond – to reshape society.

20 September provides one step, or starting point, for workers' action around climate change.

We do not expect a general strike on 20 September, or likely even widespread actual strikes. Anti-union laws forbid strikes over political issues, such as climate change, in the UK. The militancy of the UK trade union movement is not yet at a stage where we could expect widespread political strikes, even if that didn't additionally mean illegal strikes. However, actions short of this is a vital start.

Various workers already planning strikes for live disputes on other issues have been discussing re-arranging this to coincide with these climate strikes.

Other workers have been seeking for permission from employers to shut work for that day, with successes to date. Employers might do this because they want to look environmentally-conscious, in some 3cases because they are, or because they have been pressured to be.

Some Labour councils have previously passed motions declaring "climate emergencies". While such motions generally commit to very

little of substance, they provide useful ammunition to pressure councils with. We hear that one or two may be "supporting" the 20 September mobilisations – which should mean committing to not dock pay.

Workers at other councils have discussed taking widespread unofficial strike action or walk-outs, on the basis that the administratively difficulty of docking pay often costs more than paying it anyway.

UCU, following motions passed at their conference, is calling on the TUC to call for a 30 minute work stoppage on the day.

In many workplaces, actions will be smaller still: joining city-wide protests en-masse at lunchtime, lunchtime rallies, or taking group photographs in support of the climate strikes.

From discussions with environmental activists internationally, it seems the picture is similar across much of Europe, at least.

Organising workplace meetings, passing motions in union branches, talking to colleagues and distributing leaflets, are some of the many ways activists are building for it.

**Beyond September, we'll be building for larger and bolder actions monthly, and using it as a springboard for organising campaigns within workplaces over environmental questions.**

## Reclaiming "climate camp" tradition

By Mike Zubrowski

**"Reclaim the Power", a direct action environmental movement, held a five-day camp on 26-31 July against new gas infrastructure and against the "Hostile Environment" for migrants, close to a gas power station twenty miles north of London. It was bigger than most previous camps that RTP have organised, with perhaps 600 people.**

After a couple of days of workshops on a wide range of issues, we held a rally outside the Home Office to demand an end to the government's anti-migrant policies and border regime, on Monday 29 July. This was coupled with activists constructing "tripods" to block the entrance to the coach company Hallmark Connections, demanding that they stop facilitating government deportations.

The following day, we had a range of actions, protests, and banner drops targeting companies constructing new gas infrastructure. On the same day, activists entered and shut down – for the day – SSE's new Keadby 2 gas power plant in Lincolnshire, the only new UK gas power plant currently in construction.

Climate change has already forced tens of millions – or more – people to migrate, internationally. As climate catastrophes progress the number of "climate refugees" will correspondingly escalate. At a



time when anti-migrant politics is also on the rise globally, this is a lethal mix, threatening over time, to throw perhaps one billion people into unimaginably horrific circumstances, and stoking the rise of the far-right.

Drawing clear links between the two struggles and taking firm direct action on both has never been more necessary. Reclaim the Power is among the most left-wing of the environmental movements, in many ways the successor of the 2006-11 Climate Camps, and for the most part explicitly anti-capitalist.

Reclaim the Power's key limitation is insufficient class analysis and sparse engagement with the organised working-class. From recognising the central role of capitalism in driving climate change, for the most part they don't make

the next logical step, of seeing the central role of workers – who do the labour which creates and recreates capital – in fighting climate change. The other limitation is the lack of positive, offensive demands – society-wide calls on the state.

As well as making the case for class politics in different workshops and with flyers and other literature, we called a workshop on trade unions, class-struggle, and climate change, talking about 20 September among other things. There was a generally good reception to these ideas, although the deep reorientation required in methods of "activism" is a barrier to many putting this into practice.

**We're organising with several activists from the camp and beyond to pursue working-class internationalist climate activism.**

## Definitions and focus



### Debate

**People who worry more about climate change, correspondingly putting more effort into "being green", are likely to live lifestyles with higher associated emissions.**

In advanced capitalist countries, middle-class people tend to think more about climate change. They are simultaneously living in less densely-packed areas, further from where they might travel to, and with more disposable income: more carbon-intensive lifestyles.

Martin's article (*Solidarity* 513 bit.ly/512debate) and mine (*Solidarity* 512 bit.ly/cc-512) are in broad agreement, areas of disagreement being a question of subtly different emphases or slight tweaks.

In the longer version of this article (online at bit.ly/mz-reply), I critique emissions calculations and allocation, and the (more or less) deep limitations of the a particular theories of causality and agency, and a narrowed scope in consideration, that come with most such calculations, and some other things. Here I consider (again, more condensed) the term "decarbonisation", and our analysis of historic climate movements.

It's good that Martin is giving a precise definition, as "reduce the amount of gaseous carbon compounds released in or as a result of a process", and so synonymous with "reduce emissions", adapted from *removal* of carbon accretions from engines. Not all, but many dictionaries do define decarbonize like Martin has.

Previously, Martin has stated that "I take decarbonise to mean zero carbon emissions", as other comrades have agreed with and none, before Martin, disputed. To the extent that it meant anything, I had also taken it this way: not *reduction* but *elimination*, an *achievement* of "net zero". It is on this basis that I had disputed it – we should not pretend that individual institutions can achieve net zero.

When arguing for environmental demands at work, I have easily kept what I was proposing in clear proportions, with no demand to "decarbonise", which would have confused and miseducated more than clarified. The gravity of the insufficient and – for some time at

least – shrinking amount of environmental engagement is another issue our articles are in agreement on.

However, Martin underplays the extent to which "environmental activism has been [historically hindered by] a 'tunnel-vision of institution-by-institution focus'. There has been lifestyle and win-environmental-awards greenery. But that's not really activism." Matt Cooper's article (*Solidarity* 513 bit.ly/512debate), referring to "the straw man of localism" also underplays this.

No, that isn't activism, although it is seen as by many and influences the ideas of yet more. Perhaps there are areas of environmental activism that weren't as influenced by this as I stated, and likely these ideas had less influence on the labour movement, on the working-class more widely. But an institution-by-institution focus *has* been predominant in much of the environmental left, among much of what we would see as "environmental activists" (see my article in *Solidarity* 512 bit.ly/cc-512).

From climate camps, and since, we have seen much needed, often heroic, creative and inspiring environmental direct action – but almost all institution-by-institution. The minimal demands that come with this aren't fundamentally altered by the maximalist rhetoric of "system change not climate change", with nothing, no credible strategy, connecting the two. Engaging with rather than writing off these political currents has been necessary, as well as organising inside labour movement with which we want it to fuse.

Workers' Liberty have been involved and supported these actions, trying to link them to the labour movement and to push them further, to more radical politics. The key, consistent argument we've made is the need to orientate seriously to the labour movement.

**The other strand of our politics that we have, rightly I think, pushed is the need for wider, positive demands. For energy to be socialised, to be taken into democratic public ownership, with adequate public funding to carry through a rapid transition, sourced through taxing the rich, expropriating the banks and the wealth of the rich.**

Mike Zubrowski

## Local augments the big picture

**Especially since 2009, much climate activism has been reactive and defensive: stop (this or that) fracking (project); stop Keystone XL; stop Adani, etc.**

That isn't because people have had "institution by institution" illusions, but because with the movement on the back foot, those defensive battles seemed more winnable.

The renewed climate activism with the school student strikes gives hopes of moving onto the front foot again. The renewed activism will also build *local* activism

to "decarbonise" big workplaces and campuses, which, as Paul Hampton's research has shown, sagged as the bigger-picture activism also sagged.

Pushes to reduce carbon emissions in workplaces and campuses (to "decarbonise", using one word instead of three) will build up pressure on governments, develop copyable technologies, and nourish anchored long-term worker-controlled climate activism.

**It will complement the big general-political challenges and augment the base for them.**

Martin Thomas



# Hallelujah for Boris Johnson?



## Antidoto

By Jim Denham

**The *Morning Star* and their political masters the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), have a problem with Boris Johnson: when it comes to Brexit, they agree with him.**

This is obviously embarrassing for people who call themselves socialists. The *Morning Star* does its best to avoid making it too obvious. But the strain tells.

In its editorial of 23 July, the *Morning Star* suggested that “Where his [Johnson’s] coronation both poses a risk and presents an opportunity to the left is in his greater distance from the Establishment ‘mainstream’ and the already evident breach between him and parts of the permanent state”.

In another *Morning Star* article (15 July), “Brexit, Boris Johnson and a British state in crisis”, Kevin Ovenden (a member of the Counterfire group, who broadly agree with the CPB) had already argued that “the establishment is losing control” as a result of the “historic anti-Establishment result” (i.e. the June 2016 referendum). Under Johnson the Tory party “is unmoored from following the overwhelming consensus of big capital in

Britain”.

Have you got that? Johnson’s not really part of the “Establishment” and he poses a threat to “the permanent state” (i.e. the civil service, the armed forces, MI5, etc) and “big capital”.

If you think I’m being unfair, read CPB general secretary Robert Griffiths in the *Morning Star* of 27 July:

“The formation of a government headed by Boris Johnson opens a new stage in the political crisis of Britain’s ruling class.

“Why? Because it is a regime apparently committed to a policy that contradicts the interests of big business.

“Most of the big financial and economic monopoly corporations do not want Britain to leave the EU. They regard the result of the 2016 referendum as a major defeat...

“They were prepared to accept Theresa May’s ‘semi-Brexit’ if an exit could not be stopped altogether”.

But it’s all different now. When Boris Johnson said “fuck business”, he really meant it!

The *Morning Star* (reporting on CPB policy) nailed its colours to the “no deal” mast back in January, while May was still prime minister.

“Britain should leave the EU on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms to free a future Labour government from single market rule, the Communist Party declared at the

weekend...

“Any withdrawal agreement revamped by the government would continue to bind Britain to the single market.

“CP general secretary Robert Griffiths said this would ‘obstruct any future British government’s efforts to promote infrastructure investment, manufacturing industry, economic planning, public ownership, regional development, public-sector procurement and VAT reforms and a labour market that ensures full rights for all workers.’

“Mr Griffiths added that being part of a customs union would ‘outlaw import regulation to protect strategic industries such as steel, while also impeding a mutually beneficial fair trade policy with developing countries’.

“The CP urged the labour movement to reject moves to extend Article 50 as this could lead to Brexit being cancelled”. So the only danger it seems was that under May the Tories could not be trusted to take the UK out of the Single Market, or fully out of it.

Now Johnson says the same thing, and not just in newspaper articles, but from 10 Downing St. And promises to push it through, whatever Parliament thinks, whatever the electorate thinks.

Where does it leave the CP and *Morning Star*? Why don’t they offer critical but unconditional support? Why don’t they campaign



A T-shirt produced by the CPB giving their view of the “Remain and reform” argument

for Johnson to stay true to his promise to take Britain out “come hell or high water” on 31 October?

**When it comes to Jeremy Corbyn’s one consistent policy on Brexit (opposing no-deal), the *Morning Star* actually opposes him. But you won’t get a *Morning Star* editorial spelling that out.**

# Defining away impairment?



## Letters

**My exchange with Janine Booth (*Solidarity* 513 and previous) started with a comment by me, in an interview with Judy Singer previewing the neurodiversity session at Ideas from Freedom.**

Some neuroatypicalities, I suggested, are just “differences”; others are also “impairments”. (There’s a big grey area, as with physical atypicalities).

I cited examples from my experience as a maths teacher. Some autistic students are “just different”. Others, maybe impaired.

Example: “student B” spent most of his school time in the Special Education Unit. The SEU asked him to go to my mainstream

lessons to diversify his experience.

They told me that B was autistic in such a way that it would be hard to include him in general class work. (I did try, and succeeded just once). An SEU worker would come into class to work with B.

Both in class and when the students were gathering outside the building before class, B interacted with the other students scarcely at all. (They were, by the way, friendly and un-censorious towards him). B spent almost all his time knitting, and occasionally shouting out on issues nothing to do with the class.

My point was not that B did poorly at maths. It was that it was good, and not unnecessary fuss, that the SEU did special work with him.

Janine agrees that some neuroatypicalities involve impairment, but is not convinced

that B’s did.

She does that partly by saying that “‘collective learning’ is only one form of learning. I’m not sure that there are sufficient grounds to assume that learning in large-ish groups is such a superior form of learning that it warrants ‘hard-wired’ preference for learning alone or one-to-one as ‘impairment’.”

With B it was not just “preference” – that’s common enough – but (as yet) severe impairment at collective learning. And that is so inconsequential as not to qualify as impairment at all? Seems to me a bit like saying that hearing impairment is really no impairment at all because I could read instead.

I’d argue that collective discussion is more important in maths than elsewhere, but leave that aside. That a lot of learning, and for example workplace organising, is done in

classes, seminars, lectures, study groups, meetings, picket-line gatherings, etc. is not a crime of capitalism.

It is common to many societies, and it is virtue rather than vice that there is more of it in capitalism. Or the pre-industrial aristocratic mode of learning by individual tutor should be the norm? That seems to me both impractical and undesirable. In workplaces, the chief capitalist misdeed is not excess of collective group discussion, but the substitution for it of one-by-one “consultation” of individual workers by managers.

It’s good, rather than bad, that the school recognised B’s impairment and tried to help. Maybe the SEU could have done better.

**I’m fairly sure what they did was better than saying “just different. No problem”.**

Martin Thomas, Islington

# Williamson and Willsman



## Letters

**It’s true, I think, that Chris Williamson MP has acted as a channel into the Labour Party for fundamentally right-wing politics (pro-Assad, “anti-Zionist” conspiracy theories, etc.)**

Political integrity demands that Labour does not allow him to become an MP or be seen as “representing” Labour.

I am still unconvinced that socialists should go a step further and be for Labour

expelling him altogether from membership.

In a Labour Party where the Leader’s Office is run by people of a Stalinistic turn of mind not very far politically from Williamson, our chief concern is to establish political norms by debate, education, political battles; and to defend rights of dissent.

If the Labour Party machine decides to throw Williamson overboard in order (they hope) to save their more prudent core operators, we will not have gained. And we may have lost, in that the machine gets more authority to expel people because they have “offended” X, Y, or Z, rather than because they have had specific breaches of Labour

Party integrity proved against them.

Whatever the balance in Williamson’s case, comparison shows that we should oppose expelling Pete Willsman. Willsman is guilty of an off-the-wall outburst in a National Exec meeting and of repeating similar ideas in what he thought was an off-the-record conversation with a journalist who had set out (and with some skill) to coax him into that position. Garrulous? Offensive? Shaped by ill-thought-through “loyalism” and “knee-jerk” reactions? All those, maybe.

**But nothing comparable with Williamson’s consistent and unrepentant track-record.** Rhodri Evans, London





## Block No Deal, stop Brexit!

**Saturday, 7 September 2019  
11:30am-5:00pm, Camden School for Girls, Sandall Rd, London NW5 2DB**

Labour for a Socialist Europe is holding an emergency national meeting to help left anti-Brexit activists hammer out ideas and map out an effective strategy for the turbulent weeks and months ahead.

Discussions will include:

- What political strategy to block No Deal and win a Labour government?
- How should the anti-Brexit left organise in an election?
- Winning the fight at Labour Party conference
- What does "Remain and revolt" mean? Our vision for transforming Europe
- Confronting the far-right insurgency, challenging nationalism on the left
- More: [labourforasocialisteurope.org](http://labourforasocialisteurope.org)

## Local Labour parties call for socialist GND

The Labour for a Green New Deal campaign has been circulating a model motion for Labour Party conference, and with major success – the motion seems to have been submitted by something like 60 local labour parties.

You can read the text at [labourgnd.uk/motions](http://labourgnd.uk/motions). It includes the appropriately ambitious demand of a zero-carbon economy by 2030. But the measures it advocates to reach that goal are, socialist rhetoric aside, broad-brush-stroke to the point of being woolly.

The *Clarion* has been circulating a more radical version ([bit.ly/2Z1zaOv](http://bit.ly/2Z1zaOv)), with demands based on the emergency motion "For a Socialist Green New Deal" passed at the Fire Brigades Union conference in May. Its demands are more concrete and more radical.

These include full public ownership of energy; public ownership and democratic control of banking and finance to provide the necessary economic resources and leverage; and repeal of all anti-union laws so that workers can drive the process by freely taking action over social and political issues like climate change.

Variants of this motion have so far been passed in six local labour parties, with more hopefully to come. The FBU is also planning to submit a version of its own.

We should fight for these radical proposals to make it to the floor of Labour conference and pass.

**The situation is too urgent for tinkering. In any case, for socialists, these kind of demands should be minimum first steps. Hopefully Labour for a Green New Deal will agree.**

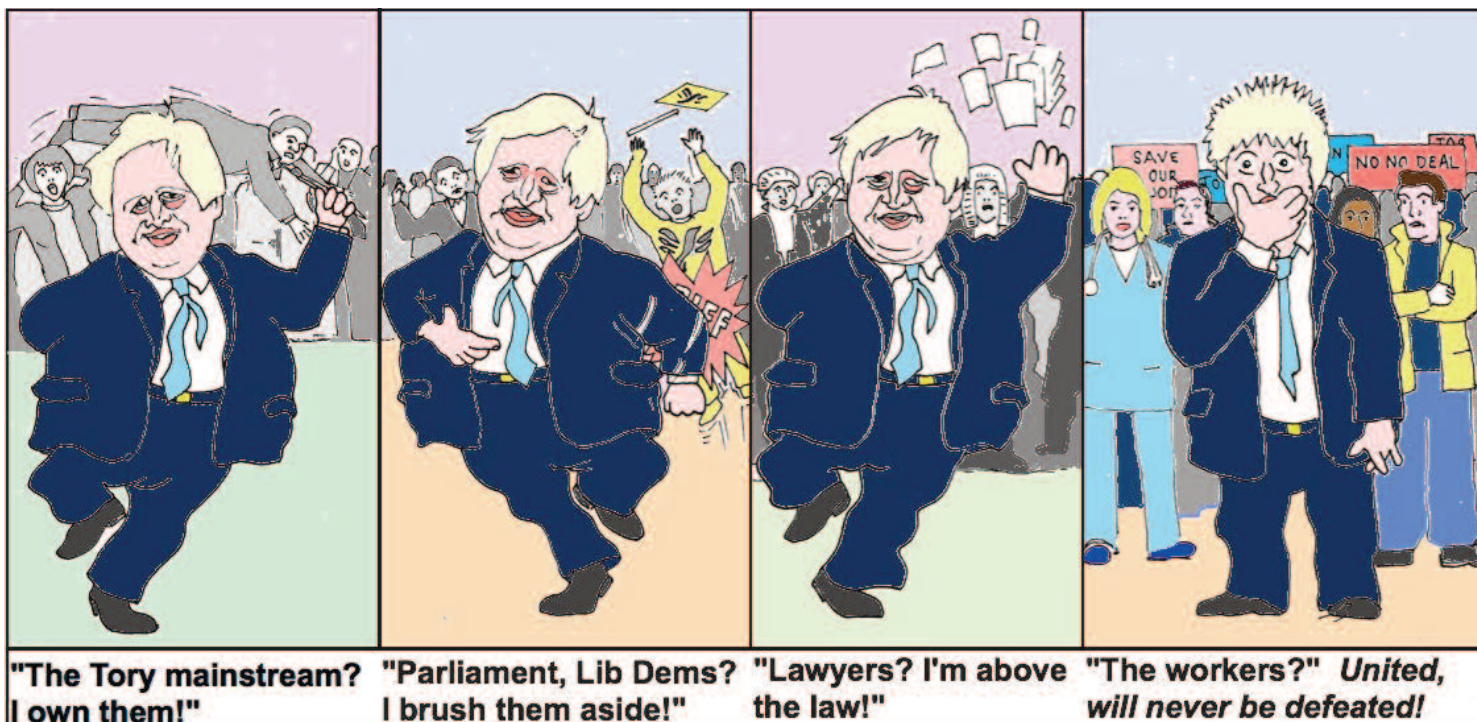
• More: [bit.ly/2Z5ieCZ](http://bit.ly/2Z5ieCZ)

## March against Brexit

**Saturday 12 October**

**Noon, Park Lane, London.**

**Watch out for details of left bloc!**



# Disaster capitalism needs drastic answers

Twelve years ago, Naomi Klein wrote a book about "Disaster Capitalism", describing how plunderers and capitalist social-justice-warriors had picked up on catastrophes, throwing society off-balance, in order to slam through their plans.

The New Orleans flood of 2005 was one example. Another was the slump which started in Britain around the same time Thatcher took office in 1979 and – pushed in the first place by world oil price rises – had taken industrial production down 15% by early 1981.

Boris Johnson's drive for "no deal" is an exercise in disaster capitalism. For him, there are advantages to doing Brexit in a chaotic, off-balanced, improvised way.

That way makes it easier to use Brexit as a lever for social regression and worker-bashing.

"No deal" is not what it says on the can.

No-one, not even the Tory free-market ultras, believes that Britain can "build a wall" in the Channel and continue without negotiations and arrangements with other countries.

"No deal" means mainly that the deal-making will be helter-skelter, ad hoc, and tilted towards closer ties with Trump's USA and away from continuation of the social regulation acquired in Britain as part of the EU's patched and fumbling processes of social "levelling up".

As far as we can judge, Boris Johnson's policy on the Irish border will be to turn a blind eye there to the tariffs and checks introduced elsewhere on EU-British frontiers. Probably Ireland and the EU will do similar, initially.

Each will "dare" the other to be first to move against the resulting anomalies. Johnson can hope for a new "hard border" at least to seem less hard than it might have been, and quarter-plausibly blamed on the EU.

The Tories' Immigration Bill has been stalled since March. Under it, the Tories plan to end free movement, and limit EU workers on less than £30,000 a year to applying for 12-month visas, with a minimum gap of 12 months between visas.

Johnson's chances of pushing through a harsh version of that will be improved if he can do it in emergency mode, after a "no deal" Brexit.

Johnson's plan is risky. But it will not necessarily fail through its own contradictions. He may be able to put it through if the labour movement does not mobilise.

Some months ago, Tom Kibasi, director of the IPPR think-tank, not a left-winger but anti-Brexit and someone who's spoken at "Another Europe is Possible" events, called for a cool appraisal of "no deal".

"There won't be trucks filled with rotting food in Calais or shortages of medicines in pharmacies. Planes will continue to fly... A thin agreement – covering areas from aviation to contract continuity – [will] be quickly concluded..."

"No deal", he argued, will be a regressive hit. But over time, rather than through a quick spasm of chaos ([bit.ly/kibasi-nd](http://bit.ly/kibasi-nd)).

Suppose Kibasi is right, or nearly right. "No deal" Brexit on 31 October is disruptive, but manageable. Its worst effects will develop only after time, as Tories leverage the emergency bit by bit.

### NOT PREPARED

**In that case, if Labour does not sort itself out fast, Boris Johnson has a good chance of winning a snap election.**

He has a good chance of recouping the Brexit Party vote for the Tories. What will Farage have to say, if Johnson has already "delivered" Brexit? If Labour does not recoup its votes lost to Lib Dems and the Greens in the Euro-election, then the mechanics of first-past-the-post will bring the Tories a clear parliamentary majority even if their percentage vote is mediocre.

Labour is not prepared.

Jeremy Corbyn still will not say what policy on Brexit he would take into a general election. His fantasy "I'm better at bourgeois diplomacy than the Tories: just watch me fix a deal"? Or a visibly reluctant what-else-can-we-do Remain policy?

The social-welfare, anti-cuts message which drew a big Labour vote in 2017 has been undercut in two ways. Labour's high command has narrowed it to a thin pleading for more money for cops. Johnson is set to gazump that, and to promise specious boosts for schools and the NHS, too.

The latest figures (for end-2018) show that Labour still has 519,000 members.

Some will have dropped away in the last eight months; some will still be on the books, but deactivated by the leaders' dithering over Brexit and antisemitism. It remains a much bigger membership than any other party, and bigger than Labour has had for decades.

50 local labour parties so far have voted to send left anti-Brexit motions, promoted by Labour for a Socialist Europe (L4SE), Another Europe Is Possible, and Open Labour, to Labour's conference on 21-25 September. As Nadia Whittome of Labour for a Socialist Europe says: "In a moment of polarisation between us and an extremist No Deal Tory campaign, we need to cohere the Remain vote around us – it's our only way out."

Labour's membership needs to use the Labour Party conference to call the leadership to account and send it out with policies attuned to working-class demands and to the depth of the impasse of global capitalism:

- Remain, Transform, Rebel
- Green New Deal, with public ownership and control, and rapid conversion, of the energy industries
- Make workers free to reclaim our rights, by scrapping all the anti-union laws, Thatcher's laws as well as the 2016 Trade Union Act
- Restore the NHS and schools to full public ownership and control, and to adequate funding
- Restore the benefits system, especially for the disabled
- Public ownership and democratic control of utilities and banks
- Tax the rich!

• Naomi Klein's book discussed at the time: [bit.ly/nk-dc-1](http://bit.ly/nk-dc-1), [bit.ly/nk-dc-2](http://bit.ly/nk-dc-2)



# The rise of the DSA: hopes and limits

By Simon Nelson

**The DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) – a group founded in 1973 as a left social-democratic splinter from the then-decaying “Shachtmanite” Heterodox Trotskyist tradition, and long with little profile – has recently grown to over 50,000 members.**

The DSA convention this year (2-4 August) had over 1000 delegates, an increase from 700 in 2017. Admirably, the conference was livestreamed. It may have seemed overly procedural at points, but it reflects well on the DSA that their conference is accessible to the membership and a wider audience.

The rise of the DSA offers some hope for revival on the US left. But at the same time the ISO (International Socialist Organization, a splinter from the SWP-UK’s international network) has dissolved itself, and now Solidarity (a group combining “Third Camp” socialists, “Mandelites”, and others) has started discussions about converting to an “educational centre”.

Both ISO and Solidarity had been working with and in the DSA, in different ways. Whatever the shortcomings of ISO and Solidarity, their fading means that most of those with some semblance of “Third Camp” and revolutionary socialist politics are scattered in the US without an organisation. That limits the possibilities from the rise of the DSA.

The DSA convention was followed by a minor furore online after a video collated from snippets of procedural debates at the convention, got widely shared by right-wing *Fox News* reporter Tucker Carlson. The video (put together so as to suggest it was a continuous session) included people making procedural speeches against the use of gendered language and asking delegates not to clap.

Angela Nagle, appearing as a guest on Carlson’s show, cited the video as proof of the DSA sliding away from class politics. But

Nagle represents a particular strand of identity politics herself. That of a “working-class” identity being white, male, able-bodied and “strong in arm, thick in ‘ead”.

Whatever criticisms we may have of the running of the conference, not allowing clapping is better than the politics of Nagle and others on the so-called “dirtbag left”.

In the run up to the convention, caucuses which are really political tendencies produced a number of resolutions, mostly but not solely focused on organisational rather than political matters. These caucuses, the largest of which are Bread and Roses, Socialist Majority, Collective Power Network, and Libertarian Socialist Caucus, are also represented roughly in proportion to their support at the convention on the National Political Committee.

At the most basic their differences are about whether the DSA should be as it is, a (loosely) centralised organisation with different chapters (branches), or more like an alliance of local groups, with greater autonomy, money and power given to the local groups.

The headline-grabbing vote was the endorsement of the “Bernie or Bust” position for the 2020 US election. The DSA will not endorse an alternative Democrat candidate.

A substantial minority did not support that position, and would be willing to back a candidate like Elizabeth Warren. Sanders has some history on the left, and has run as an independent for his Vermont Senate seat, Functionally, though, the positions of Warren and Sanders are not that different.

Another resolution required endorsed candidates to run as open socialists. There is still no obvious method of accountability to the organisation for those elected as DSA members. Or indeed what exactly it means to run as an “open socialist”.

One of the mainstays of the Bread and Roses caucus has been support for the “rank



and file” strategy in the labour movement. That means an orientation to encouraging DSA members to get jobs in organised industries and becoming rank and file union militants rather than union staffers or NGO workers.

This view is well known as being advocated by Kim Moody of Solidarity, and has a lot in common with the ideas of Workers’ Liberty and *Solidarity*.

Confusingly, though, Bread and Roses do not link their position with advocacy of an explicitly independent political organisation. The top of DSA, and those who have led its growth since the 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign, still have a conception of the DSA as a pressure group to push the Democratic Party to the left.

Though it is not explicitly stated, some version of the old 1960s “strategy of realignment” (pushing to hive off the right wing of the Democrats and thus convert the Democratic Party into a US version of the Labour Party, and then...) is implicit in much of the organisation’s method.

As Dan La Botz notes in his report for the *New Politics* website: “The convention was devoid of any references to Marxist theory and there were few references to socialist history...”

The internationalism of the DSA is rather weak, and over the decades has lost the “Third Camp” slant it still had at its semi-“Shachtmanite” beginnings. It has some

fairly typical kitsch left baggage. On Israel-Palestine the DSA supports BDS [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, essentially a position of declaring Israel an illegitimate entity], and this convention tried to strengthen its campaigning on the issue. (Sanders himself opposes BDS.)

A resolution on Cuba called for much more uncritical support, and, as Dan La Botz’s report notes, one of the speakers from Venezuela was part of the Maduro government.

There is still a real need for political education in the DSA. The best parts of the revolutionary left should be prioritising that.

The main aim for many members is the election of Sanders, and a government modelled on the better bits of European social democracy.

If Marxists and revolutionary socialists are to be able both to radicalise the DSA in terms of US working-class politics, and to push it to an independent working-class orientation in international politics, then they will have to act in a more concerted and thought-out way than as individuals or even within caucuses. (Besides, there is the problem that both the ISO and Solidarity have supported BDS.)

US leftists are right to throw themselves into the movement which represents the biggest organised support for socialist ideas in a generation.

**But to dissolve revolutionary organisation at the same time is a serious error.**

## “After Johnson’s Brexit, us”

By Sacha Ismail

**A new “left-wing” campaign for Brexit, “Leave – Fight – Transform” (LeFT), has been launched with great fanfare from the *Morning Star*.**

The initial signatories, too, confirm that this is an initiative of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) and other bits of British Stalinism. More on that below.

What is striking about the content of the statement is not just that it indulges in an extravagant version of the Lexit fantasy – the idea that some form of Brexit is necessary to and can help bring about working-class and socialist progress in Britain. Much worse than that, it is essentially a petition in support of Boris Johnson’s Brexit policy.

The statement is not opposed to a No Deal Brexit. Not at all. Although it does not use the words “We support a No Deal Brexit”, that is clearly and logically what it is saying. Nor does it counterpose a better, Labour-led alternative Brexit (a fantasy in our view, but nonetheless) to what is actually happening.

On one level, this is quite shocking. But it is not surprising when you consider that the

CPB and *Morning Star* already support a No Deal Brexit, with Britain’s economy moving to “WTO rules”.

So just at the point where the dominant faction of the Tories, with the wind of the Brexit Party behind them, are pushing full-speed into a scorched-earth neo-liberal, radically authoritarian and anti-migrant national populist Brexit – these “left-wingers” step up to help them by shouting “Ensure the 2016 referendum result is implemented” (to quote their statement).

The statement has nothing to say about the burgeoning threat from the right in Britain and instead presents the EU as the main driver of the attacks we face.

At this point it’s worth considering who has signed the statement. It’s not (yet at least) a hugely impressive list – 80 people in all. Some of the key names of the Stalinist-influenced Labour left are on it, but not that many. Who knows what internal politics or divisions are involved there.

Key figures in the CPB, its associated organisations and its milieu are well-represented – including CPB General Secretary Robert Griffiths. (Some of the Labour Party

signatories are very close to and perhaps even crypto-CPB members, e.g. Marcus Barnett and Eddie Dempsey.) It’s worth noting that the CPB were the organisers of a campaign for people to boycott the European elections, i.e. to refuse to vote for Labour even – or it might be more accurate to say because of – the Brexit Party surge.

Some comrades have speculated that this new organisation was launched because a pre-existing one, “The Full Brexit”, was too discredited by a number of its founders supporting and in one case – James Heartfield – standing for the Brexit Party.

But TFB has been quick to get a statement out supporting and trumpeting its involvement in LeFT. And the initial LeFT signatories include Phil Cunliffe, a central participant in the same ex-Revolutionary Communist Party/Spiked network as Heartfield, fellow Brexit Party candidate (now MEP) Claire Fox et al – and himself a supporter of the Brexit Party! Plus another *Spiked!* writer, George Hoare.

This is not an initiative any self-respecting socialist should have anything to do with.

It was therefore genuinely disappointing to

see that LeFT’s signatories include a number of supporters of the anti-Stalinist (ex-SWP) socialist group RS21: Such as Jen Wilkinson, Brian Parkin and Colin Wilson. It seems surreal that these comrades could put their names to such a thing.

Consider that the statement, despite pro forma references to “abuse of migrants” and “the structural racism of fortress Europe”, says nothing about the actually-existing assault on migrants or what the left should say or do to oppose it. How could it, given both what it is supporting and who is behind it?

In the 1930s, the German Stalinists dismissed proposals for a labour movement united front to beat back the Nazis, and in effect downplayed the Nazi threat, with a blithe declaration that after Hitler came to power, it would soon be their turn. “After Hitler, us”. Meanwhile they competed with the Nazis’ nationalism, insisting that they shared a common goal of “national liberation”.

**Johnson, of course, and the Tories are not Nazis. But the signatories to the LeFT campaign are essentially saying “After Johnson’s Brexit, us”.**



# New Tory “Brexit coup” plan: make Labour fight!

By Pete Broxas

**Paul Mason, one of the most influential journalists and writers in the pro-Corbyn left, has called for “a progressive pact with Greens and Lib Dems” as Labour’s “only option” against Boris Johnson and his rush for Brexit.**

In Parliament, as against Johnson’s government as against other Tory governments in the past, Labour MPs will of course walk through the same lobbies as Lib Dems and the SNP and rebel Tories.

They will even coordinate parliamentary tactics with them.

What is ruled out is a tactic which buries politics under the tactic, rather than having the tactic serve politics. Which makes the labour movement unable to advocate policies opposed to all wings of the ruling class. Or unable to advocate them except as something to be pursued at a later and quieter time, outside the crisis that calls for a coalition tactic.

An electoral pact – or “popular front”: Paul Mason acknowledges that his proposal links back to the 1930s “popular fronts” – would blur politics at the very point where voters actively engage with politics, in the polling booth at a forthcoming crisis general election.

Another option now being circulated is that Labour should agree a single-shot coalition government with all the other opposition groups – Lib Dems, SNP, Anna Soubry’s group, rebel Tories, the lot – to take office after a vote of no confidence in Johnson.

The coalition agreement would thwart Johnson’s plan, announced by his adviser Dominic Cummings, to remain prime minister even after losing two votes of confidence and to make the subsequent general election happen after no-deal Brexit had become an accomplished fact on 31 October. The plan is essentially a variant of Johnson’s previous scheme of “proroguing” (suspending) Parliament.

Supposedly the coalition government would revoke Article 50 and then do nothing at all except call a new general election. Or, in another versions, negotiate a further Article 50 extension with the EU, then call a new general election.

These schemes are unlikely even in their own terms. If there were a solid majority in Parliament for revoking or extending Article 50, then that could be voted through now. In fact, would have been voted through already.

For Labour to start talking about such a coalition would only put all distinctive working-class politics, all calls for distinctive working-class mobilisation, on the back of the shelf for the duration – and the duration of a political crisis! – for a will-of-the-wisp.

And would this hypothetical coalition government go ahead with Johnson’s announced plans for more social spending? Or stop them, and see Labour outflanked on that issue by the Tories?

Johnson’s “Brexit coup” – whichever variant he goes for – should be combatted in the first place on the streets, by mass demonstra-

tions and strikes to force him to resign. That cannot be done in coalition with the Lib Dems and Soubry.

We have already seen, in the Euro-elections, Labour supporters, and even left-wing Labour members, going off to vote Green or Lib Dem. Those voters have to be won back by politics.

An electoral pact would deny voters the opportunity to vote for reversing privatisations, for increasing the minimum wage, for repealing anti-union laws, for stopping benefit cuts, and for progressive taxation. To revert Labour to being a party of the status quo and consensus would be suicidal.

An electoral pact would feed back on and restrain how Labour could campaign. If Labour is to back the Lib Dems in constituency A, it will have to moderate what it says about them in constituency B.

What about popular fronts that Paul Mason refers to in his article, in France and Spain in the 1930s? In Spain that meant the betrayal and suppression of the Spanish workers’ revolution of 1936-7, in the name of “first defeating fascism” – and then the victory of fascism. In France, a Popular Front parliament that deflected the strike movement of June 1936 with unstable concessions, and four years later voted full powers to Pétain.

Paul Mason is right when he says that going on about Nick Clegg and tuition fees will cut little ice today. But what about the Lib Dems’ policies today? On nothing except

Brexit are they at all left-wing. That is why Labour has to defeat them as well as the Tories.

The Lexiter criticism of Mason on the grounds that he breaks an embargo on the Lib Dems who were party to the 2010-2015 austerity is pretty hypocritical.

Not one of those Lexiters spoke against Corbyn going into negotiations with May to help deliver Brexit, and indeed for some weeks talking up the possibilities of success from those negotiations.

Those Lexiters are not the left.

Definitions of what is left and right are never set once and for all, but are always shaped and shaped again by new events and new issues.

Some of those who reckon themselves part of Labour’s left are barely on speaking terms, particularly over Brexit and immigration, with others who also define as “left”.

There are also sharp divisions among those who reckon themselves on Labour’s right

The idea of a definitive “left” position to which we must conform is a dangerous, undemocratic and Stalinist nonsense. That is especially true on Europe, on which, for decades from the 1960s through to the late 1980s, the self-declared “left” was usually more regressive and nationalistic than much of the Labour right.

**All that is true. But Paul Mason’s new advocacy of popular frontism will not strengthen our fight against the rise of the new right. It will weaken it practically and ideologically.**

## Scottish Labour right is wrong to attack McDonnell

By Ann Field

**In 2014 the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) right wing virtually destroyed Labour in Scotland by allying with the Tories in “Better Together”. Now, in 2019, they’re back for a repeat performance.**

The 2014 class collaboration with the Tories resulted in: the loss of 40 out of 41 Westminster seats in 2015; the loss of 13 Holyrood seats in 2016, leaving Labour a poor third behind the Tories; and the loss of a raft of council seats and control of Glasgow City Council in 2017.

The fact that it now turns out that a majority of Tory Party members are happy to see the break-up of Britain in order to achieve Brexit reveals the right-wing architects of “Better Together” to be even more stupid than we already knew them to be.

With an imminent general election now a real possibility, the SLP right wing has swung into action to throw Labour’s electoral prospects in Scotland under a bus.

In an interview at the Edinburgh Festival last week John McDonnell made the perfectly sensible and perfectly pro-democracy statement that if it was clear that there was majority support in Scotland for a second indyref, then Labour in Westminster would not oppose it.

McDonnell did not say that Labour wanted a second indyref. Nor did he say that Labour would campaign for an independent Scotland.

But the response of the right-wing SLP Westminster candidates was rabid.

Led by Kate Watson (former “Better Together” Chief of Operations, and specialist reserve officer in the British Army’s 77th Brigade) and Martin McCluskey (former “Better Together” employee), they set up a new App for SLP Westminster candidates, excluding candidates who they knew would not agree with them.

The upshot was a public statement signed by a less-than-impressive dozen candidates which began by boasting about Labour’s suicidal involvement in “Better Together”: “In 2014 Labour led the campaign to keep the United Kingdom together.”

Instead of moving on from the disaster of “Better Together”, the statement pushed it back centre stage. Instead of focusing on Labour’s economic and social policies, the statement pushed identity politics back to the forefront.

The statement moved on to attack the Labour Party (brilliant tactics on the eve of a possible general election!): “Since then our party has too often sounded like we do not know where we stand on this issue.”

It concluded by stressing the signatories’ opposition to a second indyref (which McDonnell had not advocated anyway), support for the UK staying in the EU (so: some repeat referendum are okay), and the stirring statement: “We do not believe that the answer to nationalism is more nationalism.”

But the statement itself is the embodiment of British nationalism.

The statement’s sub-text, made explicit at a meeting of SLP Westminster candidates later in the week, is that the Westminster Parliament must have a right of veto over the staging of a second indyref, and that veto should be a Labour Party election manifesto commitment.

As a matter of principle, this is wrong. Scotland’s right to self-determination includes the right to decide (through a vote in the Scottish Parliament) if or when to stage a second indyref without the all-UK Parliament having to grant approval.

As a matter of pragmatism, the statement is even worse. Its anti-democratic substance is a gift to the SNP, and it will do nothing to win support from Tory voters (who will never see the Labour as the true custodians of defence of the Union – because we’re not).

One argument advanced in support of Westminster having a “right” to veto the staging of a second indyref is that independence for Scotland would impact on the UK as a whole, and the Westminster Parliament “must” therefore be involved.

But the break-up of the British Empire also impacted on the UK. That did not mean that the colonies of British imperialism had no right to declare independence without Westminster’s permission. And exercising a veto is rather more than mere “involvement”.

The right wing’s statement was issued in a week when a Lord Ashcroft opinion poll found that 47% of Scottish voters want a second indyref before 2021, and 52% of those with a definite opinion would vote for inde-

pendence.

Of course, the usual caveats to the findings of any opinion poll apply. But the poll certainly indicates that opinion in Scotland about a second indyref and independence is pretty evenly divided around 50/50.

This underlines the politically criminal nature of the SLP right wing’s statement.

The gist of an adequate response to such polling is: “If a majority of Scots want a second indyref and independence, we respect that. But what we advocate as an alternative is a radical Labour government which delivers for working people in Scotland and the rest of the UK.”

But the gist of the SLP right-wing response is: “Around half of you people out there want a second indyref and independence. Well, vote for us and we’ll make sure that you get neither.”

The statement is further evidence of the monumental stupidity of the SLP right wing and how out of touch they are with reality.

In recent months their line has been: “The SNP don’t want a second indyref because they know they would lose” and “I’ve been knocking lots of doors and I’ve not found anyone who wants a second indyref”.

They must have been knocking on the wrong doors.

**It’s a real pity that so few of the SLP’s Westminster candidates are socialists rather than British nationalists and British Army officers who prefer to stand for election under the Butcher’s Apron rather than on the basis of socialist policies.**



# Dissident voices of the in



## Interview

**The book covers a very broad range of people. How did you go about getting your list together and doing the interviews?**

Before I started the book, I didn't know that many of the people either. I had interviewed some of them for different publications and in a lot of cases I knew who I would like to interview and then I was able to find more people by asking others. I wanted a broad range and it was important to have people from different places and not just Europe and the US.

*There is a marked difference between the kind of interviewees in the US and Europe and those in South America, Asia and Africa.*

I knew much less about a lot of the activists in those places, so I wanted to give an idea about what is happening there and also show that there are dissidents across these places, and they do not necessarily reflect the views ascribed to them from afar. Showing that there are left wing dissenters in South America is particularly important. Not every critic of Chavismo or Ortega is doing it in order to back US interests in South America. It's important also to have people realise that feminist activists in Africa and Asia have found the view of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch inconsistent when it comes to non-state actors.

*Noam Chomsky is probably the most well-known figure you interviewed.*

I have read many of Chomsky's books and I agree with him on many issues, while differing with him on some positions he has taken. I think Chomsky done a solid job throughout his career of illuminating how US government involvement or outright complicity in war crimes or genocide (Vietnam, East Timor, Cambodia, Turkey, Indonesia, Iraq, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, etc.) is covered differently than crimes committed by countries that are considered hostile to the



**In *Dissidents of the International Left*, Andy Heintz's first book, he interviews 77 figures from across the international left - many of them, especially those from the global South, notable "dissidents" from what is taken in the USA and Europe to be left "orthodoxy".**

**Many of them have not had much hearing in English language publications, though several have been interviewed by or spoken to *Solidarity* and *Workers' Liberty*: Yanar Mohammed, Maryam Namazie, Houzan Mahmoud, Pragna Patel, Marieme Helie Lucas...**

**Andy Heintz talked with Stephen Wood from *Solidarity* about his book. Heintz is a freelance writer whose work has been published in *The Wire*, *The New Internationalist*, *Common Dreams*, *Europe Solidaire*, *Muftah*, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, *CounterVortex*, *Balkan Witness* and *Secularism is a Women's Issue*.**

United States.

For example, when George W. Bush declared a war on terrorism and declared that you are either with the US government or with the terrorists, it should have been self-evident to the legacy media that, by the US government's own definition, it has been involved in supporting terrorists in places like Nicaragua, Angola, Haiti and Cuba during the Cold War and the War on Terror.

Yet that falls outside the spectrum of opinion that is usually featured in the mainstream media. Chomsky has been an important al-

ternative voice when it comes to pointing out these double standards.

However, I also wanted to interview him because we differ on the Balkan wars or the Syrian conflict.

*You focus largely on Yugoslavia and his views on Srebrenica. Probably a lot of people forget that Chomsky got that quite so wrong. He seems irritated by the questions.*

I wanted to ask Chomsky questions about his views on the Balkan Wars because we differ on Bosnia. I felt at the time of the interview, and still feel, the US should have intervened earlier to prevent not only the genocide in Srebrenica, but the also the Serbs' genocidal behaviour throughout the country, including the hideous murders and rapes happening in Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje.

I read Diana Johnstone's book, but I found it to be too pro-Serb, which was why I didn't end up finishing the book. I think that it's important to recognise the meticulous and rigorous work by the International Commission for Missing Persons, which found that 8,100 men and boys were murdered in cold blood in Srebrenica.

I also think Chomsky is correct that similar hideous crimes committed by the US and its allies have not in the past and will not in the future – barring some welcome changes in the global system – be given the same resources and coverage to conduct such an admirable and rigorous an investigation as was conducted by the ICMP.

I think Srebrenica was correctly labelled a genocide. Chomsky also refused to label other crimes committed by US allies, such as the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, the massacres in El Salvador, or Turkey's killings and expulsions of the Kurds as genocides. I think Chomsky, whether you agree with him or not, tends to consistently not use the term genocide because he believes it's been overly politicised.

While the answers Chomsky provided cleared up some questions I had, it didn't change my general differences with him over what the US role should have been during the Balkan conflicts. Studying the Balkans helped me to rethink some of my ideas about US intervention and American exceptionalism.

Even though I differ from Workers' Liberty in that I was opposed to the form NATO intervention took in Kosova, I do believe decisive intervention in the Balkans in the 1990s could have helped prevent Srebrenica and other horrors. I agree with Workers' Liberty – although this wasn't always my view – that some form of NATO intervention was warranted in Kosova. While I opposed the bombing of Serbia and the lack of NATO troops on the ground to protect Kosovars, I think a mixture of troops on the ground with a green-light to protect Kosovars from Serb violence coupled with diplomacy would have warranted support.

Bill Weinberg, whom I share a lot of similar views writes in his section about the non-violent resistance being led by Ibrahim Rugova

that was sidelined and ignored.

Later in the book I interview Ed Vulliamy who is one of the reporters who, Chomsky said – according to an interview in the Guardian (which Noam claimed mischaracterised his views) – “happened to be caught up in a story which is probably not true”. If that was a correct characterisation of what Chomsky said – and only Chomsky and the interviewer Emma Brockes really know, and they perhaps perceived the interview differently) – then I disagree with Noam.

I thought Ed's coverage of the Balkan Wars was accurate, compassionate, chilling and heartbreaking at the same time. I appreciated that Ed went out of his way to humanise a group of people whom Milosevic and other hardliners were trying to dehumanise and otherise.

*The interviewees cover quite a wide spectrum of opinion: socialists, self-declared anarchists as well as liberal thinkers, NGO workers and activists. But I found the inclusion of Glenn Greenwald perplexing. Glenn Greenwald may be best known for helping to expose the leaked information from Edward Snowden about the work of the NSA. But in more recent years his journalism has been used to apologise for the Assad regime and to try and downplay the role that Russia has played in Syria. He seems to be absolutely an "American exceptionalist", and a fairly poisonous one.*

I don't think that is fair. I don't agree with Glenn on everything and we have had very different positions on some issues like Syria. Glenn was against further US intervention, while I thought the Obama administration should have provided Syrian rebels with more anti-aircraft weaponry before Iran and Russia decisively intervened on Assad's behalf. I think this may have been enough to get Assad overthrown.

My general position on this issue was influenced by talking with Robin Yassin-Kassab and Yassin al-Haj Saleh and reading both men's excellent books about the Syrian conflict.

I think Glenn has provided some useful criticism of the reporting on Trump's relationship with Russia. Some of his criticism echoed that of anti-Putin expert Masha Gessen. I think Glenn at times underestimated the importance of some aspects of the Mueller Report, but he also asked some legitimate questions that cast serious doubt on the narrative that Donald Trump was a Russian asset.

I wish he could have been featured more on outlets like MSNBC so he could have challenged the “Russian puppet” narrative. I think the FBI and the legacy media assumed Trump's refusal to acknowledge Russian interference in the 2016 elections because he was loyal to Putin for some mysterious reason.

I honestly think the real reason is less James Bond-esque. I think Trump is an amoral figure who will use any nefarious person – whether foreign or domestic – if that person can help him get what he wants.

I also think a lot of his refusal to acknowl-

## AWL and Kosova

**Workers' Liberty did not call for NATO to bomb Serbia in the Kosova war in 1999.**

We criticised and refused to join the “Stop The War” marches which said “stop bombing”, but that is not the same thing.

We explained ([bit.ly/kos-99](http://bit.ly/kos-99)): “NATO's policy... is to ‘cool down’ the region (which in the short term even led them to war). In the process NATO - to a limited extent and for their own reasons - helped the Kosovars.

“That imperialist governments sometimes help the enemies of their enemies should come as no surprise to socialists. During the first world war, for example, the German imperialists attempted to send guns to Irish rebels; Lenin was helped to get back to Rus-

sia...

“Should German workers have prevented the shipment of guns to the Irish? or attempted to halt Lenin's ‘sealed train’? Of course not – and, likewise, socialists should not have protested at any help NATO happened to give the Kosovars”.

Some on the left, such as *Red Pepper*, opposed the NATO bombing in the name of calling for NATO ground troops against Serbia in Kosova.

**We dissented from that view on the grounds that it is neither realistic nor principled for us to seek to give military advice to NATO.**



# International left

edge the interference is because Trump is so emotionally fragile and self-absorbed that he believes acknowledging the reality that the Russians intervened in the elections to help him win would make his victory seem less legitimate,; therefore he ignores it.

*That may well be true. But Greenwald's down-playing of Russia is not to highlight hypocrisy but to act as an apologist for Russian bombing in Syria and to talk only of possible US aggression against what he considers the legitimate leadership of the Syrian people. In Britain the Stop the War Coalition demonstrated several times against the bombing or proposed bombing of Syria, by which they meant, US and UK intervention. They were silent on Russia. There is a growing trend for Russian imperialist apologetics and ideas that originate in the far right and among advocates of Greater Russia being pushed in the labour movement and left here. That is the role that Greenwald helps to play.*

I don't disagree with what you say about organisations like the Stop the War Coalition and the same would apply to groups like ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism). We have similar supposedly left-wing people in the United States who opposed the war in Iraq yet say nothing about Putin and Assad's massive crimes against humanity in Syria. Meredith Tax refers to this type of selective empathy and outrage as imperial narcissism. It's a kind of inverted form of American exceptionalism.

However, I don't think it's accurate to lump Greenwald in with this group. If you read his past interviews on *Democracy Now*, he has acknowledged Assad is primarily responsible for the crimes in Syria, which for me separates him from those openly supporting Assad and Putin. I think it's also important to remember that Greenwald lives in Brazil and now faces attacks as a journalist by President Bolsonaro along with death threats directed at him and his family for his critical reporting of the president and other political figures in Brazil.

The growing convergence between some views on the far right and an isolationist and nationalist left is something we should guard against, but I just don't think Greenwald falls neatly into this category.

*What do you think about the varying views on military intervention in support of the Kurds?*

I support the right of the Kurds, the PYD and YPG, in fighting against Daesh and for autonomy. I think it was probably inconceivable that they would ever be given the heavy weaponry they would have needed to be able to take on Turkey, or the regime if it had chosen to crush them.

I supported their right to take up arms so they could defend themselves against one of the most reactionary, fanatical and misogynistic forces in the world.

I think support for the Kurds has been another issue in which the left has started to re-examine its old slogans and think more carefully about what it would mean to call for, or at least not outright oppose, intervention by Western powers, particularly the US.



**A Stop the War Coalition demonstration against the UK bombing Syria. Demonstrators are waving the Syrian flag of the Assad regime. STWC has never protested against Russian bombing of Syria.**

*Several of your interviewees, particularly Bill Weinberg and Meredith Tax, are prominent supporters of what is going on in Rojava (the "canton" controlled by the PYD in Northern Syria). Through your questions you provided a relatively nuanced position, recognising both the rights of Kurds to self-determination while remaining critical of some of the conduct of the forces on the ground. In Britain we often get an uncritical championing of the project based on ideas that the PYD have fully embraced the so-called "democratic confederalism" of Murray Bookchin, or that they deserve uncritical support as a continuation of the guerilla tactics of the PKK.*

I think Bill and Meredith's support has been admirably nuanced. Bill has championed the democratic Syrian rebels as well. This is very clearly not a black and white issue.

Can a movement founded as Maoist guerillas and with a very prominent figurehead in Ocalan be won over in mass to the theory of Murray Bookchin? I think time will tell about that. I genuinely feel there are progressive forces in the movement fighting for women's rights and a multi-ethnic society, and I didn't feel comfortable criticising them when they were facing an existential threat from Daesh and Turkey.

In the same vein, I felt uncomfortable criticising the Syrian rebels when some groups fought alongside extremist factions against Assad, because I don't think it's fair to judge people fighting for their survival.

Is it right to just lump the PKK and the PYD/YPG together as the same movement? I don't think so. Certainly, a lot of people are

inspired by Rojava, particularly in some anarchist and feminist circles. And there are conflicting reports regarding political repression, arrests and so on. The Amnesty report which accused the PYD of detention without trial and discrimination against non-Kurdish forces was then contradicted by the UN.

I do not take an uncritical view, but I am broadly supportive of the movement's experiments with democratic confederalism along with its embrace of gender equality.

*Who is the book aimed at and what do you hope people get from the interviews? How has the response been so far?*

I want as many people as possible to read

it! I think that it is a good tool for people from a variety of perspectives and hopefully goes some way to providing the start of greater dialogue among the left and talking about the way forward. I think it is increasingly important now to build a healthier left and at least debate our differences.

So far the book has been well received and I hope it starts more conversations and goes some way towards informing people about the different dissident left voices across the world.

**It is by no means a perfect book, but I'm honoured by the voices in it and the people who helped make it possible.**



**A new pamphlet from Workers' Liberty, "The German Revolution: Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg", has Rosa Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9.**

**They span the time from when the German revolution of 1918-9 broke out, through to her murder on 15 January 1919 by a right-wing militia operating under the protection of the Social Democratic government.**

**An introduction by Paul Vernadsky, author of the Workers' Liberty book "The Russian Revolution: When Workers Took Power". 56 pages A4. Cover price £5. With postage - non-UK £7, UK £6. Cheap rates for bulk orders: four for £18, ten for £40, twenty for £70. Buy online at [bit.ly/r1-gr](http://bit.ly/r1-gr)**



# Transforming the labour movement: a reply to our critics



## Debate

By Todd Hamer

**The Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO) has written a polemic against Workers' Liberty: [bit.ly/cwo-wl](http://bit.ly/cwo-wl).**

It starts with a measured survey of record of activity over the last few decades. It sets out some of our political positions and cites our extensive independent press.

But then it ends in flurry of political swear words. We are described as the "left wing of capitalism", "reformist" and "advocates of socialism in one country".

We are "loyal cheerleaders" for Labour and our activity consists of "shouting hurrah for Corbyn and electing left-sounding windbags to positions in the trade unions". We peddle a myth that "state control of capitalism is socialism". We pretend that parliamentary elections are a road to socialism.

The polemic insists that capitalism has been in permanent crisis due to "the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" since the 1960s (or maybe longer, since it the period since then as "open crisis" and "the re-emergence of the crisis"; as if "the crisis" is eternal, and the question is only when it emerges into the "open".

I think they are just plain wrong both in their reading of Marx's *Capital* and in their understanding of reality. They are also wrong in their opposition to national liberation struggles.

But the core issue is between our orientation to transforming the labour movement – starting with the movement we have now – and the CWO's dismissal of the movement as only strands of "the left wing of capitalism".

Capitalism is based on exploitation. It continues because this fact is not obvious to the vast majority of working-class people.

For socialist revolution to be possible the ideas of capitalist society (individualism, meritocracy, consumerism etc.) need to be replaced by socialist ideas (militancy, solidarity, equality, critical thought etc.), at least in the minds of a sizeable section of the working-class.

In any one individual there will always be contradictory and conflicting ideas. But we can and will shape a workers' movement that has "good enough" ideas and culture for the task.

We should measure our success as revolutionaries by the number of people who are won over to socialist ideas and attitudes, and the extent to which those ideas become a material life-changing force within society.

Our work focuses on that thick seam of working-class activism which is organised within the mass workers' organisations – the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Within this movement there are tens, many hundreds, of thousands of activists who form the most politicised and class conscious section of the working-class. The Labour Party and unions are the arena for the debates and struggles that take place within the British working-class movement.

The Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party. It is the most strategically important political site of class struggle for the British working-class.

Within the movement we find organised propagandists for the ideas of social democracy or Stalinism (or semi-Stalinist versions of orthodox Trotskyism). We also find a much larger mass of people who are ideologically unsure of themselves and heavily-influenced by the capitalist society around them.

The consequences: a culture marked by deference to the leadership, disdain for serious political discussion, demagoguery, careerism and bureaucracy.

We are out to transform the culture of the labour movement and ridding it of these bureaucratic methods. We fight to transform the labour movement into a democratic, fighting force for working class liberation. We fight for a labour movement that embodies the highest standards of democracy, critical enquiry, solidarity and militancy.

Our work focuses on the labour movement because this is the place where millions of working-class people organise together for their own political and economic class interests. Even a small shift in the politics and culture of this movement towards socialism can result in much greater political and cultural shifts within society at large, which creates conditions for even greater transformations.

A recent example of our approach is the Free Our Unions campaign initiated by the broad-left *Clarion* magazine. Alongside allies within the movement, Workers' Liberty activists are central to this initiative. The campaign has won a victory in getting Labour to officially pledge to abolish all anti-union legislation.

We do not expect this to mean a future Labour government will automatically come good on this pledge. We keep up the pressure. But if we win, we will have secured much more favourable conditions for workers' struggle and the development of a mass revolutionary socialist movement.

### EDUCATIVE

**And even if we do not win this time, the process of campaigning in this way helps to organise the militant workers.**

Thousands of pamphlets have been sold during the course of this campaign. Our interventions are educative not just in the formal politics we advocate but also in the way the campaign exposes the democratic deficits of the party and the timidity of the leadership.

It sorts the serious socialists from the careerists, bureaucrats and fakers. Simply raising the campaign presupposes that members have democratic rights, that their votes matter and that they should take these issues seriously. Arguing out the issues stimulates further reading and study. The campaign results in events and action that need to be organised and moves members into political activity beyond electoralism.

It hones the skills of our people as political persuaders and organisers and generates new activists. Though such interventions we aim to organise the most serious socialist activists into ever more coherent, educated and effective force.

There is always a danger of individuals or the organisation as a whole accommodating to the dominant reformist politics.

However Workers' Liberty's record shows clearly that we have not fallen into this trap. We are perhaps the most vociferous left-wing critics of Corbyn within the labour movement – certainly a lot more critical than the



**Today's "left communism" draws on what we were two clashing strands in the 1920s, the Italian "Communist Left" of Amadeo Bordiga (left) and the "Dutch-German" "left communism" of Herman Gorter and others.**

SWP (Socialist Workers Party) and SP (Socialist Party). We continue an independent press, publishing a weekly paper and numerous books of Marxist theory.

Our supporters engage in serious study, discussion and debate. Contrary to the CWO spin, we sow no illusions in reformist, parliamentary methods. We are open about our approach and proud of our transparency. All our agitation is for the fight for revolutionary socialist politics within the party here and now (even if it means our members are witch-hunted out of the party).

We do not think today's Labour Party is a vehicle for socialism. However we do think such a vehicle will emerge only through a conscious struggle within the party.

It is nonsense to suggest reforms are "utopian". History shows that workers can win considerable reforms under capitalism e.g. weekends, abolishing anti-union legislation, the NHS, unemployment benefits, and that these reforms create more favourable conditions for workers' struggle. We are not indifferent to winning reforms. We fight for the day when the demands of the mass workers' movement cannot be met within the confines of bourgeois democracy.

The CWO website explains that in order to intervene in class struggle they do not engage with parliamentary parties or trade unions. Instead – with "internationalist groups by factory or territory", i.e. something they have invented. They proudly proclaim they would get involved in future soviets!

We see socialist revolution as something that will come out of a process that starts today in the here and now. It will be a process of deepening democracy as workers increasingly come to see reality squarely.

We believe that workers, including organised revolutionary socialists, learn quickly in the heat of class struggle. The current forms of working class self-organisation are inadequate for socialist revolution, but it is struggle

within them that will forge better organisations that are up to the task.

Whether we are arguing to nationalise the banks, are supporting a picket line or standing for election we see our role as primarily educational, getting the activists and workers around us to see more clearly, to understand their experiences in the broadest possible context and to understand the next tasks.

The CWO argue like economic determinists. History will unfold by economic forces and at the crucial time the Communist Workers Organisation will rise from their armchairs and lead the masses.

To be sure, there are great historic, structural forces at work. Yet we are not merely passive inheritors of history, but also creators of the future. What we do and say today affects what happens tomorrow.

As Marx put it: "The materialist doctrine that men [sic] are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating."

"Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society..."

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it." (*Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845)

**We cannot conjure up a mass revolutionary party, let alone world revolution, by an act of will. What we can do with our short lives is fight as effectively and as courageously as we can to change the world.**

• Abridged from a longer version available on our website at [bit.ly/th-cwo](http://bit.ly/th-cwo). For a supplementary note on the history of the traditions and doctrines of "left communism" on which the CWO bases itself, see [bit.ly/his-1c](http://bit.ly/his-1c).



# Self-determination for Kashmir!

**By Nadia Whittome, Nottingham South CLP**

**By revoking Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution that provide special autonomous status and residency rules for Jammu and Kashmir, and preparing to break up the state, Narendra Modi's far-right, Hindu-supremacist government has effectively declared war on the Kashmiri people.**

It has virtually declared a literal war too, with tens of thousands of troops invading the state, mainstream political leaders under house arrest, a total communications blackout, and reports of widespread human rights abuses. An already bad situation has got much worse, fast.

This attack foremost profoundly impacts the people of Kashmir, in particular, but not only, the roughly 70% Muslim majority. It also further endangers the Muslim minority in India, who are the main targets of Hindu nationalists now running the country.

Beyond this, the UK has the largest diaspora Kashmiri community in the world and, whilst the blackout continues, they are unable to check that friends or family in Kashmir are safe. And more generally this is a dramatic deepening of the far-right project Modi's regime has been gradually escalating.

It is extremely disappointing that the Labour Party has not spoken out loudly about India's assault on Kashmir.

Firstly, because an injury to one is an injury to all, and we should stand against human rights abuses and suppression of democracy everywhere in the world.

Secondly, because our party and movement should be the determined enemy of the far right everywhere in the world, and the Indian government is a central element of that growing far right internationally. No Pasaran!

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Shadow Minister, Liz McInnes, has made a

statement on behalf of the Labour Party, but it is not strong enough politically nor does it amount to campaigning solidarity. The party leadership is largely silent. A group of Muslim-background Labour MPs have written a stronger letter to the British government demanding real opposition to the Indian government's moves. They should not be left to fight alone.

Labour must insist that the British government releases a clear statement of condemnation, demanding reinstatement of Articles 370 and 35A, immediate military de-escalation, and the immediate suspension of British arms sales for use by the Indian military.

Crucially, the British government must publicly assert the Kashmiri peoples' right to self-determination and support the plebiscite that was promised at the time of accession, and give a firm commitment to use all diplomatic means to resolve this.

It is hard to know exactly why the party nationally has not stirred itself. It may simply be the inertia which hangs over the party on various international – and not just international issues.

Where are the strong statements of support for the democracy movement in Sudan, for instance, or in Hong Kong, or against the suppression of the Uyghurs?

But I cannot help but also wonder if the presence of BJP or Modi sympathisers in senior positions is also a factor. Barry Gardiner in particular has a two-decades long record of supporting Modi, including recent statements praising him. To come out fighting on this also implies confronting the likes of Gardiner.

Socialists are not advocates for any nationalist movement or nationalist solution to a conflict. We are internationalists. But internationalism demands determined opposition to oppression and in this case to the Indian imperialist Hindutva drive against the people of Kashmir.

In this case it is not enough simply to re-



solve for "peace" because, as in Palestine, peace in Kashmir is necessarily dependent on the right to meaningful self-determination.

Let us campaign for our party and unions to make a strong stand against the Indian occupation of Kashmir, for peace, and the right to self-determination.

**Meanwhile members should educate themselves on the issues; write to our**

**MPs asking for support; organise solidarity meetings or actions and attend those already being organised; and share protests and information on social media.**

•Republished, with thanks, from theclarionmag.org

## Why the lights went out on 9 August



**By Luke Hardy**

**On 9 August a series of blackouts affected more than one million homes, the rail and tube networks, hospitals, and traffic lights.**

The long term issues that affect energy security are being made much worse by the fragmented, privatised and profit-hungry mess of the UK energy sector.

The buffer between supply on the network and demand has been squeezed. This squeeze is mainly down to how the energy market works.

The National Grid pays for energy in a virtual auction. They shell out more per unit to the generator companies when they need to meet peak demand. So generators can make money while waiting until their power is needed and they can get the National Grid to pay over the odds.

Gas-fired power stations run "open cycle" or windfarms sit idle, waiting until their operating companies get the price per unit they want. Then they start generating.

The generating companies are under no

obligation to provide supply and in extremes like this can exhort the price they want. The National Grid has an obligation to keep the lights on, but its only method for that is money.

The National Grid also has very little say over the mix of generation been built. Over the last decade coal-fired power stations have started to close. In theory new generating capacity has come in to take their place, mostly.

But the coal fired power stations tended to run 24/7 rather than sitting idle until the right price shows, so the new capacity has not led to an increase of the supply buffer back up to the recommended level of 10-12% more energy on the grid than demand. The grid has been operating on a safety buffer of 3-6%.

### INTEGRATION

**The lack of vertical integration in the industry makes it much harder for the National Grid to ensure the Grid is kept at a stable 50hz frequency.**

That needs generation units capable of being centrally controlled to change the frequency of the electricity output.

The coal-fired power stations used to provide this. New generation nuclear promises to provide non-fossil-fuel power stations on the scale need to stabilise the frequency of

supply on the grid, but no progress is being made on that due to lack of investment.

On 9 August, the gas-fired power station at Little Barford, Bedfordshire, and the large offshore wind farms at Hornsea, East Yorkshire, both unexpectedly went offline within two minutes of each other, causing a 5% drop in the system's electricity output.

It looks like there were enough alternative sources of generation available to make up the shortfall, but the network could not keep the grid stable at 50hz, and that caused bits of the network to disconnect automatically.

The *Guardian* reports an industry source saying that "the frequency had previously fallen to dangerously low levels three times in the last 12 weeks".

There is also a lack of investment in the grid and distribution networks that carry power from substations to people's homes. The problem is not a lack of money. National Grid posted £1.8 billion profits in May, and increased payouts to shareholders.

But much of the grid is old, and the situation with the distributors is even worse. They used to be part of the centrally integrated regional electricity boards, but the successor organisations (the Big Six energy companies) sold off the distribution sections to often smaller fragmented companies. Lack of in-

vestment and understaffing is endemic there.

Because of the lack of investment very little progress is being made towards a responsive smart grid that would reduce demand, as is meant to be introduced towards the end of the next decade.

Labour's policy calls for the nationalisation of the National Grid and the distribution companies. They are also talking about a publicly-owned supplier company to compete in the energy retail market with the Big Six.

That is a massive improvement on the previous policy, but it will not resolve the underlying problem. It preserves the market in energy rather than abolishes it.

We should call for all of the energy generation, grid, distribution and supply companies to be brought under public ownership and the market dismantled, to be replaced by vertical integration and transparent, accountable central planning that can respond to the need to decarbonise and ensure security of supply.

The 9 August blackouts also show the need for base-load generating capacity to underpin the security and stability of supply.

**We should call for public investment in a new generation of cutting-edge nuclear power stations, alongside continued expansions of wind and other renewables.**



# Against Thatcher's anti-union laws: campaign, don't snipe!

## John Moloney replies to Andy Green's *Morning Star* attack on the Free Our Unions campaign

1997 saw the launch of the Campaign for Free Trade Unions. It was an open, democratic, rank-and-file based campaign, aimed at mobilising labour movement pressure on the new Labour government to repeal the Thatcher anti-union laws. Members of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty were central to launching that campaign.

As a report of the launch event from the time records, "the conference heard from representatives of all the key disputes taking place at the moment – Liverpool dockers, Hillingdon hospital, Critchley Labels, Magnet Kitchens, Project Aerospace, London post, and British Airways" ([bit.ly/cftu-97](http://bit.ly/cftu-97)). It was keystoned by Liverpool City Union.

Desiring and advocating unity, after a while that Campaign agreed a merger with another group in which the *Morning Star* and Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party were more active, to form a "United Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti-Trade Union Laws".

The early years of the Blair government were a low time for trade-union militancy, and Blair was able to placate unions with measures that eased trade-union recognition. The bulk of the anti-trade union laws remained in place.

The United Campaign and its successors (see [tradeunionfreedom.co.uk](http://tradeunionfreedom.co.uk)) have continued, but, with the influence of the *Morning Star* now bigger, less and less active, and less and less willing to campaign for what was the shared objective of 1997: repeal of the laws which ban solidarity strikes, large-scale picketing, mass-meeting votes for strikes, strikes without giving prior notice to the

boss, etc.

I still believe in the objectives of 1997, as I believe do the mass of trade unionists. Now we have Labour Party conference policy for that repeal (thanks to efforts initiated by *The Clarion* magazine, which includes AWL supporters); and Labour Party leaders who sometimes, in activist meetings, say they will repeal those Thatcher anti-union laws, but in the Labour manifesto and in the mass media talk only of repealing the 2016 Trade Union Act.

### NEW CAMPAIGN

**I fully support the initiative, launched by *The Clarion* and Lambeth Unison and taken up by wider groups of Labour Party activists and trade unionists – including but very far from limited to AWL supporters – to launch a new "Free Our Unions" campaign.**

The Fire Brigades Union and other union bodies which have joined that campaign will not recognise it from Andy Green's description – "a front organisation for the AWL".

Andy Green does not set out clearly why he apparently opposes solidarity strikes, large-scale picketing, mass-meeting votes for strikes, and so on. Only if we abolish the anti-trade union laws can we have solidarity strikes. Therefore arguing that some laws must be retained has the same effect as not wanting those strikes. Instead, he concentrates on the AWL. This is sectarian. You don't judge a campaign solely by who is in it, you judge it by its policy platform and practice.

But let's address his arguments that AWL (1) is small (2) is a group where a designated leader's vision goes "unquestioned" and "unchallenged" (3) is devoted to splitting (4) has no record of initiating broad campaigns.

(4) falls at the first hurdle, with the example of the 1997 CFTU. The AWL's history of initiating campaigns that were not tightly-controlled fronts, but included activists well beyond the AWL's own ranks and many with differing political ideas to them, is a matter of public record. AWL members were involved in initiating campaigns such as No Sweat and more recently in establishing Labour for a Socialist Europe. There are others, in the student movement as well as the labour movement.

Going further back, but a good case for *Morning Star* readers to think about – the campaign for the "Shrewsbury 24" building workers from 1973, initiated by AWL's forerunner Workers' Fight but refused publicity for its first months by the *Morning Star*.

It is also a matter of historical record that the forerunners of the AWL were expelled from the Socialist Labour League and the IS (now SWP), and pushed out of Militant (now the Socialist Party). Green sees that as proof of the AWL being "schismatic", rather than evidence that those groups were bureaucratically intolerant of internal dissent. Historians and students of the socialist movement can make up their own minds.

A glance at the public press of the AWL and its forerunners will show that it has consistently carried internal debate, with every "leader" subject to challenge. Like all far-left groups, the AWL has been involved in splits and mergers, and does indeed remain small. But Andy should also acknowledge the much diminished state of the Communist Party and *Morning Star*.

In 1966, the CP had maybe 35,000 members. A welter of splits, expulsions, and dropings-out later, the rump Communist Party of Britain claims just 775 members (see [bit.ly/cpb-18](http://bit.ly/cpb-18)). It is common knowledge on the left that many of these members are inac-

tive. The CPB's capacity for public campaigning activity (as distinct from winning favour with trade-union officialdom) is less than AWL's.

If Andy and his comrades don't want to take up the fight against all of the Thatcher anti-union laws, so be it. They should at least refrain from sectarian attacks against those who wish to do so. I am proud to campaign alongside the AWL in this struggle; alongside the FBU; and alongside an increasing number of labour movement bodies.

**I want freedom for the unions. You should want that too.**

• John Moloney is Assistant General Secretary of the PCS, writing here in a personal capacity. Weblinks for Andy Green's article and for Free Our Unions at [bit.ly/fou-reply](http://bit.ly/fou-reply)

**Free Our Unions is now supported by three national unions (FBU, RMT, IWGB) and over sixty union branches, trades councils, reps committees, etc, around the country. The campaign is growing and it is starting to have an impact.**

We are planning a lobby of Parliament in the autumn, a conference in the new year and lots of other activity.

How you can help:

- Put the Free Our Unions statement to your union branch or CLP (we are having a major push on CLPs in the autumn).

- Invite a speaker.

- Order (free) posters and take a photo at your meeting.

- Buy copies of the Free Our Unions pamphlet to sell or distribute.

**More:** [freeourunions@gmail.com](mailto:freeourunions@gmail.com) or [bit.ly/clar-tu](http://bit.ly/clar-tu)

## Economics and learning from the facts



### Review

By Natalia Cassidy

**Martin Thomas's book *Crisis and Sequels: Capitalism and the New Economic Turmoil since 2007* is constructed around 32 interviews, discussions, and debates with left wing economists and other thinkers.**

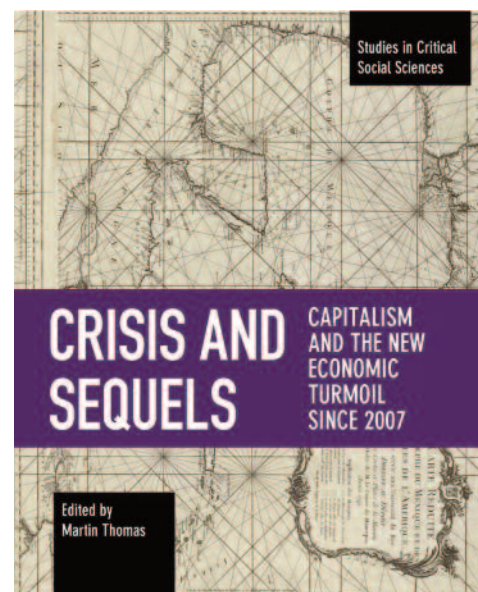
It takes the reader, mostly chronologically, along the timeline from the immediate aftermath of the crash itself in 2007-8 across the next decade, up to 2016.

Thomas offers a substantial introduction, with overviews of the debates that take place across the book between the various contributors and himself.

Issues in debate centre around Marx's "tendency of the rate of profit to fall", US hegemony after the crisis and beyond, and the resilience or fragility of neoliberalism as a political and economic project.

Thomas, both in his introduction and in an appendix, gives a convincing argument against the use of the "tendency of the rate of profit to fall" as a theoretical framework through which to view the 2007-8 crisis.

He argues that the rate of profit has in fact, by any reasonable measure, risen substantially since the 1980s. Thomas asks us to consider the relevance of some of the writings of Hyman Minsky, which in my opinion offer a framework that is much closer to what actually went on.



It is indicative of a broader problem on the left that many still try to contort the reality of what was happening in the build-up to 2007-8 to suit their preferred theoretical explanation rather than seeking to know what was really happening. The approach comes close to adjusting reality to suit our preferred theory rather than using reality to sharpen our theoretical toolkit.

Thomas, both in facilitating contributions and in his afterword, does not push for any single conclusion we as readers must draw from the events of the previous decade. Instead, he highlights the importance for us on the left of maintaining a critical lens in our

understanding of economics: "the economic question is not just, or even mainly, about techniques for promoting growth. It is about what sort of growth, for whom, controlled by whom, at the expense of whom" or, to put it as Lenin did, "who, whom".

This book is a valuable resource, an archive of debate happening as events unfold. It gives us the chance to see contributors disavowing previous assertions they had made on the basis of being proved wrong by reality.

**Largely, the contributors accept it when they've got things wrong, and seek to correct themselves by looking more closely at the situation, rather than by distorting reality to suit their original assertion or theoretical outlook. This, I think, is the key lesson Marxists should draw from this book.**

### Audio of *Solidarity*

Many thanks to the volunteers who have enabled us to produce an audio version of the paper.

Links to the audio version are at [workersliberty.org/audio](http://workersliberty.org/audio), and can be found through many podcast providers: search "Workers' Liberty" or "Solidarity & More". Email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) for e-reader versions of *Solidarity*.

## More articles online

### THEORY-ORGANISATION-PRAXIS IN BERLIN

An activist from TOP-Berlin, a group which came "out of the anti-Deutsche/antifa/anti-capitalist scene", talks with Neil Laker. [bit.ly/top-iv](http://bit.ly/top-iv)

### ROBERT FINE, ANTISEMITISM, AND STALINISM

Eduardo Tovar follows up on Dan Davison's discussion in *Solidarity* 512. [bit.ly/et-rf](http://bit.ly/et-rf)

### LUKACS, "WAR COMMUNISM", AND BOLSHEVISATION

Martin Thomas takes issue with the image of the Georg Lukács of the 1920s as an adequate "philosophical" interpreter of Bolshevism. [bit.ly/mt-lu](http://bit.ly/mt-lu)

### THE "REVISIONISM" DEBATE OF 1898-9 IN THE SPD

Often portrayed as a sham battle. Martin Thomas says: more to it. [bit.ly/rev-db](http://bit.ly/rev-db)

### SINGLE-TERM RADICAL LEADERS IN THE UNIONS

Janet Burstall analyses the narrow defeat of Bob Carnegie in Maritime Union of Australia elections. [bit.ly/bc-loss](http://bit.ly/bc-loss)

### DECARBONISE OR "NET ZERO"?

A school which has declared itself "carbon-neutral". [bit.ly/c-shs](http://bit.ly/c-shs)



# A first step against antisemitism

By Dale Street

The Labour Party training materials on antisemitism first promised in April of last year have now been produced and circulated to party members ([bit.ly/lp-as](http://bit.ly/lp-as)). Potentially, they could help to start a meaningful process of political discussion and education.

A leaflet entitled “No Place for Anti-semitism” condemns conspiracy theories which portray “capitalism and imperialism as the product of plots by a small shadowy elite.” These are “just one step away from myths about Jewish bankers and a secret Jewish plot for world domination.”

Some of these conspiracy theories, the leaflet recognises, “substitute Israel or Zionists for Jews, presenting Israel as controlling the world’s media and finances” and “ascribe to Israel an influence on world events far beyond any objective analysis.”

Zionism is variously defined as “Jewish national self-determination in a Jewish state” and “the maintenance of that state”. Zionism, says the leaflet, is not monolithic: “There are many forms of Zionism.” And for many Jews “Zionism represents national liberation.”

Jewish people, the leaflet continues, “have the same right to self-determination as any other people.” Many Jews “view calls for Israel to cease to exist as calls for expulsion or genocide.” And opposition to the Israeli government “must never use antisemitic ideas”, such as “comparing Israel to the Nazis.”

Israel, Zion and Jerusalem “run deeply in Jewish religion, identity, culture,” explains the leaflet. Most British Jews “feel connected to some extent to Israel.” Therefore, “the sensitivities around these concepts (such as Israel and Zionism) should be considered before using them.”

Other materials on the “new antisemitism minisite” include some video-clips containing the same political content as the leaflet, a 2018 article by Corbyn promising to ban antisemitism from the Labour Party, and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition and examples of antisemitism.

Plus a link to register for a course entitled “Facing Antisemitism: Politics, Culture, History” at the University of London’s Birkbeck College – £350 for three two-hour sessions.

## SPARSITY

Given the length of time these training materials have been “in the pipeline”, the “antisemitism minisite” is strikingly sparse in terms of what it has to offer. Maybe more materials will be added over time.

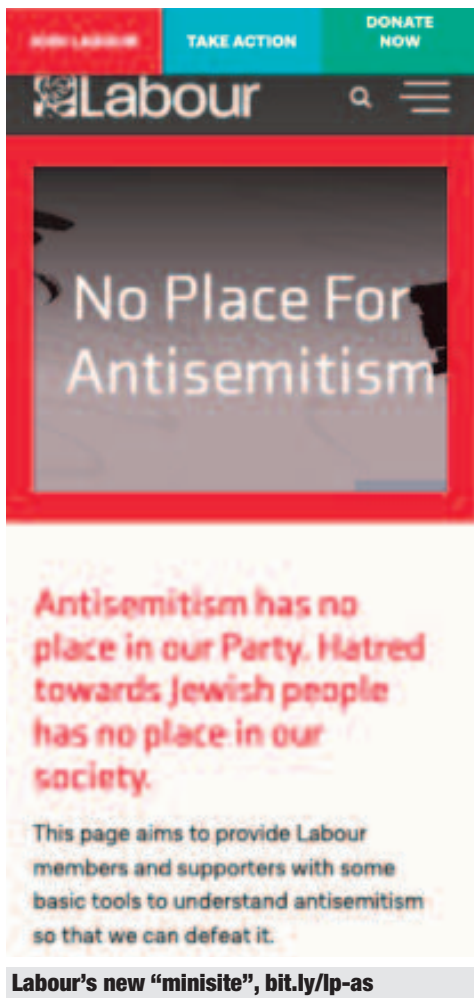
But there are also more basic problems with the training materials.

They are inconsistent in defining what constitutes the problem of antisemitism in the Labour Party (and broader labour movement) and in defining the extent to which it constitutes a problem.

One the one hand, the problem is correctly presented, albeit not always explicitly, as certain ideas about Zionism and Israel which incorporate antisemitic ways of thinking and which inevitably give rise to an antagonistic attitude towards most Jews in Britain (and the world).

But, on the other hand, the specific examples of antisemitism in the Labour Party which are provided in the training materials do not relate to those conceptualisations of Zionism and Israel.

Instead, they are examples of what every-



one – even the misnamed Jewish Voice for Labour and Labour Against the Witch-hunt campaigns – can happily agree constitutes antisemitism:

“Holocaust denial, crude Jewish-banker stereotypes, conspiracy theories blaming Israel for 9/11 or every war on the Rothschild family, and even one member who appeared to believe that Hitler had been misunderstood.”

This then leads into the “few bad apples” argument: Antisemitism in the labour movement is not a fairly broadly held set of political ideas about Zionism and Israel but just the off-the-wall views of a few individuals.

According to Corbyn’s 2018 article: “We must face the uncomfortable fact that a small number of our members and supporters hold antisemitic views and attitudes. They may be few – the number of cases over the past three years represents less than 0.1% of Labour’s membership – but one is too many.”

And according to the “No Place for Antisemitism” leaflet: “We must face up to the unsettling truth that a small number of Labour members hold antisemitic views.” (Although this is then qualified by: “... and a much larger number who don’t recognise antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories.”)

## LACK OF CLARITY

The training materials also suffer from a lack of political clarity, sloppy political formulations, and misplaced diplomatic attempts to say something to please everyone.

Anti-Zionism, says the leaflet, “is not in itself racism.” True, anti-zionism is not necessarily racism. But the dominant form in which antisemitism expresses itself today is that of “anti-zionism”, in which traditional antisemitic tropes are “translated” into “anti-zionism”.

In fact, the logic of the leaflet is that anti-

zionism actually is racism.

The leaflet defines Zionism as “Jewish national self-determination in a Jewish state.” It says that Jewish people “have the same right to self-determination as any other people.”

By that logic, to be anti-zionist is to be an opponent of Jewish people having the same right to self-determination as any other people. And that, in reality, is the substance of the bulk of contemporary anti-zionism.

“Arguing for one state with rights for all Israelis and Palestinians is not antisemitic,” the leaflet continues, “but calling for the removal of Jews from the region is.”

But given that like any other people the Jewish population of Israel will not voluntarily surrender statehood and collapse into a larger state in which they would be a national minority, it is impossible to see how “one state” could be achieved without the military conquest and ethnic cleansing which the leaflet condemns.

The leaflet also sidesteps the fact that the traditional formulation of the call for “one state” has been “a democratic secular state.”

This formulation denies Jewish national rights (by treating Jewishness as a religion rather than a national identity), is a coded call for no minority rights (in the sense that democracy is the will of the majority), and, with the rise of the very anti-secular Hamas and Hezbollah, has no grip on reality.

The educational value of the training materials is further undermined by their failure to relate the general statements which they contain about Zionism, Israel and conspiracy theories to specific contemporary issues.

Most obviously: Ken Livingstone’s hobby-horse of Zionist-Nazi “collaboration” in Germany in the 1930s; the Skawkbbox campaign to “expose” accusations of antisemitism as a Zionist conspiracy against Corbyn; and the broader labour movement campaign for boycott, disinvestment and sanctions against Israel.

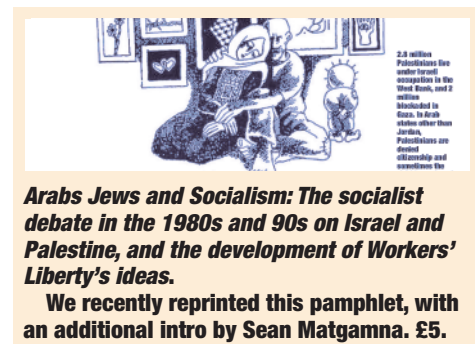
The same criticism also applies to references in the training materials to conspiracy theories which portray “capitalism and imperialism as the product of plots by a small shadowy elite” and which are “only one step away” from traditional antisemitic tropes.

Did it not occur to anyone involved in the production of the training materials to think through the implications of that for the now standard Labour references to “the rigged system”, “greedy bankers”, “vested interests and the cosy cartels” and “speculators and gamblers who crashed our economy”?

The training materials are like a jigsaw puzzle in which half the pieces are missing, the pieces which have been provided don’t fit always together properly, and there is no picture on the box to explain what the final product is meant to look like.

You can certainly make a start with what has been provided.

A lot more pieces need to be added in order to achieve what it says on the box: “No Place for Antisemitism Understanding Antisemitism to Defeat It”.



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



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Workers' Liberty



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# The outage



## Diary

**By Emma Rickman  
(engineering apprentice at a combined heat and power plant)**

**Every summer our plant shuts down for annual maintenance; fourteen days of 24-hour work on essential systems that can't be carried out while the plant is running.**

Because the plant generates energy, this shutdown is called "the Outage".

Hundreds of workers from contracted companies set up on site to erect scaffolding, drain chemical silos, replace pipes, grind debris off tubes, weld metal sheets over holes, calibrate instruments, replace machines and clean as much as possible before the plant comes back online. There are many conflicting pressures in an outage; the main one being the city bin waste (which our plant burns to generate electricity). Anything can go into "general waste" bins, and when a lot of it is piled together it attracts pests, harmful bacteria, and generates heat as the organic matter is squashed and begins to break down.

Waste in big quantities is a fire hazard, so legally can only be stored for 12 hours before being buried or incinerated. This means

that the longer the plant is offline, the more waste Veolia and the council have to send to landfill, which (rightly) incurs heavy taxes.

Veolia in turn are not paid by the government to process waste, which is their main source of revenue. Being online makes them money, being offline costs them financially and in carbon-footprint.

On top of this, while the fire is out no steam is generated. The turbine and generators are offline, no power is sold to the grid, and the plant must pay the grid to power themselves. There is no source of heat for the District Energy network, which heats most of the public buildings in central Sheffield. Veolia must buy and burn gas to power back-up boilers; another financial and carbon cost.

Putting pressure in the other direction, burning any old crap every hour for a year puts enormous strain on the plant. By law the waste must burn at over 850 degrees, and the tubes inside the furnace must absorb this heat and withstand erosion from hot particulates continuously.

These tubes — which carry the water that becomes steam — wear very thin and often burst before the annual shutdown, extinguishing the grate fire and causing an emergency shutdown. The ash that remains after incineration must be cooled and processed, funnelled through metal ducting and fed onto conveyors, which all block up or wear out. The air pollution control

system, essential for preventing toxic smoke venting to atmosphere, must be similarly cleaned and repaired.

Any valves or pumps which deliver harsh chemicals or high pressure steam must be repaired or replaced. Any tiny misalignments in the turbine mean it must be stripped and overhauled. Any malfunction of the transformers, including their temperature probes or cooling systems, must be addressed to avoid turning off power to all of Veolia's buildings in the area. The list of essential work that is "offline only" is endless.

## ORDER

**Some of these jobs can take place simultaneously, but most of it must take place in a specific order. For example, the grate must be cooled and ventilated while workers are grinding and welding inside it.**

Ventilation is provided by the plant's Induced Draft (ID) fan which also provides the pressure differential to push chemicals around the Air Pollution Control (APC) system. This means that while the ID fan is on, no work can be done on the APC without blowing lime and carbon everywhere. The ID fan itself must be serviced at some point.

The other pressures are human. To save burning gas for District Energy, the Outage is scheduled in midsummer when demand for heat is low, and why we find ourselves

in boots, overalls, gloves, helmets and face-masks in 26 degree heat, inside a confined metal space, with power tools.

The scaffolders must move heavy metal poles and wooden boards up and down flights of stairs and into the furnace, ducts and silos. The fabricators and mechanics must weld and grind within these spaces. The industrial cleaners must empty screw conveyors, silos and pipes of waste ash and APC chemicals — these are a combination of lime and carbon, which become hard as concrete when mixed with the water vapour in the air.

Everyone is working on top of each other, working for a different company and on a different work permit. But a sack of ash can't be emptied near mechanical work; electrical testing can't happen if equipment is isolated; gear can't be installed without scaffolding; instruments can't be calibrated near vibrating grinders; and everyone must have the correct materials and equipment delivered on time in a safe condition. Frequently and unsurprisingly, the service lift breaks down.

Honestly, I'm having more fun than I've had all year. In addition, I met *another woman* last week — one of the lagging team who strip and install insulation around ducting. I lost a bet with these laggards when they told me there would be an Outage Ice Cream van and I didn't believe them.

**Well, there is an ice cream van.**

## Social media, politics, and the "Schweitzer model"

**By Rhodri Evans**

**The decade-and-a-bit since the 2008 crash has been a distinct period of capitalism in economic and in political terms. It has also been a distinct period in the technology of political communications.**

Twitter "took off" around 2007, Facebook "took off" around 2009, mass use of smartphones "took off" about the same time. For a few years now, more web browsing has been done via smartphones than via computers. Tablets and e-readers, once said to be the wave of the future, have lagged.

Many young people today get their news of the world via social media, rather than via newspapers or TV news or even directly from news websites.

This technological development has facilitated the emergence of new forms of old political patterns.

J B von Schweitzer was the leader of the "Lassallean" workers' movement in Germany from Lassalle's death in 1864 through to 1871. August Bebel was in those years a

Marxist adversary of Schweitzer in the movement.

In 1910, writing an autobiography, Bebel described Schweitzer as energetic, intelligent, studious, and a good speaker. But:

"He had a knack of flattering the masses, whom he really despised, which I have never seen in greater perfection in any man. He spoke of himself as their instrument, bound to do the sovereign will of the people, the 'sovereign people' who read nothing but his own paper and on whom he imposed his will by suggestion.

"Whosoever dared to kick against the pricks was taxed with the lowest motives, branded as an idiot, or as an 'intellectual' who despised the brave, honest workers and wanted to exploit them in his own interests".

Bebel himself, a manual worker from a pauper background, was accused by Schweitzer of receiving secret payments from the King of Hanover.

Schweitzer was a demagogue. His political line was erratic, but always presented as reflecting the instinctive sound good sense of the

plebeian masses. His political movement was built not as a structured democracy (with experienced, reasonably stable, accountable leaders), but as a rallying around himself as a personality.

He marked out the boundaries of the movement, and defended it against critics, not by political arguments, but by a whirl of emotion-laden personal accusations against the critics.

Schweitzer had his success because working-class politics then in Germany was very loose-knit and atomised. The main "technology" of political communication must have been face-to-face chat.

Bebel records that when Schweitzer's ADAV had a membership of 12,000 or so, its newspaper had a circulation of only 500, rising to 1200. Literacy was already almost universal in Germany, but there must have been many workers unready for the cost and trouble of newspapers.

The increase of political communication mediated through short, skim-read messages, which gain circulation by being emotive rather than being evidenced or reasoned,

recreates similar conditions, and greater potential speeds of expansion.

In the era since 2008 the same methods have been used in mainstream bourgeois politics by Trump and Bolsonaro and Farage on the right. But also by some in the mainstream bourgeois "centre". And on the left. (Think of some of the "left Brexiters").

The new technologies create other possibilities. They allow demonstrations and meetings to be publicised more quickly. They also allow the more studious to fact-check and to compare reports more quickly and more easily than in eras dominated by printed-paper communication.

But we have had a relatively low level of strikes and such since 2008, and thus a relatively atomised, labile state of political life.

So in the last decade new technologies have facilitated the rise of new and quick-growing political "bubbles".

**Those have become significant factors to be combatted in the struggle for politics based on reason and evidence.**





# PCS in rash of strikes

**By John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, PCS union (personal capacity)**

**Our members working as cleaners and catering staff at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) are continuing an all-out, indefinite strike to win living wages.**

Other outsourced workers at BEIS, including security guards and mailroom staff, have also struck, and they are discussing escalating the dispute by joining the indefinite strike.

Cleaners at HMRC offices in Bootle and Liverpool are also striking for living wages, and are striking from 11-13 August.

On 13 August, workers from BEIS visited Liverpool for a joint rally. Outsourced workers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have also been striking. We're looking to spread these disputes.

Directly-employed civil service staff are also fighting a number of local disputes. IT workers at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency will strike for four weeks from 22 August. They're fighting the imposition of worse terms and conditions.

Universal Credit Service Centre workers in a number of locations are fighting for increased staffing levels; workers in Stockport voted 91.9% voted in favour of strikes, with 95% in favour of action short

of strikes, on a 71% turnout.

Unfortunately UC workers in Walsall and Wolverhampton, who'd struck previously, fell slightly short of the required thresholds in a re-ballot imposed on them by the restrictive anti-strike laws. As I write, we're expecting the return of a ballot of job centre workers in Balham, in south London, who are fighting to protect jobs.

I stood for AGS on a platform that the union should empower groups of workers who want to take action, and facilitate them in taking that action, rather than putting obstacles in their way, and I believe we're beginning to deliver that.

We're paying strike pay to our outsourced worker members to ensure they're able to take sustained action and aren't starved back to work.

We're also discussing what PCS can do to support the 20 September climate strike. We have communicated with branches to encourage activity on the day, even if it's something relative minimal like joining a local demo.

Some branches are planning their own activity. Branches are also being encouraged to write to the employer asking them to support workers in walking out, as some local government union branches have done.

**We are also seeking to arm local negotiators with demands for "greening" the workplace.**



**130 workers at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast face the loss of their jobs, after the employer went into administration. Workers have occupied the shipyard, demanding it be taken into public ownership. Labour's Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell visited workers there on Monday 5 August. The Unite union has argued the yard's productive capacity could be used to manufacture renewable energy infrastructure.**

## EMT out again on 17 August

**From Off the Rails blog**

**Guards on East Midlands Trains, soon to be East Midlands Railway, struck for a third successive Saturday on 3 August.**

The past two strikes have been well supported; EMT can only operate a much reduced service by drafting in its own and other companies' managers to operate the train doors and perform platform duties.

The dispute is over EMT's unilateral imposition of a 25% pay cut for guards in their first year, a failure on their part to fix the quota of "five day" guards at each depot and implement progression to "four day" link arrangements.

There is also an issue with "Pink days", extra days that have to be worked to make up a shortfall in rostered hours.

As Stagecoach/EMT will be



handing over the franchise on 18 August there doesn't seem to be any desire from them to end the dispute.

Before the first strike they said they couldn't attend last minute talks because there was nobody available on the management side. That position seems to have hardened with management withdrawing the role of full time union convenor yesterday. This could be

a case of the old HR director (EMT), who becomes the new HR director (EMR), trying to firm up their position in the new company.

In any case we should add the reinstatement of the convenor role to our list of demands to settle the dispute.

**To welcome the new owners on 18 August we have announced another strike for the previous day.**

## Multiple disputes on the Tube

**By Ollie Moore**

**Train drivers on London Underground's Victoria Line are set to strike, after drivers in the RMT union voted unanimously, on a 62% turnout, for industrial action.**

Members of the driver-only union Aslef also returned a majority for action on a 75% turnout.

Both unions are in dispute over the conduct of local depot managers, with drivers saying a culture of enforced overtime and overbearing discipline has developed. RMT says its reps were denied time to properly scrutinise new duty sheets, which management plan to impose.

The dispute mirrors a similar campaign on the Central Line, where RMT driver members have also returned a majority for strikes. The rank-and-file bulletin *Tube-worker* has called for the disputes and action to be coordinated.

On 14 August, shortly after *Solidarity* went to press, RMT members across all grades within London Underground were due to meet to discuss the ongoing talks with Tube bosses over pay and conditions.

All four Tube unions (RMT, Aslef, TSSA, and Unite) have demanded a 32-hour working week (currently 35 for full-time staff). Tube bosses have refused to engage with this demand, insisting their coffers are empty, despite London Underground posting an operating

surplus of hundreds of millions of pounds per year.

Bosses insist the money is spoken for, citing a Transport for London policy to use LU's surplus for such things as subsidising privatised bus companies.

*Tubeworker* has been arguing for some months that the unions should move to a network-wide ballot on these issues, given that the previous deal on pay and conditions expired in April.

**RMT is also gearing up to ballot its outsourced cleaner members for strikes to win travel passes, company sick pay, improved holiday and pension arrangements, and the reversal of job cuts.**





# Solidarity

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## Self determination for Hong Kong!

By Chen Ying

**It is now two months since 12 June, when the Hong Kong police fired 150 canisters of tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters.**

That caused a city-wide outrage against the excessive use of force, which forced the Chief Executive on 14 June to "indefinitely delay" introducing the proposed extradition law.

The conflict has now escalated further, with a protesters' occupation shutting down the airport today (12 August), after a horrific series of street battles over the weekend.

After their initial victory on 14 June, the protesters continued to press for their five demands:

- full withdrawal of the Bill
- Withdrawing the designation of the 12 June protest as a "riot"
- Release of all arrested protesters
- Accountability for the decision to fire on protesters on 12 June
- The resignation of the Chief Executive

As the protest continued to spread to many parts of the city, a critical incident occurred in the district of Yuen Long on 21 July. Hundreds of men wearing white T shorts, many not even bothering to wear masks to hide their identities, attacked protesters in the high street, chasing them into the underground station and beating

passengers as well as retreating protesters indiscriminately with rattan canes and batons.

It took the police 39 long minutes to arrive at the scene, giving the gangsters plenty of time to disperse. Amidst widespread accusations of police / triad collusion, the city was outraged, the police commissioner was clearly embarrassed and the tide of public opinion turned further against the Government and the already untrusted police force.

An evening rally of civil servants against the Government drew over 40,000 despite heavy exhortations about "political neutrality". Senior retired civil servants spoke out to defend civil servants' civil liberties, arguing that their political neutrality is not compromised by such protests and that their allegiance is to the civil service system and to the public, not to individual leaders of the Government.

One in seven of Hong Kong's Administrative Officers, the elite of the civil service, petitioned Carrie Lam to hold an independent inquiry. Hundreds of members of the legal profession held a second silent march through the streets of Central.

The rallies and protests escalated, leading the Beijing liaison office to issue press statements to support the Chief Executive and the police, and to condemn "rioters attempting a colour revolution".

The emboldened police has recently gone on the offensive, battering and arresting many more protesters (over 700 to date).

On 4 August, the police declared that they have fired over 1000 rounds of teargas and hundreds of rubber bullets. Three water cannons are being prepared for active service, and rumours abound that Chinese troops across the border are conducting anti-riot exercises.

### GENERAL STRIKE

**The protest movement called for a one day general strike for 5 August.**

Although this did not receive support from the Beijing-controlled trade unions, it did bring the city to a partial halt, interrupting public transport networks and causing around a third of scheduled flights to be cancelled because of large numbers of air traffic controllers and airline staff calling in sick.

For the past week, there has been almost daily clashes between protesters and the police across many different parts of the city, with the indiscriminate use of teargas affecting many bystanders in local neighbourhoods.

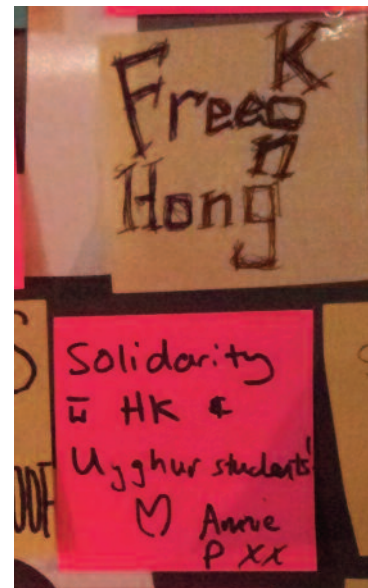
Whilst protesters who are prepared to repeatedly take to the streets are now reduced to an active minority, they have adopted guerrilla tactics of disrupting traffic and moving on to the next location, rather than risk more arrests through set piece clashes with the heavily armed riot police.

On Sunday 11 August, police further escalated their offensive. Teargas was fired into Kwai Fong underground station and protesters were repeatedly clubbed as they tried to escape down the escalators of another underground station in Tai Koo. A woman protester received a horrific eye injury from a bean-bag bullet and may become blinded.

The police openly admitted and justified the use of elite crack units dressed up in black T-shirts to infiltrate the ranks of protesters as agent provocateurs. 149 people were arrested in just one day.

As this article goes to press, there are now (12 August) hundreds of social workers protesting outside the police headquarters about their excessive use of force in wrongfully arresting a neighbourhood social worker who was not protesting, and against the eye injury caused to the female protester. More significantly there is a mass occupation of the airport this evening which has led to all flights being cancelled.

The Hong Kong economy has taken a big hit with tourist alerts declared in 22 countries, many families staying at home, a reduction of mainland Chinese tourists and of course the adverse effects of the US-China so-called "trade war".



The Government is quick to blame this on the rioters, aiming to split the active minority away from the mainstream of society who are still very angry at police collusion with gangsters and their excessive use of force.

The increasingly menacing of Beijing, the rising number of injuries and arrests, the Government's hard line stance and the lack of further success on the 5 demands now present the protest movement with major challenges.

The coming month of September, running up to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on 1 October, will be critical. All eyes will be on Beijing to see how the regime handles Hong Kong, the forthcoming elections in Taiwan, the worsening domestic economy and a hardened Trump administration eager to achieve a victory in the economic conflict in order to secure Trump's re-election.

**Provided the protest movement keeps its nerve, continues to be tactically flexible and keeps up its challenge over this crucial month while maintaining public sympathy, it can cause Beijing significant discomfort, despite the regime's seemingly hard line distance and aura of invincible power.**

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