

# & Workers' Liberty **Solidarity**

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# VOTE LABOUR



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L4SE has produced leaflets, stickers, posters, and briefing papers to argue socialist, free-movement, and Remain ideas in the Labour campaign. [bit.ly/L-4SE](https://bit.ly/L-4SE)





# Landslide election in Hong Kong

By Chen Ying

The pan-democratic camp won control of 17 out of 18 District Councils in Hong Kong's 24 November elections, almost wiping out the pro-establishment Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB).

The only council held by the pro-establishment camp was the Islands district, where 8 out of 18 seats were automatically assigned to pro-establishment village heads.

2.94 million (71.2% of eligible voters) voted in the Pan-Democrats and other independent democrats in nearly 400 out of 452 seats, with the DAB winning only 58 seats. Four years ago, the pan-democrats failed to win a single council and were heavily marginalised by the DAB.

The democratic camp won around 57% of the total vote, and our opponents 42%. These elections were based on a UK single-member constituency, first-past-the-post

system, so in straight one-to-one contests, in most of the constituencies of around 5,000 to 10,000 voters, the DAB were massacred.

There does not appear to be a noticeable difference in results between richer and poorer districts.

In next September's Legislative Council, there are only 30 directly elected seats in five large multi-member constituencies, so neither pro nor anti-establishment parties can win similar landslide victories easily.

The other 30 Legco seats are reserved for functional constituencies such as the banking and insurance industry sectors, the medical and legal professions etc., creating a further pro-establishment buffer. Any motion to be passed in Legco requires a majority vote in both of the two sections, and that almost guarantees the Hong Kong government an easy ride.

Nevertheless, the dramatic win on 24 November is a great slap in the face for Carrie Lam and her government. President Xi and the

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders must also be very concerned, not least about the very poor quality reports they get from their supporters in Hong Kong. More than once, Beijing has been badly misinformed.

## PAN-DEMOCRATIC CAMP

The pan-democratic camp's largest group is the Democratic Party, which won 91 seats. It was set up shortly after the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, and generally takes a liberal democratic position clearly in opposition to the CCP. It is not to be confused with Hong Kong's Liberal Party which is a pro-establishment pro-business party.

Many of the Democratic Party's key members have over the years also been on the committee that has organised annual rallies for the past 30 years to commemorate 4 June. Other than that, it does not take a pro-working-class stance against the billionaires.

The next largest party is the Civic Party, with 32 seats won out of 36 contested, more strident in campaigning for civil liberties but also not opposed to big business.

The Hong Kong Labour Party was set up in 2011, in an attempt to be modelled on the UK Party. It won all seven of its contested seats. The Labour Party generally takes a more left-leaning position in regard to workers' rights.

There are many other newer parties and groups in the pan-democratic camp, as well as some veterans like Leung Yiu Chung to the left of the mainstream parties.

Long Hair Leung Kwok Hung, leader of the League of Social Democrats, who has been on Legco for many years and has campaigned for decades on an anti-Stalinist Marxist platform, narrowly failed to unseat the DAB leader Starry Lee from her district seat. He and five other pro-democracy legislators were disqualified from taking their Legco seats in June 2017 because of the manner in

which they took their oath of office.

During the election period, street protesters refrained from their previous confrontational tactics, leaving the peaceful civil disobedience movement to cast its votes with telling effect.

What happens next will be keenly monitored by all sides. This new group of nearly 400 elected District Councillors and their active campaigners will naturally become a focus for political debate on the way forward.

Meanwhile the police have held back from storming the Poly University building, now down to fewer than 100 protesters still inside. The police appeared to tone down their approach and have offered not to immediately arrest those who agree to come out, citing as their reason concerns for the health of the weakened and exhausted protesters.

There may be a possibility that this very long siege could come to an end without casualties. □

# Impeachment? What impeachment?



**Sanders campaign**

By Eric Lee

Something strange is going on with the Democratic presidential candidates and the impeachment of Donald Trump. All the candidates support Trump's impeachment. But none of them want to talk about it.

At a recent event in Las Vegas, Bernie Sanders said that Trump "will be impeached, and he should be impeached." But he quickly added that his own campaign is about "more than just defeating" the Republican president.

When California Senator Kamala Harris was asked recently if she was following the impeachment hearings, she replied "not so much". "I've been in Iowa," she ex-

plained. As Politico put it, for the Democratic candidates, "it's as if the unfolding [impeachment] saga hardly exists."

Why is there this disconnect between the Presidential candidates and the impeachment process?

One of the reasons is that impeachment is a matter for Congress to resolve. It is not something that is decided by the presidential candidates. Those politicians who are running to become the Democratic nominee are focussed on winning the vote in the early primary states – Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina – and not on what's happening in Washington, D.C.

And while polls show that a majority of Americans now support impeachment, it's not necessarily a vote winner for the Democrats. Though popular, the impeachment of Trump, like the earlier attempts to impeach Nixon and Clinton, has

not brought people out into the streets. Americans have gotten angry and staged massive protests over issues like women's rights, gun control and climate change. But they have left impeachment in the hands of the politicians in Washington.

For Sanders in particular, while he understands that Trump is corrupt and deserves to be removed from office, he believes that the real fight is against Trumpism, against the reactionary politics of the white supremacist far right that Trump leads. It is not enough to remove Trump from office. His movement must be completely defeated politically as well.

When asked how central impeachment was to his campaign, Sanders answered: "Sadly, we have a President who is not only a pathological liar, he is likely the most corrupt President in the modern history of America." But the

Vermont Senator also warned that being "consumed" by Trump meant losing the election.

In a strange twist that few foresaw, many of the Democratic candidates, Sanders included, will face a real problem when the Senate trial of Trump begins in early 2020.

Six of the Democratic candidates are Senators, and all of them are expected to attend the trial of Trump, and not only to be there to vote on the verdict at the end.

This will mean staying in Washington rather than being out campaigning in the early primary states. Some leading candidates like Biden and Buttigieg will be able to continue their campaigns as they're not Senators – but key players like Sanders, Warren and Harris will find themselves stuck in Washington rather than out in the field, possibly for several weeks, during the decisive period in the run-up to the Iowa caucuses and the New

Hampshire primary, on the 3rd and 11th of February.

When asked how his campaign would cope with this, Sanders replied: "I don't know how you prepare for that ... We will do our best to get back to Iowa, to get to New Hampshire, to get to all of the states that we have to, but there's no question it will make our life a little bit more difficult."

What the candidates have not been saying – though all are certainly thinking – is that Trump appears highly likely to be acquitted by the Republican-controlled Senate. So while Sanders and the others will find themselves obligated to take their seats in the Senate chamber during his trial, rather than campaigning to win the party's nomination, they will be participating in what is almost certainly a futile exercise. □



# Labour's climate policy: the fine print



By Misha Zubrowski

The environmental section of Labour's manifesto ([bit.ly/lpm-19](http://bit.ly/lpm-19)) is more ambitious than previous policy announcements, but less so than sections of the policy passed at this year's Labour conference (see [bit.ly/cc-passed](http://bit.ly/cc-passed)).

It has received much hype but less attention to detail. This article unpicks some of the finer points.

The rhetoric, at least to start, seems refreshingly left-wing, it suggesting a direct working-class approach. "Just 100 companies globally are responsible for the majority of carbon emissions", they recognise. They thus commit to "work in partnership with the workforce and their trade unions in every sector of our economy, so that they lead the transition in their industries, creating new, good-quality jobs... Social justice will define Labour's approach. We will make sure that the costs of the green transition fall fairly and are mostly borne by the wealthy and those most responsible for the problem."

Welcoming the resurgent climate movement, they commit to "full mobilisation of national resources, both public and private".

In the finer detail, the ruling class get more of a look in, and the ambitions are less bold. With co-ordination of investment "involving trade unions and business", Labour's "Regional Development Banks will be governed by boards made up of key local stakeholders such as local chambers of commerce, trade unions and councillors".

The real substance is, of course, their aims. They promise:

- "at least one million well-paid" green jobs, and many green apprenticeships
- "to achieve the substantial majority of our emissions reductions by 2030"
- "£250 billion" over 10 years for "a Green Transformation Fund dedicated to renewable and low-carbon energy and transport, biodiversity and environmental restoration"
- An additional "£250 billion of

lending for enterprise, infrastructure and innovation over 10 years some of which will go for environmental transition, from a "National Investment Bank, backed up by a network of Regional Development Banks"

This works out as £25 billion a year direct spending, compared to £66 billion in the *One Million Climate Jobs* publication ([bit.ly/omcj-14](http://bit.ly/omcj-14)), sponsored by many unions, of one decade ago; or the Green's £100 billion ([bit.ly/gpm-19](http://bit.ly/gpm-19)).

- In energy, they promise to build: 9,000 new wind turbines (7,000 offshore, 2,000 onshore)
- Enough solar panels to cover 22,000 football pitches
- New nuclear power

They commit to "bringing our energy and water systems into democratic public ownership." However, the fine detail does not bear out this promise.

## ENERGY IN DETAIL

The energy industry is currently divided into several parts: generation, transmission, distribution, and supply. Generation is the power stations, wind and solar farms, etc., which create electricity. Transmission is high voltage transportation — through the national grid — across long distances: from where electricity is generated across the land, to particular cities.

Distribution is the running of towers, cables and meters to particular houses and buildings, within a city or region — lower voltage and shorter distance than transmission.

These three components comprise the technical, objective energy system — although artificially divided. Currently however there is also "supply", with the big six energy companies — and some smaller ones — acting as brokers, to whom energy consumers pay money, intermediaries through which the other three components are funded.

Labour commits to nationalise transmission. A "new UK National Energy Agency will own and maintain the national grid infrastructure and oversee the delivery of our decarbonisation targets".

It will also nationalise distribution. "14 new Regional Energy Agencies will replace the existing district network operators and hold statutory responsibility for decar-

bonising electricity and heat and reducing fuel poverty".

And supply. "The supply arms of the Big Six energy companies will be brought into public ownership where they will continue to supply households with energy while helping them to reduce their energy demands."

This is important and good. However, they do not mention taking generation into public ownership. In recent comments, Corbyn has stated that the public will have a "51% stake in all new wind farms". In other words, these wind farms will be privately owned with the public exercising control only as shareholders. (And presumably older power facilities will be 100% private-owned).

The energy industry should be taken entirely into direct public ownership and integrated. Environmentally, generation is the most important component of the transmission.

In transport, they commit to invest in factories for electronic cars and metal reprocessing, aiming to end "new sales of combustion engine vehicles" by 2030, investing in charging points and "electric community car clubs", "a vehicle scrap-page scheme and clean air zones".

As one alternative, they will give resources and powers to local councils to be able to take public ownership of busses, reinstating cut routes and providing free travel for under-25s. They will bring "railways back into public ownership" to make them more affordable, better staffed, expanded, and electrified, "using options including franchise expiry".

The nod to "increase the funding available for cycling and walking" is followed by a dishonest fudge on aviation. "Any expansion of airports must pass our tests on air quality, noise pollution, climate change obligations and country-wide benefits."

In the foreseeable future, no expansion could meet any reasonable tests. This devious caveat tries to square the circle of keeping champions of expansion and environmentalists happy, and gives lie to their supposed commitment.

The manifesto makes commitments on housing, research and development, steel, rewilding and tree planting, flood defences, food production, animal welfare, inter-

national finance and aid, and the establishing or expansion of the remit of various committees. They are positive first steps, but insufficient in ambition and precise commitment.

Labour's manifesto is way ahead of their previous manifesto, and a league above the — at best — pitiful or commitments of the Conservatives and Lib Dems (see [bit.ly/ge-cc-19](http://bit.ly/ge-cc-19)).

## LABOUR VS GREENS

The main electoral contender for those serious about tackling climate change is the Green Party.

Many commitments, such as one million climate jobs, or bringing "all railways back into public ownership over ten years" are the same as or similar to Labour's.

Some are better: committing to £100 billion a year funding, net zero by 2030, stopping the building of new runways, 100% rather than "nearly 90%" of energy from renewable and low carbon sources by 2030, and clearer bold targets about planting trees.

In some ways it is worse. Business — as in Labour's — plays a significant role in their envisioned transition. In some areas, this seems to play a greater role: their targets around the energy industry seem to rely on market forces, regulation, and government spending, with no mention of taking it into public ownership. This is both more expensive and less effective: hence they lack the concrete programme to make their targets a reality. They also aim to "[p]rohibit the construction of nuclear power stations."

One serious gap in the Green's manifesto is any commitment to repeal anti-trade union legislation. Labour's manifesto is better than the Green's and a welcome step forward, in this respect, but should go further (see [bit.ly/lpm-fou](http://bit.ly/lpm-fou)). While these laws remain in place, workers cannot legally strike over climate issues, an obstacle to any meaningful climate movement (see [bit.ly/fou-ukscn](http://bit.ly/fou-ukscn)).

A rational materialist consideration of the political parties does not simply compare policies. Nor does it simply temper that with "tactical voting". We must analyse the class forces at play, the way in which the changes can be won.

History demonstrates conclu-

sively that progressive manifestos cannot simply be implemented by parliament. They rely on pressure from the labour movement and social movements to force the government to implement them, and to combat the corporations, bosses, and ruling class when they resist.

Of the options in the ballot box, Labour, as the party based — however imperfectly — on the trade-union and workers' movement, is the best tool at our disposal for adding to and wielding that pressure. Getting Labour into power, arguing for a working-class environmentalist programme, and fighting to transform Labour, are all part of forging the labour movement as a whole into a force capable of winning the environmental policies we need.

We must place pressure on the democratic levers within Labour to push for bolder environmentalism. Many ambitious environmental policies were passed at this year's national conference — more resolute than the manifesto by some way. Other necessary policies were kept from conference floor by the party's and unions' leaderships. We must raise all these policies, and challenge the leadership for leaving them by the wayside.

## HONESTY

Momentum, the biggest left-wing grouping within Labour, have made a summary of Labour's manifesto ([bit.ly/mmtm-19](http://bit.ly/mmtm-19)). However, beyond necessary simplification, they tend to oversimplify and exaggerate the manifesto as being more left-wing, more radical, than it is.

It is good that they think more radical policies would be better, and inadvertently, perhaps, encourage these ideas. It is bad that, by presenting it in this way, they cover for the Labour leadership selling out, fudging, and not being firm enough in various areas.

Environmentalists must fight for Labour in every seat in the coming general election. We must also highlight the shortfalls in the manifesto, and take Labour's conference policy — rather than the manifesto — as the starting point now and after the election. Whatever the outcome, we will have to fight to have such policies implemented. □

# Building after 29 November climate strike



By Misha Zubrowski

Millions of young people, in the UK and around the world, will take part in the 29 November global climate strike. In many workplaces workers will take ac-

tions, whether a lunchtime photo-shoot or delegations of workers joining city-wide climate protests. In the UK, particularly important this time are the UCU strikes, which coincide. We must build on the 29th for wider climate activism.

Youth climate strikers should deepen our collective and democratic organisation on town-, city-, and region-wide bases. Youth strikers must work with workplace ac-

tivists to build a clear programme of environmental demands and mass workplace participation.

Workplace activists and environmentalists must build on any successes of the 29 to make union support for future climate strikes real. We should aim for mass workplace actions and protests in future climate strikes, and mass delegations of workers to city-wide protests.

These strikes can also act as a springboard to build struggles around workplace environmental demands, including on campuses, and to link these up. We should contextualise these struggles within a wider set of society-wide environmental demands, a "Socialist Green New Deal".

This climate strike, of course, falls within the build up to a historic general election. Labour's

manifesto, and especially the policy passed at Labour's conference this year, make big steps towards the environmental policy needed. This should be used, on the one hand, as a way of raising discussion of the society-wide changes needed at work, on campus, and among young people; and simultaneously galvanising the same people to campaign for a Labour victory. □



# The Rabbi and the real issue

By Daniel Randall

Jewish identity and history is a profoundly important aspect of my life. But I'm not a communalist. I think the idea of a unitary interest for ethnic groups is dangerous, and I think official community leaderships, especially in faith groups, are basically reactionary.

An anti-communalist, secularist, anti-clerical critique of the role in Jewish life, and in social and political life in general, of people like the Chief Rabbi has been developed by Jewish radicals over many years, finding perhaps its most exuberant expression in the work of people like Benjamin Feigenbaum. Equivalent critiques have been developed by radicals from other ethnocultural communities for their own contexts.

It should be noted, however, as an aside, that sections of the left have somewhat hampered their ability to assert this critique in the case of the Jewish community by the fact they have rejected its applicability to other communities pretty recently.

A large section of the far left spent much of the mid-2000s engaged in an opportunist, communalist orientation to Muslim communities, promoting and allying with religious conservatives and running election campaigns on an explicitly communalist basis (the "Respect" lash-up with George Galloway).

But, back to the Chief Rabbi. Here's the problem: however historically reactionary the role of the conservative clerical leadership has been, we can't wish out of existence that he is speaking to a real issue.

There is a real and very serious issue in the Labour Party and on the wider left with antisemitism, the Labour leadership has fre-

quently flailed around and dithered in its response, and a great many Jews do feel, at best, deeply uneasy about voting for Labour given all of this.

If we, by which I mean the socialist left, broadly defined, want to persuade Jews to move beyond a communalist consciousness, if we want to develop a working-class anti-racism, we have to understand and have answers on these issues.

That's why responses to the Chief Rabbi's statement that simply scoff at it, or dismiss it as hyperbole or overreaction, or, worse, antisemitic responses that talk about the Chief Rabbi being puppeteered by Israel, will compound and entrench the problem.

Responses that have insisted that Mirvis's support for Israel is the key "context" for understanding his intervention also have this effect. The issue isn't that Mirvis's wider reactionary politics might not be informing his intervention here — I'm sure they are; that's just how consciousness and ideology works, isn't it? — it's that what this tells non-Jews is that the primary "context" within which they should consider Jewish concerns about antisemitism is what the position of the Jews in question is on Israel.

## ISRAEL

And given that most Jews support or have some affinity with Israel, however diffuse, what this implies is: most Jews are fair game.

Another especially obscene response to Jewish people expressing the view that they can't vote for Labour because of antisemitism I've seen frequently is one which basically runs: "Because of your selfish, and probably manufactured, concerns about antisemitism, you're going to be complicit in perpetuating policies that kill people; and if you're pre-



pared to do that... maybe people were right to hate you in the first place?" It's rarely expressed that starkly, and I'm hyperbolising somewhat, but people who follow these debates will recognise the form.

"Just get over it" is never going to work as a response to a member of a community that faces systemic oppression — or, in the case of Jews, has a deeply embedded inherited cultural memory of experiences of systemic oppression and attempted genocide.

The only way out of this mess is for the left to seriously confront and understand the roots and contemporary construction of the antisemitism in our own midst, which requires first an acknowledgement that it exists, and for us to respond patiently, via reasoned debate, which involves listening to people and engaging with their arguments, even when you sharply disagree.

You don't have to concur every time a Jewish person says something is antisemitic, but if you want to persuade that person of socialist ideas, you do need to, as a minimum, a) know what you're talking about, b) understand the problem, and c) be able to engage in a mode of exchange that doesn't reproduce and reaffirm the problem.

Everyone should start by reading Steve Cohen's book 'That's Funny, You Don't Look Antisemitic', and we'll take things from there. □

•Daniel Randall is a Jewish socialist and Labour Party supporter. The above is adapted from a thread he wrote on Twitter in response to Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis's statement urging people not to vote for Labour.

# Push out the Tories, sort out Labour

By Sacha Ismail

To respond to Orthodox chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis' attack on Labour over antisemitism ([bit.ly/2DkKucg](http://bit.ly/2DkKucg)) by pointing out that it is exaggerated only gets you so far.

The reality is that since Jeremy Corbyn became Labour leader, Seamus Milne took over the Leader's Office, and some thousands of "returners" from the 1980s became newly vocal, a culture of antisemitism has flourished on the margins of the party and, in somewhat less virulent forms, deeper inside it too.

A significant strand in Labour antisemitism is connected to a particular view of Israel and "Zionism". While the party's formal policy on Israel-Palestine, as stated in the manifesto, is good, the leadership does not really argue for it. "Absolute anti-Zionist" views, defining any continuation of Israel as evil, are widespread among the leadership's supporters.

Corbyn is for "two states" and against boycotting Israel, but his own record on identifying and fighting "anti-Zionist" antisemitism is poor, and his leadership has been extremely hesitant about dealing with this problem. The solution is not just, or mainly, "more expulsions", but the fact remains that many quite blatant antisemites

continue in the party untroubled. Educational efforts have been perfunctory.

Literally as I write Labour is launching its "Race and faith manifesto". Its main manifesto, unlike the 2017 one, says nothing about fighting antisemitism beyond a commitment to defend synagogues against physical attack.

More generally, the leadership and many of its supporters tend to dismiss complaints by talking as if violent far-right antisemitism is the only antisemitism, or the only significant antisemitism.

## ALARM

Mirvis is certainly right that a very large proportion, maybe a majority, of Britain's Jewish-background people regard the possibility of a Labour election victory with alarm.

Obviously people can be mistaken, or persuaded by conservative or reactionary ideas. But that large swathes of a community facing bigotry and racism, including many who are not conservative or reactionary, regard the prospect of a Labour government in this way should be a matter of deep concern for socialists.

*Solidarity* will continue its fight against antisemitism, including on the left. Antisemitism will be defeated by a labour movement educated and organised to defeat

it, and surely not by supporting the Tories or Lib-Dems against the movement.

Momentum leader Jon Lansman has cited detail of open antisemitism from Tory candidates and other representatives ([bit.ly/jl-jc](http://bit.ly/jl-jc)). "Before someone accuses me of 'whataboutery' for daring, as Jewish man, to speak about antisemitism and racism in other political parties, let me remind you that I have consistently called out and campaigned against antisemitism within my party too". Lansman has done that, including in the pages of *Solidarity*.

But, as he says, "focusing only on Labour whitewashes the antisemitism and racism that infects the Conservative Party from top to bottom, and problems within the Lib Dems too".

We face the threat of triumphant return of a right-wing nationalist government with a clear record of and commitment to accelerating a range of racist policies, led by a man whose record of casual but calculated racism is startling. There is detailed evidence of anti-Muslim prejudice in the Tory party.

And polling evidence from YouGov shows that Tory supporters are more likely to hold antisemitic views than Labour.

The Lib Dems too attack Labour over antisemitism, but they were in coalition with the Tories when all the ground was being laid for the right-wing and anti-migrant agenda

which has blossomed since the Brexit referendum. The Labour Party contains antisemitism and softness on antisemitism.

It also contains many thousands of activists hostile to antisemitism who have gained some impact already, and who will be essential to defeating antisemitism in politics. Labour is the party of the labour movement, the only force which can halt and reverse the nationalist wave the Tories are now riding and augmenting. That wave may help create conditions for antisemitism on an even larger scale.

We need to get rid of the Tories, and at the same time redouble efforts in the Labour Party to combat antisemitism and to establish a rational, internationalist, left-wing position on Israel-Palestine. □

• Socialists Against Antisemitism statement: [bit.ly/sas-em](http://bit.ly/sas-em)  
• Info on Tory antisemitism [bit.ly/tory-as](http://bit.ly/tory-as)



The weight of general election activity has left Jim Denham unable to write his usual Antidoto column for this week's *Solidarity*. Sorry.



## AEIP conference 14 December

By Katy Dollar

Another Europe is Possible (AEIP) is holding its conference on 14 December. It has advertised "interactive and informative sessions and workshops, a thorough discussion of our strategy, and elections for [the] National Committee".

Some committee members argued that with the election on Thursday 12 December and conference on Saturday 14 December, we may not even know the make-up of the government on the day of the conference. It is difficult to submit thought-out strategy documents, because we do not know what the election result will be.

The eventual compromise decision is that there will be a further decision-making conference scheduled in early 2020.

AEIP is unable to do more than general "anti-Tory" publicity in the election, because it is set up as a "cross-party" group. But over the past year, it has been an important force on the anti Brexit left. It was the leading force behind the Stop the Coup demonstrations and worked with Labour Campaign for Free Movement and Labour for a Socialist Europe to win free-movement policy and push for "Remain and Transform" at Labour Party Conference.

The formation of Labour for a Socialist Europe (from a motion to Another Europe's December 2018 conference) has been a boost for AEIP's radical activist wing.

You can join and register for the conference at [another europe.org](http://another europe.org). □

### "LABOUR TRANSFORMED" LAUNCHES

A new Labour left organisation is being launched from elements around Labour Campaigns Together.

Labour Transformed has put out a launch statement and plans a conference on 14 December in London. It's not clear why it has been scheduled to clash with the Another Europe Is Possible conference.

Prime movers include James Meadway, formerly of Counterfire, and a former adviser to John McDonnell, and Seth Wheeler, formerly of Plan C.

The statement contains much to agree with on anti-capitalism, socialism, internationalism and the importance of democracy in our movement. It says, rightly:

"Whatever the outcome of this election, we are going to need to fight... Other Labour-affiliated organisations, although vital to the party's electoral capability, have failed to provide the coordination we need.

"Momentum is not the national organisation that was promised to its 40,000 members – it is not a fully member-led movement and it lacks a clear or coherent political vision."

We are yet to see whether Labour Transformed will successfully develop the internal democracy, strategy, and routine of holding leaders to account which they correctly identify as missing in existing Labour left membership networks.

They will have to face difficult questions, including antisemitism, and overcome sectarian attitudes which have tanked previous attempts at setting up new left networks in Labour. One initial question is whether they are willing to work together with "Labour campaign" groups like Labour for a Socialist Europe and the Labour Campaign for Free Movement. □

• [labourtransformed.org/](http://labourtransformed.org/)



# What if a hung parliament?



## Editorial

On 25 November Jeremy Corbyn reiterated his opposition to a coalition with the Lib Dems if the Tories lose the election but Labour does not win a majority.

He did not respond to a question about coalitions versus forming a minority government. Mostly Labour's leaders have rightly said they oppose a coalition and that, if Labour comes out from 12 December ahead of the Tories but short of a majority, they will go for a minority government. The Lib Dems have gone even further and said they will not vote to make Corbyn prime minister, let alone join a coalition.

However, on 19 November the *Financial Times* carried an article quoting (anonymous) sources from within Corbyn's "inner circle" hinting at the need for a coalition government.

The left should oppose calls for a coalition and organise to prevent one.

The SNP and in particular the Lib Dems are capitalist parties. We support Labour because despite its limitations, and in fact a long record of bourgeois policy, it is based on the organised labour movement. Coalition with out-and-out bourgeois parties would mean more tightly tying Labour to the capitalist power structure and neutralising the scope

for the rank-and-file of the labour movement to mandate the leadership. Isolated issues on which, say, the SNP is to the left of Labour, like Trident, don't alter that basic picture.

As the FT comments: "if Mr Corbyn did manage to enter 10 Downing Street, his left-wing programme to overhaul the economy by nationalising several industries and extending workers' rights could be watered down by any parliamentary partners that Labour agrees to work with."

Some of the same problem would exist with a minority government. If Labour doesn't have a majority, it doesn't have a majority (and there is also an issue of some Labour MPs refusing to vote for left-wing policies). That is why a minority government would be unstable and very likely terminate in Labour having to appeal to the electorate well before a normal parliamentary term.

But that is exactly what the party should do – attempt to carry out its manifesto, vocally explain what it stands for, and, if blocked, appeal to the voters to give it a majority. As well as turning out the vote in the coming weeks, labour movement activists need to develop strong and militant organisation in workplaces and communities to support but also pressure the Labour government, help win a majority and ensure the program is carried out.

In contrast, coalition with the Lib Dems or SNP means negotiating to retreat from Labour's program and institutionalising a much safer, less radical one from the very

start of a new government. It would mean insulating the Labour leadership from rank-and-file party and labour movement pressure.

It would mean, eventually, Labour facing an election not on the basis of its policies but whatever it cobbled together with more right-wing, more bourgeois political forces.

Leaning on its policy of a fresh Brexit referendum, Labour should challenge the other parties to allow it to form a minority government and use the momentum to push through its wider program. It should exploit attempts by the Lib Dems or SNP to oppose left-wing policies to strip them of their left-leaning supporters.

Better and stronger policies on Brexit, free movement and the like would help. □



## Two nations, two states Socialists and Israel-Palestine

A Workers' Liberty pamphlet, third edition, 2016. Cover price £3.50

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# Israel-Palestine: potential for a future

By Daniel Randall

At a recent meeting at the London School of Economics (14 November), hosted by the campaign group Yachad and others, Alon-Lee Green and Sally Abed from the Israeli Arab-Jewish socialist movement Standing Together were asked their views on the argument that the possibility of a two-state settlement is dead.

Should progressives demand a “one-state solution”? This is an edited version of Alon-Lee’s response, published with his permission.

“The idea of one state, as an immediate solution to the present situation, might sound nice, but how is it to be achieved? You have two distinct national groups, both of which have a strong will to self-determine.

“How are you going to force these people into the framework of a single state from this point?

“The only viable immediate solution is ending the occupation and fulfilling the Palestinian right to self-determination by establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

“If you want to dream, why stop at one state? Why not a socialist federation of the Middle East? That’s my dream, and it’s not something I plan to stop dreaming of once we have two states. Two states is not the end point, I want to go beyond that. But we need to get there first.

“We need to be careful not to fall into the right-wing trap. To say, ‘Israel is only the occupation, Israel is only the settlements... everything Israeli must be boycotted’... this is to play Netanyahu’s game. It’s his project to ensure that all of Israel becomes entirely bound up with and represented by the settlements and the occupation.

“We should not fall for that; we should say, ‘there is another Israel.’

“Even now, after all the movement to the right, all recent opinion polls still show a big majority of Israelis support two states, an end to the occupation, and a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.

“Our movement shows there is potential for a future beyond occupation, racism, and division.” □

## STANDING TOGETHER STATEMENT

*Standing Together has put out this statement about the recent clashes in Israel and Gaza.*

Last week we witnessed a violent cycle that has become terrifyingly routine. Heavy rocket fire over Israel sent civilians in the south running into shelters, wondering if their loved ones are okay. In Gaza, Israeli air-fire killed over thirty people, including medics, children and innocent civilians. Devastating.

We stand strong in our condemnation of these violent outbursts, which serve no one but cynical Israeli politicians trying to preserve their own power. But condemnation is not enough. Here at Standing Together, we don’t just condemn. We build.

While missiles flew overhead, we reached out to peace activists in Gaza and arranged a public Skype meeting with them. With 140 participants from all corners of Israel present, we heard from a new generation of Gazan leaders, Rena Akila, Rami Aman and Manar Al Sharif, about their lives, their fears and

their inspiring visions of peace.

During the meeting, Jewish and Arab citizens of Southern Israel also shared their frightening experiences of the previous days under missile attack. Breaking every stereotype in the book, our conversation proved how much average citizens on both sides are hungry for peace and cooperation.

We listened, we learned and we built partnerships for the future. □



## Corrections

The SI-Cobas conference pictured on p.13 of *Solidarity* 525 was in Naples, not Milan.

The figures on p.11 of *Solidarity* 525 for Unidas Podemos’ representation in the Spanish Parliament were outdated as of the 10 November general election. They hold 35 and 6 seats in the lower and upper house respectively, not 30 and 2. □

# Homeopathy: comments by a far left physician

By Martin H. Goodman

First off, let’s be clear: “alternative medicine” (also referred to as “complementary”, “integrative”, and “holistic” medicine) is quackery. At best worthless, often harmful, and at times deadly.

Alternative medicine is medicine that has either not been proved to work, or has been proved to not work. There’s a name for alternative medicine that has been proved to work: “Medicine”.

Alternative medicine includes “disciplines” proved beyond doubt entirely worthless (such as homeopathy, naturopathy, Reiki, iridology, cupping), and some such as acupuncture that have to date been proved nearly entirely worthless with *perhaps* minor exceptions. (Emphasis on “perhaps”... the jury is out).

And it includes some that historically and by their theory are pure quackery, like chiropractic, where it has been shown that one very limited narrowly defined aspect of the discipline (in the case of chiropractic, spinal adjustment based on history and observed findings only for relief of mild to moderate back and neck pain) is proved about as effective as conventional medical treatment.

Of the above, homeopathy is by far the easiest to demonstrate to be entirely totally bunk, because it involves for the most part treatment with pills, so that the gold standard of clinical testing, double-blind comparison of active drug vs placebo testing, is trivially easy to do.

It is secondary that the “theory” of homeopathy is outrageous bunk, for in fact we don’t have solid explanations of the precise

mechanism of many of the treatments used in science and evidence-based real medicine. For example, It took 250 years from the time it was scientifically demonstrated that citrus juice would both prevent and cure scurvy to the time we understood *why* that was the case.

## EVIDENCE AND MECHANISM

To this day we don’t know how inhalation gases cause anesthesia, but we know well how to use them safely and effectively. But knowing how something works is for the most part not important when it comes to demonstrating whether or not it works.

At the time homeopathy was dreamed up by Samuel Hahnemann in the late 18th century, evidence-based scientific medicine that offered effective treatments for a significant number of illnesses, as we know it today, did not exist. It would not exist for another approximately 150 years.

“Mainstream” medicine at that time included such deadly follies as “bloodletting”, and could easily be considered in many respects no better than the absurdity that was and is today homeopathy.

What is surprising is that such utter bunk, now overwhelmingly proved worthless at best for everything it has been proposed to treat, should persist to this day. That it should enjoy state support in the USA, India, and elsewhere. In some cases that has been merely via the official sanction of regulations and licensing of homeopathic quacks. In Great Britain there were years of official state support via the national health system for this quackery.

There is also some support for such quackery among those of the progressive and revolutionary left.

This support mostly arises due to the relative lack of education and experience with medicine and science by most leftists, with in particular lack of training in distinguishing between quality and junk medical and scientific research. But a key mechanism that leads to embracing quack medicine among leftists is a tendency toward the sort of conspiracy theory “thinking” by leftists which leads



them to “throw out the baby with the bathwater”.

That is, in rejecting the bathwater (how medicine is developed and practised under a for-profit capitalist system, and the role of insurance and pharmaceutical companies in that for-profit system) leftists ignorant of medicine and science often throw out the baby: evidence-based, science-based, research-based medicine.

Result (in some cases): belief in foolish and at times deadly quackery such as homeopathy and other “alternative medicine”, embracing of deadly myths suggesting vaccination or fluoridation or mercury dental fillings pose any threat to health, embracing of deadly conspiracy theories denying the viral cause of AIDS, etc. by various scientifically and medically ignorant leftists and leftist groups. □

• Martin H. Goodman MD is a medical doctor and director of the Riazanov Library digital archive project

## REFERENCES:

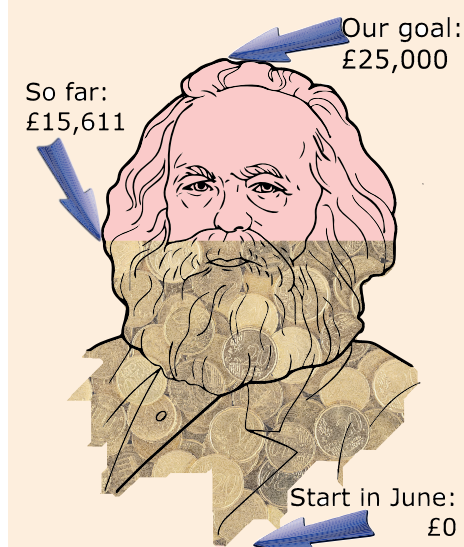
*Trick or Treatment: The Undeniable Facts about Alternative Medicine*, by Simon Singh and Edzard Ernst

*Bad Pharma*, by Ben Goldacre

And for those who want to seriously study and learn how medical research is and isn’t properly conducted, to be able to distinguish junk research from quality research themselves, by the example of efforts to study acupuncture, I recommend:

*Snake Oil Science: The Truth about Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, by Barker Bausell

# Nearing £16,000



Thanks this week to John McGee, £100, and to Simon Sanders for a £50 late contribution to Maisie Sanders’s sponsored give-up-smoking. Their contributions bring our fund-drive total to £15,610.93.

We have another £9,389.07 to raise to reach our £25,000 target.

Three comrades from Sheffield tell us they’re planning a sponsored bike ride. Since October’s sponsored bike ride, by a single rider, raised £1,250, we should have a good chance of raising several thousands from that.

We’ve spent more money this week on buying more leaflets and printing off briefing papers for the general election stalls from Labour for a Socialist Europe. We’ll need a lot more for the remaining weeks of the campaign. □

• Donate at [workersliberty.org/donate](http://workersliberty.org/donate).

In France, where up to 60% of the population seeks homeopathic treatments, the government has now announced it will no longer reimburse the bills for those treatments through social insurance. In Britain, support from the Royal Family long kept some homeopathic provision within the NHS, but in 2017 the NHS recommended that GPs should stop providing for homeopathic treatments.



# Black Friday and the folly of anti-consumerism

By Eduardo Tovar

In the US, Black Friday is the Friday following Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November). The day revolves around large discounts in shops.

Black Friday sales are notorious for the levels of chaos or even violence that occur as crowds pour into the shops and scramble for the discounted goods. To take an extreme example, in 2008 a stampede of shoppers on Long Island, New York, trampled a Walmart employee to death.

Although Black Friday as a long-running annual tradition is specific to the United States because of its relationship to the holiday of Thanksgiving, retailers in other countries, including the UK, have more recently adopted the practice.

Black Friday is a target of ire, especially as a symbol of rampant consumerism. Sometimes this outrage against Black Friday has taken the form of anti-consumerist protests on the same date, such as “Buy Nothing Day”. Sometimes these protests involve such public displays of anti-materialism as “zombie walks” around large chain shops and or mass credit card cut-ups.

There are genuine left-wing criticisms to be made of Black Friday. However, I believe that many of the anti-Black Friday protests from an environmentalist or even anti-capitalist perspective make the error of blaming mass consumption as such for social and environmental ills.

By placing the focus on consumption rather than production, one loses sight of the fact that just 100 companies are responsible for more than 70% of greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. [1] Changes in how industries are run would lead to a significantly greater reduction of these companies’ global emissions than changes in the purchasing choices of their street-level customers, targeting the latter seems to arise from abstract notions of “complicity” rather than strategic considerations of leverage.

## MORALISING

Also, many shoppers take advantage of discount sales because they have low or modest incomes and so these sales are some of the only opportunities they have to acquire “luxury” goods at all. There is a serious risk that anti-consumerist protests outside shops on Black Friday will come across as moralistically shaming poor people for trying to acquire objects of comfort or enjoyment beyond what they strictly require to live.

The ascetic ethos of “You shouldn’t buy more than you need” only makes sense to people regularly able to buy more than they need. Workers on low wages are usually careful with their expenditure as a matter of material necessity. Preaching asceticism to low-waged workers casts this thrifty lifestyle as a virtue. It tells poor workers to embrace their meagre way of living on ethical grounds rather than resist the systematic exploitation that makes their way of living meagre to begin with.

Yet some anti-consumerist preaching receives support from large sections of the would-be Marxist left. The figure of Marx looms large in critiques of consumer society.

This is especially true in academic and activist circles influenced by “Western Marxist” interpretations of the concept of commodity-fetishism, most famously those of the Frankfurt School.

The basic thrust of this line of thought is that, by producing and marketing commodities, capitalism creates artificial desires that distract people from their real needs. In this vision of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie uses mass advertising and other constituent elements of “the culture industry” to manipulate people into wanting things they do not actually require, thereby keeping them in an almost mesmerised state of compliance and passivity.

For example, the Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse categorised the prevailing need “to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements” as a “false” need “superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression”. [2] In Marcuse’s view, “[t]he products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood”. [3]

Despite their theoretical and practical-political differences with the Frankfurt School, one finds a very similar perspective on consumer society, commodities, and the generation of “false needs” in the writings of the Situationist International:

“The true fulfilment of genuine desires — which means the abolition of all the pseudo-needs and pseudo-desires that the system manufactures daily in order to perpetuate its own power — cannot take place without the suppression and positive supersession of the commodity spectacle.” [4]

## MISUNDERSTANDING MARX

Although the “Frankfurtised” version of Marx is omnipresent in the study of consumer society, it seriously misunderstands Marx’s own views. In his 1844 *Manuscripts*, Marx wrote: “Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it...”. Engels, in a letter to a comrade in 1889, commented wryly on some workers’ desire to show “bourgeois respectability”: “even Tom Mann, whom I regard as the finest of them, is fond of mentioning that he will be lunching with the Lord Mayor”.

But, far from being a cultural pessimist who denounced mass consumption, Marx believed that capitalism’s expansion of desires and needs (beyond basic food and shelter to literature, art, decoration, travel, etc.) was its “great civilising influence”. [5]

As Ishay Landa explains, for Marx, “[t]he proliferation of needs which occurs under capitalism is... a quintessentially emancipatory moment, a token of human enrichment and socialisation”. [6]

Marx famously and pointedly criticised bourgeois economists for labelling as “artificial” “firstly, the needs which arise out of the social existence of the individual” and “secondly, those which do not flow from his naked existence as a natural object”. [7]

Instead, Marx’s critique of consumption under capitalism was mostly directed at how capitalism expands the workers’ desires and needs, but simultaneously constrains their ability to consume. In his own words, the sale

of commodities under capitalism “is restricted not by the consumer needs of society in general, but by the consumer needs of a society in which the great majority are always poor and must always remain poor”. [8]

All this might come as a surprise because of how much it is taken for granted that capitalism encourages over-consumption. In truth, the relationship between consumerism and capitalism has never been straightforward.

Although much ink has been spilt over the plausibility of Max Weber’s (frequently misunderstood) “Protestant Ethic” thesis, the association in certain cultures between the capitalist drive to accumulate wealth and the ascetic practice of denying one’s impulse to spend provides a clear example of how capitalism and consumerism are not necessarily good bedfellows. [9] Indeed, as the independent socialist blogger Ralph Leonard observes, “Ebenezer Scrooge, arguably the most notorious capitalist villain in English Literature, was against Christmas precisely because it encouraged such ‘excessive’ mass consumption”. [10]

Criticising the desire for material things overlooks how many activities people engage in to pursue social relationships and human self-development themselves depend on access to material things; “one can hardly fence or paint, for example, without first obtaining brushes, canvasses, helmets, swords, and the like”. [11]

It also overlooks what Marx found so objectionable about commodity fetishism, namely that it obscures the object’s material, useful existence as the product of human labour and reduces the various kinds and concrete forms of labour embodied in the object “to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract”. [12] In other words, Marx’s objection was to how the commodity’s value becomes detached from the earthly creation and use of the physical object itself by living human beings.

As Peter Stallybrass puts it:

“For Marx, as for the workers of whom he wrote, there were no ‘mere’ things. Things were the materials — the clothes, the bedding, the furniture — from which one constructed a life; they were the supplements the undoing of which was the annihilation of the self.”

“It has become a cliché to say that we should not treat people like things. But it is a cliché that misses the point. What have we done to things to have such contempt for them? Why are prisoners stripped of their clothes, if not to strip them of themselves?” [13]

## SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS

If left-wingers still wish to protest outside shops on Black Friday, then they should protest in solidarity with the underpaid and overstretched retail workers being put at risk of physical injury from having to deal with the sheer number of sales and customers. Better yet, talk with the workers directly about unionising to fight for better working conditions. If one’s primary concern is environmentally harmful company practices, then strike up conversations about how organised labour can exercise its collective agency for environmentalist purposes, drawing from



such history as the “green bans” of the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation.

Protests against consumer culture might superficially cohere with left-wing values, but not all anti-consumerism is anti-capitalist and not all anti-capitalism is progressive. Instead of berating buyers for their “excess” or insinuating that they are mere dupes of consumer society, socialists and environmentalists should fight for a world in which everyone can enjoy material abundance; a world in which each individual’s needs are both expanded and satisfied. □

## FOOTNOTES

[1] Dr Paul Griffin et al, The Carbon Majors Database: CDP Carbon Majors Report 2017 <http://bit.ly/32VI3Hp>

[2] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Abingdon: Routledge 2002), 7.

[3] Ibid, 14.

[4] Members of the Situationist International and Students of Strasbourg University, *On the Poverty of Student Life* (1966), ch. 3. <http://bit.ly/2CSSvop>

[5] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1993), 287.

[6] Ishay Landa, *The Nature of Abnegation: Marx on Consumption*, *Historical Materialism*, 26, no. 1 (2018): 3-36, 23.

[7] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 228.

[8] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1992), 391.

[9] Max Weber’s central thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) is that Calvinist ascetic practices, which responded to the doctrine of predestination by emphasising the denial one’s immediate gratification through diligence and accumulation of wealth in order to produce outward signs that one is amongst God’s chosen, had an “elective affinity” with existing forms of early capitalism and so fused with them to create the specifically modern capitalism that first arose in the West. Despite common misconceptions, Weber does not argue that capitalism in general arose from Protestantism, nor does he argue that religious factors have a historical priority over material ones.

[10] Ralph Leonard, *A Marxist Defence of Consumerism* (18 August 2019). <http://bit.ly/2Oprgr1>

[11] Landa, *The Nature of Abnegation*, 13.

[12] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1990), 128.

[13] Peter Stallybrass, *Marx’s Coat*, in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer (New York: Routledge 1998), 203.



# Labour: the manifesto,

By Sacha Ismail

What Labour's 2019 manifesto promises is, in itself, moderate. But the rich and owners of capital did not get where they are by being generous and easy. They got there by being the most ruthless in pursuit of greed, exploitation, trampling down and squeezing the working class.

After decades of almost everything their own way, they are in no mood to concede. They will fight, aggressively and effectively.

The resistance of capital to a Labour government with this manifesto, and the risk of capitulation or retreat, can be overcome only by a strong and militant labour movement.

Despite its gaps on some big issues, the manifesto is at the left-wing end of what we expected, certainly on social provision and public ownership. It is more radical than 2017 and than the policies Labour put forward in the first weeks of the campaign.

But that better-than-expected left-wing character poses a problem. The manifesto includes many solid demands which Labour should have been campaigning for for years. Take council services. The party leadership has long resisted the call to reverse all the cuts. Only a few weeks ago its local government spokesperson responded to a letter from 120 Labour council leaders and mayors calling for this policy with evasive waffle ([bit.ly/2s9fPMt](http://bit.ly/2s9fPMt)).

Then, suddenly, there it is, a clear manifesto commitment. Why has Labour not built proper long-term campaigns around this kind of policy?

Relying on the manifesto to autonomously and quickly generate momentum in the same way that 2017's seemed to was not a good strategy. Activists have to be geared to convince people, not to assume the policies will automatically cut through.

If the Tories win, there may be a "moderate" or "soft-left" Labour backlash claiming the problem was too much radicalism. But the immediate problem is something else: the

shortage of proper debate in the movement, and of proper effort in previous months and years to convince and educate voters about the policies and a frame of general socialist ideas into which they integrate, and to organise a really active movement.

The 2019 manifesto is broadly similar in character to the 2017 one. It aims to claw back a chunk of the income siphoned away by the rich over the years to rebuild and expand public social provision.

Measured against socialism and the demands of the class struggle, and specifically on issues connected in various ways to the nation and nationalism (Brexit, immigration and migrants' rights, military issues), the manifesto falls short.

But, as Leon Trotsky put it in relation to a left-ish program from the Belgian Labour Party in the 1930s: "We share the difficulties of the struggle but not the illusions. Our criticism of the illusions must, however, not increase the passivity of the workers and give it a pseudo-theoretic justification, but on the contrary push the workers forward".

The widespread pessimism and disillusionment, which at the moment seems more entrenched than in 2017, can be turned round.

To defeat *neoliberalism*, we need to organise to fight *capitalism*, with the guiding goal of overthrowing it and taking wealth and power out of the hands of the ruling class, through workers' control and social ownership across the economy.

We want to build up and transform our labour movement, Labour Party and trade unions, by building workplace and community organisations capable of fighting to implement this manifesto and go beyond it.

## SOCIALISM

The Labour Party has never been seriously committed to socialism, but from 1923 to 1987 (even in the right-wing 1950s) its manifestos always contained some promise of socialism as a vision, a long-term aim, or the



Supporters of the Labour Campaign for Free Movement (LCFM) join local activists in support of Rosie Newbigging (Welwyn Hatfield). Rosie and Jill are two of the 48 Labour candidates so far who have signed LCFM's pledge to back all elements of the free movement and migrants' rights policy passed overwhelmingly by Labour conference in September: [bit.ly/LCFM-MP-pledge](http://bit.ly/LCFM-MP-pledge)

dominant guiding value.

"Further achievements towards a really Socialist Commonwealth" (1924); "Socialism provides the only solution for the evils" (1931); "ultimate purpose... the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth" (1945); "policy based on the ethical principles of Socialism" (1959); "programme of socialist reconstruction" (1983)...

In this manifesto, more left-wing than most, the word "socialism" is used only once, and not to state an aim but to describe what already exists in the NHS.

The manifesto states that "the Labour Party was founded to give working-class people a voice in politics". It makes the case for workers to organise. However, its class message is meagre even compared to the October 1974 manifesto's call for "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families".

2019's is more a vision of "rebalancing" where society must fight to curb abuses by "bad employers" and reshape society to win a harmony of interests between the working and employing classes.

## BREXIT, FREE MOVEMENT AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The fact that Labour now advocates a fresh Brexit referendum is a win for the internationalist left. That Labour has no position on what to say in a referendum is bad politically, and communicates weakness and shiftiness.

Here the manifesto reflects the vote at Labour conference; but Jeremy Corbyn's statement that he personally will be "neutral" signals yet further evasiveness.

The 2017 manifesto stated flatly that "Freedom of movement will end when we leave the European Union". 2019 is better: "If we remain in the EU, freedom of movement would continue. If we leave, it will be subject to negotiations, but we recognise the social and economic benefits that free movement has brought both in terms of EU citizens here and UK citizens abroad – and we will seek to

protect those rights."

Further good points: giving migrants voting rights, giving refugees the right to work, removing requirements for landlords to check immigration status, pushing to restart rescue missions in the Mediterranean.

Bad points: sticking to the ridiculous policy of closing only two out of eleven detention centres while reviewing the rest. No mention of "No recourse to public funds", i.e. making many migrants pariahs by denying them access to services (though that is an improvement from 2017, which promised to *extend* NRPF).

The impact of the internationalist left's campaigning and victories at conference is visible, but it's partial and messy.

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

The section on climate change represents real progress, but is inadequate and a retreat from the — already limited — policy passed at conference.

It includes versions of demands on public ownership, public investment and democratic control endorsed by conference. Public ownership of electricity supply is an important step forward from 2017, but falls short of full ownership of energy.

The leadership has retreated from the clear conference call for net-zero emissions by 2030, promising a "substantial majority of emissions reductions" by then. On airport expansion, crucial to emissions reduction, the conference dodged, and the manifesto waffles.

The conference demand for free or much cheaper public transport is absent, though a few policies imply improvement in this area.

An even minimally radical economic reorganisation is impossible without public ownership and democratic control of banking and high finance, as campaigned for by the Fire Brigades Union and endorsed by this year's TUC Congress. Instead, we have a plan to bar companies with bad environmental profiles from the London Stock Exchange and a lame desire to see "that the UK's financial sector is

## Lib Dems: turbo-charged neoliberalism

Quite a few of the Lib Dems' manifesto pledges ([www.libdems.org.uk/plan](http://www.libdems.org.uk/plan)) read as quite leftish. Their opposition to Brexit is clear, though revoking Article 50 without a new referendum is misguided. On migrants' rights and free movement, they stand in many respects to the left of Labour.

Even on public services, they are promising something like £50 billion above the Tories' spending plans, and in a few areas have outflanked Labour – for instance childcare, where they are pledging more free hours from earlier and specifying it will be almost all year round.

In general, though, what marks out the Lib Dems' plans is not *just* spending less money than Labour. It is that they oppose anything that involves restructuring the economy by expanding public ownership and social and democratic control. Thus

their manifesto specifically denounces Labour not only for pledging to nationalise utilities (advocating instead handing over more money to their private owners to "improve" them), but for a "dogmatic, backward-looking approach would destroy flexible jobs" by insisting on too many workers' rights.

Moreover, pretty much the entire Lib Dem spending offer is premised on an economic "bonus" from stopping Brexit.

What if, one way or another, the bonus doesn't materialise? Reasons not to trust the Lib Dems over austerity include not just their record in the Coalition but their turbo-charged-neo-liberal promise they will run a year-on-year budget surplus, making them more "fiscally conservative" than almost any mainstream party in any developed country. □



# the movement, and us



helping to tackle the emergency” and to improve “the fitness of our financial authorities to mobilise green investment”.

The “Post Bank” promised in another section is not really a step down the necessary road.

## SOCIAL PROVISION AND PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

To public ownership of transport, utilities, Royal Mail and now much of energy, the manifesto adds Openreach and associated sections of BT, in order to provide free full-fibre broadband by all by 2030. However you assessed it previously, there is little here about the “new models of ownership” the leadership talked about.

The manifesto commits to reversing all council cuts since 2010, in the lifetime of one Parliament. It is more straightforward and emphatic about reversing NHS privatisation

than in 2017, and promises free prescriptions and basic dental check-ups. It has commitments to transform the benefits system and reverse many Tory cuts.

The 2017 manifesto promised “the biggest council [house] building programme for at least 30 years”, but in 1987 only about 15,000 council homes were built. This one comes close to adopting the policy passed at Labour conference, promising that “by the end of the Parliament we will be building at an annual rate of at least 150,000 council and social homes, with 100,000 of these built by councils for social rent... we will establish a new duty on councils to plan and build these homes... and fund them to do so”.

It contains measures for private renters including “rent controls, open-ended tenancies, and new, binding minimum standards”, plus support for renters’ unions.

Another conference demand resisted by

the leadership is abolishing academies and “free schools”, now 77% of English secondary schools and 35% of primaries. The manifesto uses several formulations which suggest moving in the direction of a fully comprehensive, local authority-run system, but with major ambiguities.

On private schools, despite conference’s vote to scrap them, it commits only to closing tax loopholes and a review. Nothing about religious schools, though there is a commitment to stronger and LGBT-inclusive sex and relationship education.

The pledge for more police is there, though thankfully not as central as it was. The manifesto ups the 2017 promise of 3,000 extra fire-fighters to at least 5,000 (11,000 have been cut) and includes most of the FBU’s demands for reshaping the fire and rescue framework post-Grenfell.

Free social care for older people is progress, but beyond that is only an “ambition to extend this provision to all working-age adults”, with a meantime £100,000 lifetime cap for care costs.

The childcare policy is also progress but inadequate both in terms of the number of free hours and of public provision as opposed to subsidising private providers.

## FREEDOM OUR UNIONS

The manifesto promises better rights for individual workers and measures against union-busting. It also pledges: “We will start to roll out sectoral collective bargaining... to agree legal minimum standards on a wide range of issues, such as pay and working hours, that every employer in the sector must follow”.

Today 20-25% of workers have wages set by collective bargaining. In 1980, 75-80% did. The manifesto suggests not just encouragement but a legal mandate for collective bargaining, including sector-wide bargaining — something like the Liberals’ Trade Boards of 1909, expanded into Wages Councils in 1945, which at their peak covered 2.5 million workers (but were abolished in 1986). Or, if it goes further, something like the Australian “award” system, introduced in 1904 and still current though much weakened.

The manifesto restates the commitment to a minimum wage of £10ph for all workers over 16, but says nothing about its level after 2020.

On the right to strike, the 2017 manifesto included a few words on repealing only the 2016 Trade Union Act. Now we have a promise to “remove unnecessary [?] restrictions on industrial action” and “repeal anti-trade union legislation including the Trade Union Act 2016 [our emphasis] and create new rights and freedoms for trade unions to help them win a better deal for working people.” Much better but still vague.

## DEMOCRACY

The manifesto promises to give votes to all legal UK residents, i.e. to non-citizen immigrants, and to 16 and 17 year olds; and to promote voter-inclusion. (According to the Electoral Commission in September 2019, 9.4

million eligible people were not registered as voters).

It pledges to “work to” abolish the House of Lords in favour of a “senate of the nations and regions”.

It talks of a “democratic revolution”, but its promise of a “Constitutional Convention, led by a citizens’ assembly” suggests an unelected and only advisory body, rather than a proper constitutional assembly. The monarchy is not mentioned, there is little about reshaping the police and armed forces, and there are only hints about reorganising the country on a federal basis. There is no vision for the constitutional future of Northern Ireland beyond defending the Good Friday Agreement.

There is general praise for decentralisation but no specific commitment on re-empowering local government. The manifesto pledges to make elected mayors more accountable: scrapping them would be better, as would returning to committee- and not cabinet-run councils.

The manifesto contains nothing like the proposal advocated and adopted by some radical Labour candidates for MPs to take a worker’s wage.

## INTERNATIONALISM

Good surprises include support for the right of the Chagos Islanders to return to their homeland stolen by the British military, and a mention of China’s persecution of the Uyghurs.

The Israel-Palestine policy is similar to 2017 and basically good: support for the Palestinians on the basis of a two-state settlement.

Not good: support for Trident and NATO; a promise to maintain defence spending to “guarantee that our armed forces are versatile and capable of fulfilling the full range of roles and obligations”; and boasts about support for the UK’s “world-leading” “defence industry” — though also a pledge of stricter controls on arms sales.

## THE FIGHT AGAINST OPPRESSION

Positive proposals, though with little detail, include “reforming the Gender Recognition Act to allow self-declaration for transgender people”; “uphold[ing] women’s reproductive rights and decriminalis[ing] abortions”; and introducing no-fault divorce.

The 2017 manifesto talked explicitly about tackling antisemitism, anti-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller racism, and Islamophobia; the 2019 doesn’t, beyond proposals around stronger protection for places of worship including synagogues and mosques. □

- [labour.org.uk/manifesto](https://labour.org.uk/manifesto)
- Climate change policy passed at Labour conference: [bit.ly/2rIM5f0](https://bit.ly/2rIM5f0)
- “Free Our Unions” statement on manifesto: [bit.ly/2rpCIAg](https://bit.ly/2rpCIAg)
- Free movement/migrants’ rights candidates’ pledge [bit.ly/33eUZrX](https://bit.ly/33eUZrX)
- Preview from *Solidarity* 525: [bit.ly/2pQaEAs](https://bit.ly/2pQaEAs)
- 2017 manifesto: [bit.ly/37II4II](https://bit.ly/37II4II)

## Tories pledge new anti-union law

The Tories, in their manifesto, signal their intention to launch a new assault on trade unions, with a pledge to ban transport workers from all-out strikes by requiring the operation of a “minimum service” during action.

Otherwise the Tory manifesto is very content-light. Despite all the stuff about the Tories junking austerity and spending big on public services, the manifesto ([vote.conservatives.com/our-plan](https://vote.conservatives.com/our-plan)) pledges barely any new money – about £3 billion, as against tens of billions from Labour and the Lib Dems.

On social care, for instance, it offers virtually nothing beyond an appeal for cross-party consensus.

It pledges tax changes, for instance on national insurance, which would mainly benefit the well-off. Most importantly, however, the Tories would clearly continue the current direction of travel, for instance the cancerous growth of NHS privatisation, the

destruction of meaningful local government and the progressive disappearance of council housing.

In other respects, the manifesto would pull politics sharply to the right. It commits to hard Brexit (though even there the detail is vague). It promises to scrap existing free movement in favour of an “Australian-style points based” immigration system, because bashing migrants and rallying nationalist votes is more important than the consequences even for big business. It also sketches out a right-wing authoritarian pitch on criminal justice.

The *Guardian* notes that the Tories have done much less than Labour to promote their manifesto on social media ([bit.ly/2Ola1rP](https://bit.ly/2Ola1rP)). It looks like they are not keen on having people actually read their manifesto. Rather, they are relying on their pitch to “Get Brexit done” and their appeal to generally right-wing sentiment. □



# Another socialist for US president



## Interview

**Q:** Tell us about your campaign for president?

**A:** My campaign is about putting forward ecosocialist solutions to the life and death issues we face: the climate emergency, growing inequality, the new nuclear arms race. All these crises flow from the structure of the capitalist system.

My central campaign theme and program is an Ecosocialist Green New Deal. I am talking about socialising the energy, transportation, and manufacturing sectors of the economy in order to rapidly zero out greenhouse gas emissions and build 100% clean energy by 2030. During the World War 2 emergency, the US federal government took over or built a quarter of US manufacturing capacity in order to turn industry on a dime into what they called the "Arsenal of Democracy" to defeat the Axis powers. We need to do nothing less than that now to defeat climate change.

Inequality kills. The life expectancy gap between the rich and poor counties in the US is now 20 years. So our Ecosocialist Green New Deal also calls for an Economic Bill of Rights based on the public provision of a job guarantee, a guaranteed income above poverty, affordable housing, comprehensive health care, lifelong public education, and a secure retirement.

To address the new nuclear arms race, we call for a no first use pledge and unilateral disarmament to minimum credible deterrent, and, on the basis of those tension-reducing initiatives, negotiating with the nuclear powers for complete nuclear disarmament.

My campaign is just as much about party building. That means first of all securing ballot lines, which enables Greens to run for office at every level in the next election cycle. So we have to get on the ballot and get certain results – each state has different criteria – in order to secure a ballot line. Greens have ballot lines in 21 states, so we have to petition in the other 30, counting Washington DC. Ballot access is harder in the US than almost any other electoral democracy.

I know in the UK you just need 10 signatures to stand for Parliament. In the US you need thousands to get on the ballot as an independent or new party candidate for Congress, up to over 15,000 in states like Illinois.

**Q:** Is the Green Party a socialist party in the US?

**A:** I think it is vitally important to build a third party independent of Democrats and Republicans, who are funded by and primarily represent the capitalists. That independence is our power. Inside the Democratic

Party, the left disappears. Nobody knows if your vote is from a Sanders socialist or a Clinton corporatist. Everybody knows what Green vote means and the more we get, the more leverage we have in the political process going forward.

Is the Green Party an explicitly socialist party? It has been since 2016 when the national platform was amended to say the party rejects both capitalism and bureaucratic state-socialism and favours a democratic and decentralised economy that it calls ecological socialism, communalism [meaning a system based on "communes", rather than communalism in the more common English usage, i.e. ethnic hostility], and a cooperative commonwealth. Not every Green subscribes to this change, but the majority do.

At the moment my campaign is focused on getting the Green Party nomination. I have the nomination of the Socialist Party USA and the endorsement of Solidarity for the Green nomination. I am the only candidate in the Green Party who has a nationally-scaled campaign. Seven others are running but none is raising much money, hiring staff, and campaigning across the country like I am. I am not complacent about winning the Green nomination, but I have a good chance.

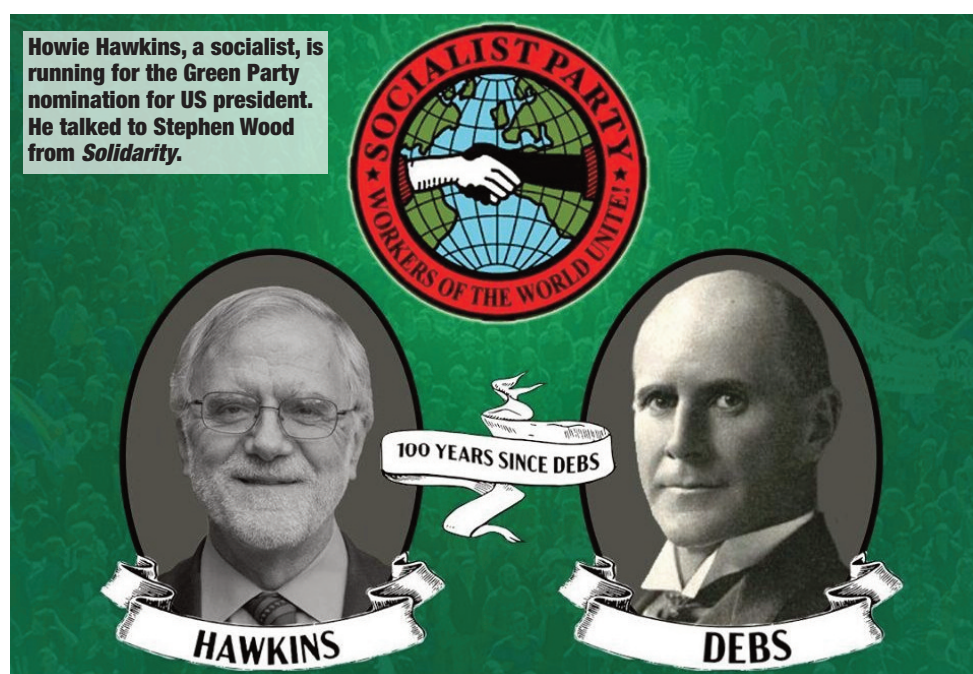
I am also campaigning for a united electoral front of the independent left. I am seeking the nomination of several progressive and socialist state parties like the Peace and Freedom Party in California. We want to build solidarity across non-sectarian independent left.

The Greens are unevenly developed across the US. Many locals would definitely call themselves socialist. Some are well integrated into the labour movement and working-class communities, but in other places not so much. In New York state, Greens have been in the middle of the big movement against fracking and for clean energy. We have some leading Black Lives Matter activists who are campaigning against police brutality.

Most Greens are pissed-off former Democrats. They came to the Greens because in fighting on a particular issue – a war they opposed, an economic justice demand, an environmental struggle – they found that the Democrats were on the other side. Jill Stein, the 2012 and 2016 Green Party Presidential nominee, came to the Greens after voters in her home state of Massachusetts passed a public campaign finance law by a citizens initiative referendum but the Democratic-dominated legislature simply refused to fund it and eventually got a court order that enabled them to repeal it.

**Q:** What is the state of the socialist movement in the US and how do the Sanders campaign and the Democratic Socialist of America fit in?

It is much easier now to call yourself a so-



cialist in the US. The word used to be a conversation stopper. Now it's a conversation starter.

A lot of that is due to Bernie Sanders calling himself a democratic socialist. I also think right-wing media helped by constantly calling Obama a socialist! Of course, Obama was anything but a socialist, but many who liked him thought, well, what is this really all about?

For me socialism is about ending exploitation at the point of production where extreme income inequality is generated as well as destruction of the environment. Sanders' socialism is about taxing the capitalist to fund social programs. Sanders talks about a political revolution against the billionaire class, but it has to be an economic revolution as well that takes away their political power by socialising the major means of production. Sanders plans sound very radical to a lot of people, but really his models are like European social democracy and he explicitly calls it completing the New Deal, which was liberal reforms of capitalism, not socialism.

I am talking about expropriating the billionaire class, not just taxing them. And I think Sanders does know that just taxing the rich will not be enough. He came through the youth wing of the Socialist Party.

But he apparently he thinks the people are not ready to go that far. I think that with a real movement behind him – it would need to be independent of the Democrats – then he would have more confidence to campaign for socialising big business. That's why I think it's important to be building that movement now.

Sanders has been clear about the class divides in society, but the difference, I think, in our attitudes is about political power. If you leave the concentrated economic power in place, it translates into concentrated political power. Then even funding the best social measures gives the capitalists the power to resist the reforms and roll them back. What is important now is clarifying these differences within this new socialist movement.

The US left is in somewhat of a crisis because much of it is disappearing into the Democratic Party. The dissolution of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in part was down to how some of their members were orienting to the Democrats instead of that organisation's traditional political independence from the capitalist parties.

The rapid growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is drawing many peo-

ple like this into Democratic Party campaigns. I do work with DSA members and supporters in social movements. They are backing Sanders and say they won't be supporting any alternative Democratic nominee. I don't expect DSA as a whole to get behind my campaign if Sanders loses the Democratic nomination, but individuals and perhaps some branches will.

When I stood for Governor of New York in 2018, after their preferred candidate lost the Democratic primary, some in DSA pushed to endorse me. Instead, they debated about whether they should have a debate about backing me! The vote was competitive but the proposal was defeated. DSA is now more divided on the Democratic Party than they were traditionally.

The growth of the DSA is a good thing. I think regrouping and bringing together the independent left is especially important at this juncture.

**Q:** How did you become a socialist?

I got my politics as a teenager in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1960s in the civil rights, antiwar, and radical ecology movements. The Democrats and Republicans were going slow on civil rights and supporting the escalation of the war in Vietnam. I committed then to independent working-class political action – in elections and in the movements.

The two biggest influences on me were Hal Draper's *Two Souls of Socialism*, which distinguished between democratic and authoritarian socialisms, and Murray Bookchin's many pamphlets envisioning an ecological and libertarian socialism. When the Independent Socialist Clubs led in alliance with the Black Panther Party the formation of the Peace and Freedom Party in 1968, I campaigned for the new party even though I wasn't old enough yet to vote for it.

In 1972, now at college in New England, I first met Bernie Sanders while supporting his campaigns for US Senate in the spring and for Vermont Governor in the fall as the Liberty Union candidate. Later in the 1970s when he produced a slide show about Eugene V. Debs, I organised a showing in my community.

Debs got almost one million votes in 1920, and he was in prison! We believe that our independent socialist campaign can win a million votes for socialism in 2020 for the first time in 100 years. □

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# The hijab: “preventing common impositions”



By Maryam Namazie

On the issue of child veiling, a state ban on conspicuous religious symbols for children is an important defence of children's rights.

## CHILDREN ARE NOT PARENTAL PROPERTY

Children are not the property of their parents. They are individuals with rights and bodily integrity. And just because their parents believe in child veiling or FGM and male circumcision doesn't mean they should be automatically entitled to impose their views on their children, especially when these views are harmful.

## IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF CHOICE

Religious symbols on children are not a child's choice but a parental imposition, as no child “chooses” to be “modest” and “chaste” and protect the family “honour.”

Even for adults, it is debatable how many have freely chosen to wear the veil given the huge amounts of pressures to conform, the compulsory nature of the veil in many instances and because submission and compliance are not the same as choice. Even so, there is clearly a huge difference between the veiling of adults and child veiling.

As the late Iranian Marxist Mansoor Hekmat said:

“The child has no religion, tradition and prejudices. She has not joined any religious sect. She is a new human being who, by accident and irrespective of her will has been born into a family with specific religion, tradition, and prejudices. It is indeed the task of society to neutralise the negative effects of this blind lottery.

“Society is duty-bound to provide fair and equal living conditions for children, their growth and development, and their active participation in social life. Anybody who should try to block the normal social life of a child, exactly like those who would want to physically violate a child according to their own culture, religion, or personal or collective complexes, should be confronted with the firm barrier of the law and the serious reaction of society.

“No nine year old girl chooses to be married, sexually mutilated, serve as house maid and cook for the male members of the family, and be deprived of exercise, education, and play. The child grows up in the family and in society according to established customs, traditions, and regulations, and automatically learns to accept these ideas and customs as the norms of life.

“To speak of the choice of the Islamic veil by the child herself is a ridiculous joke. Anyone who presents the mechanism of the veiling of a kindergarten-age girl as her own ‘democratic choice’ either comes from outer space, or is a hypocrite who does not deserve to participate in the discussion about children's rights and the fight against discrimination.

“The condition for defending any form of the freedom of the child to experience life, the



condition for defending the child's right to choose, is first and foremost, to prevent these automatic and common impositions.”

## THE VEIL PROMOTES SEX APARTHEID AND INEQUALITY

The veil is emotionally harmful. It aims to erase girls and women from the public space and creates a physical wall of segregation. If you do not stay home, and insist on going to school or work or what have you, then you must carry the purdah on your very back to prevent yourself from enticing men and creating fitnah or chaos in society.

The veil is part of the misogynist insistence that girls are “different” from boys. As has been seen in some classrooms in Islamic schools here in Britain even, what follows child veiling is girls sitting in the back of the classrooms, eating after male students, having different textbooks...

It also inhibits the free movement of children. There is an implication that veiled girls are not to run, shout or laugh too loudly or even ride a bike and be seen playing with boys. Child veiling encourages inequality between girls and boys right from the start and solidifies women's subservient status in society.

## MODESTY CULTURE IS AN EXTENSION OF RAPE CULTURE

Moreover, child veiling is on the continuum of other religious and cultural rules to control women and girls to ensure that they know “their place” – whether it be via FGM, polygamy or child marriage. At worst, it promotes rape culture and violence against girls and women.

The veil and its demands for modesty brings with it the implicit and often explicit shaming (or worse) of those deemed “immodest.” It is the immodest girl or woman who fails to dress or behave appropriately in order to avoid the male gaze and titillation. She has no one to blame but herself for any ensuing male violence. Modesty is always the remit of women and young girls.

And while it is often portrayed as harmless, modesty culture sexualises girls from a young age and puts the onus on them to protect themselves. Child veiling also removes male accountability for violence, positioning men as predators unable to control their urges. Girls and women are to be either protected or raped depending on how well they guard their modesty and the honour of their male guardian.

Therefore, despite what we are often told, the veil is not just another piece of clothing.

This would be similar to touting foot-binding as footwear, FGM as piercings and the chastity belt as lingerie.

In all religions and every religious-Right movement, the perfect “modest” and “moral” woman/girl is the one who cannot be seen or heard in public. Whether via acid-attacks, FGM or child veiling, the message is clear: a good woman/girl is a “modest” one.

## TO BAN OR NOT TO BAN

There are bans on domestic violence, FGM, child labour... because of social and political movements demanding an end to such violations culminating with changes in the law. Therefore, the banning of child veiling and conspicuous religious symbols should be seen within this move to prioritise children's rights over the rights of their parents, religious dogma or religious “leaders” and to codify it in the law.

## RACISM OR FUNDAMENTALISM

Much of the discussion around the banning of child veiling centres around legitimate concerns for bigotry against Muslims, rising xenophobia and the exploitation of any ban by the far-Right. I would challenge the view that sees girls and women as extensions of their communities and expendable for societal “cohesion.”

Yes, of course, there is a context of racism but there is also a context of the rise of the religious-Right (including white nationalism) with women and girls as their first targets. Increased child veiling is the result of this rising fundamentalism since the veil and control of “its women” is the most public manifestation of Islamist control. In Britain, today, even some toddlers can be seen wearing the veil.

A more ethical position would be to oppose both racism and fundamentalism. Excusing fundamentalism because of racism or vice versa addresses neither and leaves women and girls at the mercy of religious and patriarchal restrictions.

## IDENTITY OR SOLIDARITY

Saying the fight against child veiling is a fight for feminist and secularist movements within faith communities allows one to remain on the side lines and pay lip service to what is a serious child welfare issue. Oh well, at least you showed some solidarity by putting the onus on others!

Children – British girls – are being sexualised, segregated, taught they are different from boys. British children cannot feel the wind in their hair, run, laugh out loud, dance... They are not considered as individuals whose welfare is paramount but extensions of “community” and family and bearers of modesty culture.

The idea that the fight for the rights of these girls – because they are minorities – must be left to “faith communities” shows how ingrained regressive identity politics and cultural relativism have become. For me, the issue is clear.

If you want to improve the lot of children who are veiled, then changes in law are an important battleground for those who are serious about children's rights. □

• Maryam Namazie is an activist with the Council of Ex-Muslims and other secularist groups.



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# Neurodiversity at work: a social

By Janine Booth

Fatima's autism makes her hypersensitive to bright lights, so she can't work in our office, poor thing.

Or: The bright lights in our office make Fatima distressed as she is autistic and unusually sensitive to light. She can work here if we turn them down.

Ed's dyspraxia makes him so clumsy that he is a danger at work.

Or: The workplace is arranged in a way that is dangerous to Ed, who is dyspraxic, and to other workers.

Faryal is dyscalculic and cannot be trusted with people's money, so she cannot possibly work in the finance department.

Or: Some ways of working in the finance department might present problems to a dyscalculic person such as Faryal; we can identify and reduce these barriers.

I feel sorry for Nia because her dyslexia means that she can't write reports so she can't do a supervisor's job.

Or: The requirement that all reports must be written unaided by the supervisor is creating a barrier to Nia and other dyslexic workers. She can do the supervisor's job if she is allowed to present reports in other formats or is provided with assistive technology.

Femi fidgets and disturbs people. If they can't cure his ADHD then they will have to sedate him or keep him away from the rest of us.

Or: The way that work is organised here may be causing problems to Femi, who has ADHD, for example providing breaks too infrequently. And it may be that workers are placed too close to each other so are disturbed more than necessary. If we identify the problems, we can remove or reduce them. In the meantime, we would like his co-workers to be more tolerant and supportive of Femi and value the contribution he makes.

Maria's Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) makes her carry out ridiculous rituals.

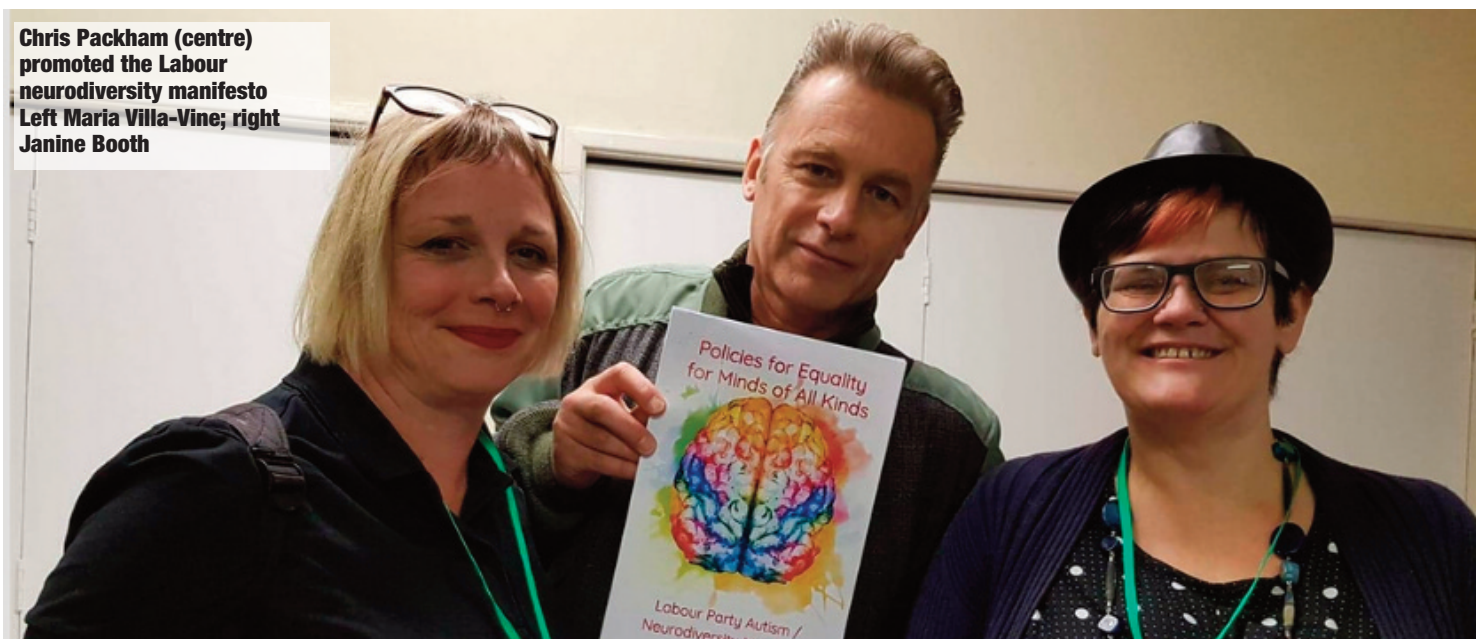
Or: Maria, who has OCD, has routines that help her to regulate herself at work. This is not necessarily a problem unless undue stress in the workplace makes it a problem or her routines are disrupted.

Henry suffers from autism so he has no social skills and does not fit in at work.

Or: Different people interact in different ways, so an inflexible requirement to "fit in" with the prevailing social culture can present barriers to autistic workers such as Henry, who needs to be recognised for what he can bring to the job.

The first statement in each pair takes a medical model approach to neurodivergence in the workplace. The second statement takes a social model approach. Both statements de-

Chris Packham (centre) promoted the Labour neurodiversity manifesto  
Left Maria Villa-Vine; right Janine Booth



scribe the same situation, but they describe it from a radically different perspective. What changed between the first and the second sentences?

The first statements start with the condition — the second statements start with the social or environmental barrier.

The second statements tell how the barrier, rather than the condition, causes problems.

The first statements focus on what people "can't" do; the second on what they can do.

The second statements have replaced or removed patronising or disabling language: they show solidarity not pity or contempt.

The social model approach is more progressive, more realistic, and much more useful for achieving change that will benefit both the worker concerned and workers in general. The trade union and the disabled people's movements support the social model.

## A NEW MODEL

In the 1970s, disabled people organised a new, radical movement of their own. It focused on the demand for independent living, and soon realised that to win this fight, it needed to challenge the whole way in which society viewed disability. It labelled the traditional way of viewing disability as the "medical (or individual) model", and its new way as the "social model".

The medical model, it said, saw disabled people as broken, as having something wrong with them, and that it was this broken thing that caused all their problems, that disabled them. They needed to be fixed, or failing that, to be pitied or to be carried as a burden by society.

The social model, by contrast, distinguished impairment from disability. The impairment is the person's shortfall in functioning, their medical condition. Their disability is the obstruction put in their way by society. It is society which disables people with an impairment.

A simple example: a blind person wishes to read a book at the local library, but cannot find a book that she can read. The medical model says that she can't read a book because she is blind, that her blindness is her disability. The social model says that blindness is her impairment, and that her disability is the failure of the library to provide books in audio or Braille formats for her to read.

The medical model says that there is something wrong with the blind person; the social

model says that there is something wrong with the library. The medical model offers only a future cure for blindness as a solution; the social model offers removal of the disabling barrier by getting the library to stock Braille and audio books.

So far, so good; but in real life, not all examples are that simple.

If the social model were that simplistic, it would not work in a lot of situations. Disabled people with life-limiting illnesses, and those in constant pain, have been among those arguing that it needs to stress that disablement can be caused by their impairments as well as by society, and in most cases by the two in conjunction with each other.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a document written with the involvement of disabled people's organisations and with substantial social-model content, acknowledges "that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

## NEURODIVERGENCE AND THE SOCIAL MODEL

For neurodivergence, we may need to consider a further tweak to the basic social model of disability. Our neurodivergence is not necessarily an impairment, and yet we are still disabled. How so?

Let's look at the opposite first: it is possible to have an impairment but not be disabled. For example, a person who is short-sighted and has this readily corrected by spectacles is not disabled under UK law. They have an impairment, but social provision has removed the disability.

In another example, if you had an impairment that made you incapable of doing something you never needed or wanted to do anyway (for example, pronounce certain words in a language you will never have occasion to speak), then you would not be disabled.

It is also possible to be disabled but not to have an impairment. This would be the case if something about you is sufficiently different from the "norm" that society causes you problems.

Left-handedness is a neurological variant. Arguably, a society which does not provide any equipment (e.g. scissors, guitars, etc) in

left-handed versions, and which seeks to force left-handed people to write with their right hands, disables left-handed people. Lefties living in such a society could be considered disabled — not simply mistreated, but prevented from functioning to their full ability. In a society which accepts and facilitates left-handedness, few people would argue that lefties are disabled.

Take dyslexia, for example

The point at which a dyslexic person becomes disabled is at the interface between their brain and the specific form of language used by the society in which they are communicating.

There appear to be significant differences in rates of dyslexia in different languages. For example, it is less prevalent in languages (eg. Finnish) where there is a more direct link between the spelling of words and their sounds, and more prevalent in languages (such as English) where that link is more obscure or complex. This is called shallow and deep orthography, respectively.

There is no biological test for dyslexia. Diagnosis is primarily on the basis of assessment of reading. Diagnosticians do not look at your brain, they look at your performance in a social function (reading), at the way that your brain interacts with written text. Languages developed (and continue to develop) socially, so reading is the interaction between a person's brain (and eyes) and a socially-constructed written code.

Alan was born to English parents who brought him up in Japan as a fluent speaker of both languages. He was severely dyslexic in English, and not dyslexic at all in Japanese. To put it another way, he was disabled in English but not in Japanese. It may be that his brain has a deficit in its ability to translate phonemes, which the English language relies on but Japanese does not. Maybe that counts as an impairment. But his disability arises at the point of contact between his brain and a particular social form (phoneme-reliant written language).

So, a traditional or medical model of dyslexia would say that it is a disability that impairs a person's ability to read. A social model of dyslexia would say that it is a neurological variant which is better suited to some forms of written language than others, and therefore that it is those written languages that disable the dyslexic person.

## 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*.



# model

## NOT MEDICAL

An interlocutor tweeted in an argument with me words to the effect that: "The social model says that if an epileptic person had adjustments at work, then they would not have epilepsy any more." No: the social model would say that if an epileptic person had adjustments at work, then they might be a little less disabled; they wouldn't be any less epileptic.

The social model does not claim that there is no medical element to disability, nor that a person's impairment or condition does not cause them any problems.

The social model does not claim that all impairments are caused by social factors (although this is true in some cases e.g. industrial injuries).

The social model does not rule out medical interventions. On the contrary, the social model would argue that failure to provide helpful medical interventions is one of the barriers that society puts in the way of some disabled people.

## A SOCIAL MODEL OF NEURODIVERSITY?

I want to argue for a social model of neurodiversity that understands that neurodivergent people are in the majority of cases disabled: some because their neurodivergence is an impairment and because society, in conjunction with that impairment, creates barriers to their equal and independent participation in society; and some because although their neurodivergence is not an impairment, they are nonetheless disabled by a society that does not tolerate or accommodate their divergence from the "norm".

For some people, their neurodivergence may be part impairment, part difference. This model would work for them too. Indeed, part of the point of it is to consider impairment irrelevant to the basic case for rights and equality. The degree to which a person's neurodivergence is impairment or difference will have a significant effect on their choice of interventions — medical, therapeutic or other — and on the way they wish society to view their condition. But it does not affect their humanity, their right to equality and dignity.

The social model is a materialist approach: it roots our experiences of disablement in social structure and in our interactions with people and environments.

People often ask whether autism (or another neurodivergent condition) is a disability. I'd argue that it is more helpful to ask whether autistic people are disabled (to which my answer would be: in most cases, yes). It may seem a semantic distinction, but it is important: it locates the disablement not in the autistic person's brain, but in the society they live in and the way the individual and society interact. Autism is not our disability: it may be an impairment, a difference, or some combination. Our disability is the difficulty that arises in our interaction with the specific society in which we live.

An effective social model of neurodiversity has the potential to unite neurodivergent people through understanding disability as distinct from impairment. Recognising that neurodivergence may or may not constitute impairment is not a moral judgement or the establishment of a hierarchy.

Quite the opposite: it is an approach that promotes unity. □

# The neurodiversity manifesto

By Louise Wildon

Earlier this year, a group of Labour Party members launched an Autism and Neurodiversity Manifesto, after a steering group had spent three years consulting with various organisations.

All of the members of the group are neurodivergent, as one of the key principles is to involve advice from the very people the policies would affect.

The other key principles of the group are to follow the principles of the Labour Party, to use the social model of disability, to use the neurodiversity approach that recognises that humanity is neurologically diverse and that those differences should be accepted rather than suppressed, and to oppose austerity and cuts to public services, as this a political decision and not an economic one.

The manifesto proposes, amongst others, the following policies:

- For diagnostic services to be available to all
- For work capability assessments to be scrapped and replaced with work accessibility assessments

ity assessments

- For the NHS to be restored and to reverse privatisation to ensure equal and adequate health and social care

- For care to be provided close to home and for it to be publicly controlled and accountable

- For well funded and publicly run schools with smaller class sizes and varied teaching and assessment methods

- For neurodiversity training for all people working in public services and teachers and teaching assistants

- For neurodiversity to be covered in the national curriculum

- For workplaces to adopt neurodiversity policies and provide training for staff

- For all treatments and therapies to be regulated

- For Legal Aid to be restored

- And for neurological status to be an additional protected characteristic in the Equality Act.

Since the launch, various local branches of the Labour Party and well known trade unions, such as Unite, have voted to pledge their support to the manifesto; and since the

general election announcement, 45 Labour MPs and PPCs have already signed a letter to publicly show their support.

At a fringe event of the Annual Labour Party Conference in September, John McDonnell spoke to party members about the need to "make sure that we get reinstated into the Labour Party manifesto recognition of neurodiversity, and the challenges and opportunities of that."

And, at a November Isle of Wight Neurodiversity event, Chris Packham, the naturalist and TV presenter, who has recently spoken out about his autism, was quoted as saying "I am very pleased to support this draft of proposals and its potential inclusion in the national Labour Party manifesto.

"If implemented it would represent a real hope for improvement in neurodiverse people's lives. It is a symbol of progress for, and in, a community which needs and deserves this more than ever". □

- Louise Wildon is a member of Poole Labour Party and of Neurodivergent Labour.

# Hot Ash



## Diary of an Engineer

By Emma Rickman

I've been following the operations assistants around the plant to get an understanding of their duties. The messiest and most routine job on the plant is dealing with what's left over after the waste is burned.

During shut-downs I've stood on the grate and tried not to slip on the slanting metal bars. It's a steep incline of steps nicknamed "piano keys" which push up and down, rolling the waste "downhill" as it burns. Above my head is a huge space covered in racks of narrow metal tubes that curl back on themselves and hang down from the distant roof like chandeliers from a cathedral ceiling. These suspended assemblies of tubes are called "pendants".

It surprised me that the gas burners which ignite the waste are a long way from the waste itself. The furnace is like an oven, but so hot that anything on it spontaneously combusts. Once lit, the burners switch off and the waste ignites itself in a continuous stream.

Of course, not everything is incinerated. At the bottom of the grate staircase is a pit called the ash discharger. Metal items, ash and rubble fall into this space, steaming hot and black. Ash and debris all fall between the 'piano keys' as they push the waste downhill. This ash is collected in "riddling" chutes and moved by hydraulic levers down towards the dischargers.

Clearing out the riddlings is a twice-daily job for the assistants. 'M' takes me to the space under the grate where these levers operate. It's hot, dark, and there are the noises of invisible hot objects falling into the chutes.

"Never look into these chutes directly, or you could get a face-full of ash" says M, pushing a long metal scraper into the chute.



"But you'll often find cash in there – coins don't burn and they fall through the grate bars."

At the other end, the hot ash is plunged into a tunnel of continuously recirculated water. This creates an air seal between the furnace and the outside world.

"The dischargers are always getting blocked", S tells me, standing ankle-deep in ash scraped from the tunnel. "Sometimes the ash is light, and just sits on top of the water. Then we get a build-up in the furnace, and we have to clear it out by hand."

At our feet are pieces of bulky metal that the discharger couldn't cope with: motor chassis, weight-lifting dumbbells, misshapen shopping trolleys. This kind of thing shouldn't end up in a black bin, but it often does.

Once the ash is through the dischargers it's hauled up by another hydraulic lever onto conveyor belts; soaking wet, heavy and still hot enough to steam. The welders show me a hole in the conveyor where this ash has battered and burned through the belt – they use

every shut-down to weld fresh steel plates over it.

M's job – rotated between three others – is to sweep and hose the ash conveyors each morning. The rollers beneath the belts clog up with wet ash, or are wrapped around with long pieces of scrap wire. He uses a power hose to wash ash into a collection bay. I take the hose from him for a while and the force of it pushes me back against a wall – I fall towards a railing when I let go of the trigger and crack up laughing.

"And now we squeegee the floor." M smiles "It's kinda satisfying. There's a feeling of pride in your work, when you've made it safe and clean, and everything functions."

Despite the power and complexity of the machines that make up the furnace, the system would fail without constant human attention. □

- Emma Rickman is an apprentice at a Combined Heat and Power plant in Sheffield.



## Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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# Sheffield Hallam strikes on workload

By Camila Bassi

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) are striking in a local dispute, for six days from 25 November, in parallel with national strikes. UCU activist Camila Bassi spoke to *Solidarity* about the dispute.

**Q: What's the background to the local dispute at SHU? What are the issues, what are the workers' demands?**

A: Our dispute is over unpaid work and stress. Specifically, changes to our academic work planning and the restructuring of our professional services have led to an unprecedented intensification of workloads and a crisis point in academic staff health and wellbeing. SHU records reveal dramatic increases of referrals to occupational health and the usage of the university counselling service by academic staff — just one indicator of the problem. In talking to members, it is clear that our workplace conditions are unsustainable.

Our demands are concrete, we are asking for: 20% of our work plans allocated to general academic duties, bringing us up to the sector average; a doubling of the time currently allocated to us for academic advising — a university benchmark role and promise to students of 1:1 academic and pastoral support which they have thus far not adequately resourced; an increase in the time we have to mark assign-

ments, from 10 minutes per 5 credits to 15 minutes; and finally, for the university to implement an academic work planning policy that is genuinely equitable and translatable to the hours that we actually work.

Our message to students is that our workplace conditions are your teaching and learning conditions. Our industrial struggle is to improve both.

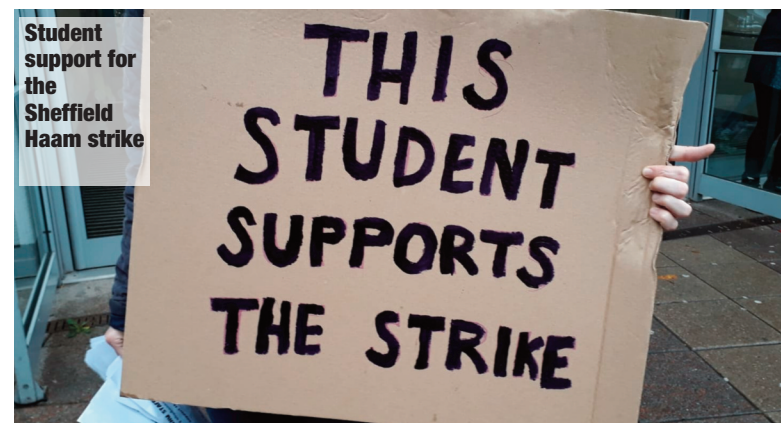
**Q: How does the dispute intersect with the national strikes?**

A: Pre-92 universities were balloted over pay and pensions. Post-92 universities were balloted over pay. We are one of a handful of the post-92 HE sector on strike alongside the pre-92 universities. The issue that pushed a critical mass of the pre-92 HE sector on strike is the long-standing dispute over their pension scheme, USS, namely the effective robbery of their delayed salaries.

What pushed SHU UCU on strike in the national dispute is our local dispute on unpaid work and stress. There are four pillars to the national pay dispute: pay inequality, job insecurity, rising workloads, and pay deflation (an almost 20% real wage cut over a decade).

**Q: How is the dispute being directed locally — via the branch, via a strike committee, or some other body?**

A: Our local dispute is being directed by our well-attended branch meetings. This is our democratic mandate and sovereign body. Our



branch committee of elected officers and reps currently forms our strike committee and runs the day-to-day of the dispute.

**Q: Are there links with students? What about other unions on campus?**

A: We have and continue to make efforts to engage with the elected representatives of SHU students' union. Officially, like the NUS, they are in support of our dispute, which means a lot to us. Other organic groups of students have emerged and are organising solidarity action on social media and on the picket lines. As academics, at the front line of the student experience, we care deeply about our students' education. The holistic politics of this dispute, which link workload intensification to zero hours contracts to not enough time to mark students' work, or prepare lectures, or support students, is what we as a union are talking to

students about. Again, our workplace conditions are their teaching and learning conditions — and our fight is to progress both.

**Q: What are the key lessons for other HE workers looking to spread this kind of action over local workload issues?**

A: We are leading the HE sector with our local industrial dispute on "workload intensification", and we have a 84.4% strike mandate. The strength of our strike mandate is because this is *the* local issue, long-standing and widespread. Any gains for our membership locally would be hope for members across the sector.

Our local struggle is part of a process that has already begun with the USS pensions dispute: members drawing connections, seeing the holistic picture, and saying "no more can we be shock absorbers for a broken higher education system, enough!" □

## Students back uni strikes

By Maisie Sanders

Student-worker solidarity campaigns have been set up at almost every striking university, and many student unions have voted to support the strikes, including several who did not support them in 2018.

Lancaster UCU said they had bigger numbers on the first day of this year's strike than their biggest day in 2018. They also had a visit from Hong Kong students in solidarity with the democracy movement. Sussex students and UCU members held a demo after the picket, with a dragon, fire engine and speeches from Jo Grady and Caroline Lucas. Many UCU branches and student groups are co-hosting "teach-outs".

Senior management at the University of Liverpool told students that joining picket lines was "unlawful" and would risk jeopardising international students' visas. Sheffield Hallam management asked students to fill out a form detailing which lectures had been cancelled due to the strike. After pressure from students on social

media and mass joke submissions, they removed a mandatory field asking students to name the lecturer responsible.

Manchester Student Union's General Secretary signed a joint statement with university management about minimising disruption during the strikes and urged students to cross picket lines to attend lectures. Brighton student union, who do not support the strikes, have prevented societies including the Labour Club from publicly supporting them too. "Unofficial" student solidarity on picket lines took place despite this.

NUS President Zamzam Ibrahim addressed a UCU rally in Manchester, and NUS as a whole have publicly declared support for the strike and sent resources to student unions. NUS is also backing a statement signed by groups such as Rent Strike, People and Planet, and local activist groups calling for vice chancellors and UUK to negotiate with UCU, management to prevent any docking of staff pay, threats or intimidation to striking staff, and to cancel the monitoring of international students' attendance of lectures during strike days.



This is good: it probably accounts for the increase in student union support for the strikes. But NUS have given no signs of call-outs for action, attempts to mobilise students outside of social media, or any plans to organise regional or national demonstrations and meetings.

The Student Left Network is hosting a student-worker solidarity national gathering on Saturday 30

November in Sheffield. We'll be discussing the politics of the strike and what's coming up next, coordinating action for the remaining three days of the strike and the later action-short-of-strike period, and debating how we should take the student-worker solidarity movement forward. □

• [bit.ly/sln-30n](https://bit.ly/sln-30n)



# “Driver Only” dispute spreads

By Ollie Moore

The announcement by rail union RMT of a sustained programme of strikes on West Midlands Trains and South Western Railway represents a significant escalation and expansion of the union’s protracted and hard-fought war against the imposition of “Driver Only Operation”.

On West Midlands Trains, guards struck on 16 November, with further strikes planned every Saturday up to 28 December. The strikes on West Midlands Trains are espe-

cially significant as this is first new Train Operating Company (TOC) to join the DOO strikes since they were spread to Arriva Rail North (Northern Rail) and Greater Anglia in 2017.

On South Western Railway, sustained strikes are planned from 2-11 December, 13-24 December, and 27 December-1 January, a significant escalation from previous strikes. SWR has sent a letter to all its guards claiming it is “entitled to recover the loss and damage it sustains as a result of you participating in the dispute”. This has angered

workers and strengthened their resolve.

Merseyrail was the TOC where guards’ strikes had perhaps the biggest impact, regularly shutting down the service. They were bolstered by near 100% solidarity from Merseyrail drivers, who admirably bucked the national trend of Aslef drivers crossing RMT picket lines.

The latest offer from Merseyrail, for which strikes planned in October were called off, retains guards on trains and maintains their control over the dispatch process. However, it also proposes to create

a two-tier workforce, by creating a new entry grade on worse terms and conditions.

Merseyrail guards, and their supporters amongst drivers, have struck repeatedly and effectively and forced a previously intransigent management into huge concessions. However their dispute ends, that achievement should be acknowledged and celebrated. But the solidarity and power they have developed has the potential not only to defend their conditions, but to ensure they can pass them on to future workers. □

# Posties still set for strike

By a London postal worker

People on the shop floor aren’t happy. Lots of people were looking forward to the strike, it was a chance to really stick it to our incompetent managers, which obviously now won’t happen as soon as we’d hoped.

The conversations I’ve had have ranged from feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness — “what’s the point of balloting if the courts will stop us anyway?” — to anger with Royal Mail for going to court in the first place.

Online, I’ve encountered a very small amount of people blaming

the CWU union’s social media campaign (“why did they have to make those videos of offices posting ballots?”) but these responses a very much a minority. The keenness to strike is still there, although not being able to strike over the busy Christmas period means we’ve lost a lot of leverage.

One big worry is that, if the appeal fails, our union will be forced to pay the costs of the court process. This will further discourage our union leadership from pursuing industrial action, and encourage Royal Mail, and other employers, to use the courts.

The judge who made the ruling

in the High Court stated it was in the public interest for the strike not to happen during the general election, as it would be too disruptive, which is disgraceful in my view. The whole point of strikes is to cause disruption. If we can’t do that, what’s the point?

The level of rank-and-file organisation varies from workplace to workplace, and seems particularly strong in some offices around Bristol and in the north west. In my office, we only had one gate meeting during the balloting process, which was conducted by senior officials in the union.

One of the biggest worries, is that

if the appeal fails as well, our union will be forced to fork the costs of the court process. This will further discourage our union leadership to engage in strike action, and encourage Royal Mail (as well as other big companies) to use the courts (worth noting that the judge who ruled on the decision, stated it was in best interests for strike not to happen during the general election. In my opinion this is a disgraceful thing to say, the whole point of strikes is disruption, if we can’t do that what’s the point?

Once the appeal has concluded, we have to re-ballot. We have no choice, it’s make or break. □

# PCS and the election



**John Moloney**

PCS has produced a pamphlet making the case for voting Labour in England and Wales, which has been distributed to members. We don’t want the “vote Labour” position to be passive; the union is using its resources to mobilise members to get out and cam-

paign. We’re targeting 40 seats in particular, either ones which have a large concentration of PCS members living in them, and/or where the Labour candidate has a particular connection to the union, for example two seats where the candidates are former PCS activists.

Each Regional Committee in England and Wales has been asked to mobilise PCS members to can-

vas, and full-time officers have been asked to volunteer. PCS will also be part of a wider trade union campaign day on 10 December, where unions across the movement will be mobilising to campaign for a Labour vote.

There are many Labour policies and commitments which will have a direct and positive impact on PCS members’ lives at work. Although it wasn’t in the manifesto, Labour has previously committed to introducing national pay bargaining in the civil service. We also welcome the pledge to increase public sector pay by 5%, and to raise the minimum wage to £10, with no youth rates. However, our own policy and demand will continue to be for a 10% pay increase in the civil service, which we’ll continue to campaign for, including industrially if necessary, whoever wins the election.

We also welcome the clause in the manifesto around outsourcing, although we want to push that policy much further. The manifesto says Labour “will end the current presumption in favour of outsourcing public services and introduce a presumption in favour of insourcing”, but committing to end a “pre-

sumption” falls considerably short of a firm commitment to end and reverse outsourcing, guaranteeing direct, in-house employment for all currently outsourced workers. That’s the promise made by numerous Labour shadow ministers, including John McDonnell, Laura Pidcock, Rebecca Long-Bailey, and others, when they’ve spoken on picket lines during outsourced PCS members’ strikes, and that’s the position we’ll continue to fight for and demand.

Labour has also committed to ending the restrictions on access to the workplace and the cuts to facility time, as well as to repeal at least some anti-union laws, which will obviously help with our organising efforts, but a left-wing Labour government should go much further and commit to abolishing all anti-union laws and replace them with positive legislation enshrining the right to strike.

That could be crucial for PCS members, as we gear up towards a possible planned national ballot for industrial action on pay in 2020. □

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of PCS, writing here in a personal capacity.

# Schedule slips on Tube pay

By Jay Dawkey

Tube union RMT continues to prepare to ballot its members on London Underground (LU) over pay and conditions. A policy passed by the union’s Executive Committee set the end of November as a target to have the ballot ready, a target which will now likely be missed. The rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* commented:

“The longer our unions go without launching ballots over LU pay and conditions, the more momentum we hand to the bosses.

“Delaying only benefits the employer. RMT announced an aspiration to have its ballot ready by the end of November; members have a right to expect these aspirations to be followed through.

“Negotiations have secured important concessions but it’s workers’ action, our ability to stop the job, that will force real movement from the bosses. The same goes for ongoing issues on stations and revenue over workplace violence and understaffing. There’s a strong mood across the job for a fightback over these issues, and several branches, and the RMT London Transport Regional Council, have now passed policies calling for disputes and ballots.

“We need to get moving. [London mayor Sadiq] Khan faces re-election in May 2020, and if we’re not in a position early in the new year to announce a programme of strikes leading up to that election, we’ll be missing a golden opportunity.”

A planned strike on London Underground’s Victoria Line on 27-28 November was called off after LU bosses threatened legal action, claiming that by raising more current issues in negotiations, reps had invalidated the legal basis of the dispute, which could only refer to issues as they were when the ballot commenced, several months ago. □

# Outsourced workers’ strikes

By Ollie Moore

Outsourced workers at University College London will strike again on 4 December, demanding direct employment and equality with other workers.

The workers previously struck on 19 November, in what their union, the Independent Workers’ union of Great Britain (IWGB), estimated was the largest strike of outsourced education sector workers in British history.

The 4 December strike will see them take action alongside aca-

demic and teaching staff in the University and College Union (UCU), striking in a national dispute over pay, pensions, and workload.

Outsourced hospital porters employed by Sodexo at St. Mary’s Hospital in Paddington, west London, are striking from 25-29 November, and from 9-13 December, demanding in-house employment with the NHS.

The workers are members of the United Voices of the World union (UVW). □

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## Labour must back UCU strike!

By Ollie Moore

Higher Education workers in the University and College Union (UCU) are striking from 25 November to 4 December, in a national dispute over workload, pay, and pensions. A striker in Cambridge spoke to *Solidarity*:

"This was my first day on a picket as a striking worker. I've previously only picketed in solidarity. Although I ignored most of the draconian anti-strike laws, the ridiculousness of wearing an arm band, and having specified numbers at all times really sank in. Despite these being less significant than many other attacks on worker action, it really helped underline the role played by governments over the last few decades in minimising industrial struggle. Let's

scrap every law trying to weaken strike action.

"The numbers on my picket were greater than the same location last February and solid across the rest of Cambridge. Although a couple of locations fewer were running, we still had eight different departmental picket lines, and some hosting more than 30 people. Alongside student support and roving pickets, easily upwards of 200 people were involved around the city.

"The pickets were followed by a town centre rally – this became a tradition at the last strike and is being adopted again. I found these to be useful for morale and to keep updated on national strike news. Given this was only day one, less was said about the latter, but the daily reports fed back on the nego-

tiating committee progress – a process which surely should be held in the open, and broadcast to UCU members.

"Student activists then organised a march through the town, along with a demo outside Old Schools, symbolically the focus of direct action and occupations during heightened political disputes at the university.

### STRATEGY

"Our branch held a meeting afterwards to discuss further demands and our strategy for the rest of the strike, including the demand to finally get our branch recognised by the university. With over 1,600 members, and possibly greater than 150 active, this surely will come soon if we decide to fight.

"Having themed strike days has

provided clear agitational focuses for the next seven days – covering issues such as casualisation, the gender pay gap, and supporting migrant workers. Friday will start with morning pickets, and then merge in town with the youth climate strikers. I've made leaflets advertising our picket as a mobilising point to march into town for those in West Cambridge.

"The September climate strike drew over 3,000 into the city without coinciding with any supportive industrial disputes. Even higher numbers could and should be present this time."

Another UCU activist told us: "Most reports I've seen so far are saying the strikes are even bigger than in 2018, and some student unions that didn't support the strikes last time have changed their

minds. There's been a mix of responses from university bosses, ranging from the Vice Chancellor joining the picket line in Bristol, to summarily evicting strikers from the university chaplaincy on the grounds that campus buildings are private property."

Many campuses saw large rallies and student presences on picket lines. Some university bosses went to considerable lengths to intimidate students out of supporting the strike. A letter from the university administration to students at the University of Liverpool threatened: "Any international students who choose not to cross picket lines... risk jeopardising their visa."

□

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