



For a
workers'
government

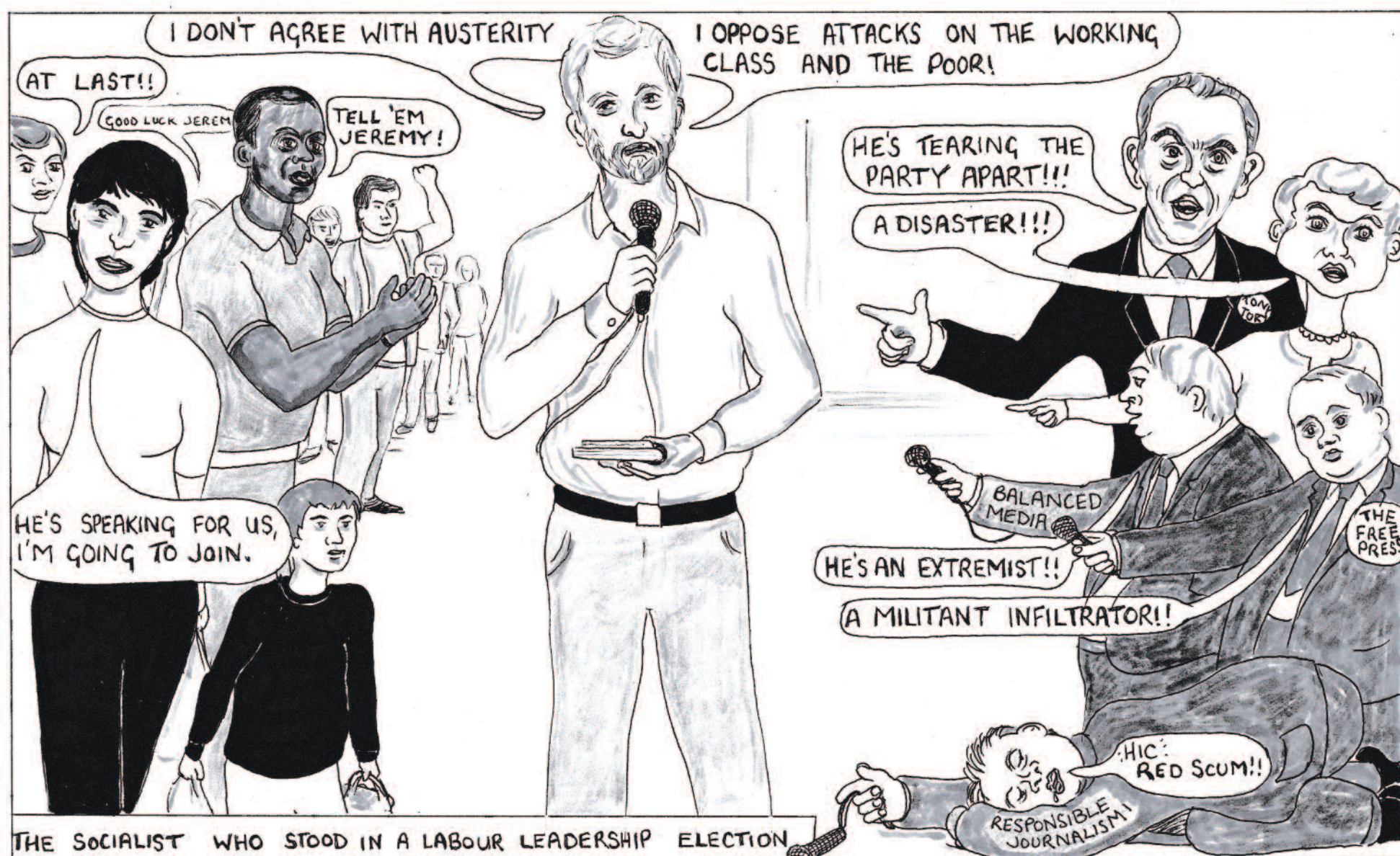
Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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www.workersliberty.org

BACK CORBYN'S CAMPAIGN FIGHT FOR WORKING-CLASS POLITICS



• TAX THE RICH • EXPROPRIATE THE BANKS

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism 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 has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. 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.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Contact us:

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Tories lie about 24/7 NHS

By Connor Peters

The new Tory government has wasted little time in stepping up its attacks on the NHS.

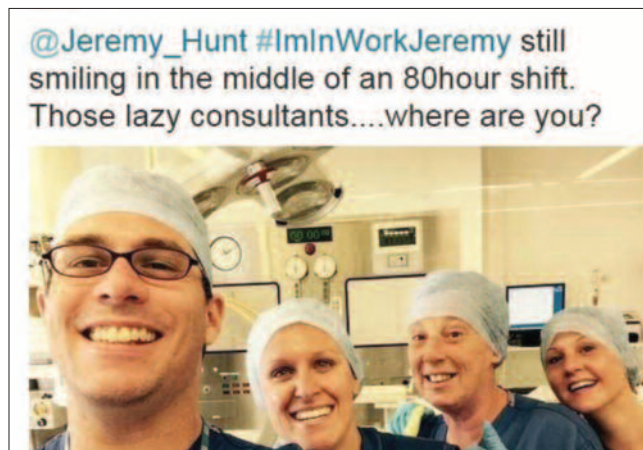
Jeremy Hunt (Secretary of State for Health) has announced plans for a 24/7 NHS and all-out war on hospital consultants.

This prompted a furious backlash from doctors across the country. And the hashtag #iminworkjeremy is reminding Mr Hunt that he *already* oversees a comprehensive 24-hour, 7-day week National Health Service.

The backdrop to this latest fight between the government and NHS workers is the recent recommendations by the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Board. The British Medical Association walked away from discussions with the government over the renegotiation of doctors contracts last year.

The recommendations were meant to be a negotiating point between the position of the BMA and that of the government. However they have some clear flaws and have been used by the Secretary of State to position himself as the patient champion against nasty workshy consultants. The reality couldn't be further from the truth.

The recommendations are particularly damaging for trainee doctors, effectively removing them from the protection of the European working time direc-



tive, which prevents junior doctors working 100 plus hours a week, as used to be the case. The "regular working day" would become 7am to 10pm, Monday to Saturday. The amount of holiday is also to be reduced.

A group of young doctors walking zombie like around the hospital are not going to be in a position to make good clinical judgments; patient care will suffer.

Non-emergency surgery doesn't always take place over the weekend for the very good reason that if tired doctors perform surgery they make more mistakes!

Jeremy Hunt seems determined not just to go to war with doctors but with all the statistics that prove he wrong as well.

There is an underlying hypocrisy to the whole saga. At the same time that the Secretary of State for Health is claiming to fight

the good fight against doctors, he is demanding that £20 billion of savings are made, pilots of seven day GP services are ending because they are too expensive, don't reduce demand on A&E and patients don't turn up for appointments on Sundays!

There will be no more staff, no more resources and no more money under a Tory government.

Everyone who works in the NHS wants good quality, effective care, especially at weekends. This is why Jeremy Hunt's claim has caused so much anger.

The focus of his demands — that more consultants be available — shows the elitism at the heart of the conservative project. No mention of the porters, cleaners, ward clerks, healthcare assistants, nurses, physios, occupational therapists, laboratory staff, radiographers, catering staff and everyone else that make a hospital run

smoothly.

Underneath it all is a desire to undermine NHS services. The NHS exists despite our current neo-liberal capitalist economy. For over 60 years it has been a shining example of how solidarity and equality can make our lives healthier.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) created a legislative framework for dismantling the NHS. Now attacks are focused on workers pay and conditions; it's all about making the service more attractive to private providers. The next stage will be the reduction of free at the point of use care, and the introduction of co-payments and an insurance model.

In a little noticed move on the 9 July the Under Secretary for NHS Productivity seemed to announce to the House of Lords an independent inquiry into the funding model of our NHS. If the government has its way it will strip our NHS bare and then throw the scraps to its friends in the private sector, safe in the knowledge that those who can afford to pay will be okay.

A Twitter campaign has shown the strength of feeling within the health service, but it is not nearly enough on its own.

Concerted, coordinated action from the trade union movement is what is needed. And the people tweeting #iminworkjeremy are that movement.

Fence Sitter

They're cutting help to those in need —
What case to vote against?
This is a tricky one indeed
I'm staying on the fence

Scrap targets for child poverty?
My mind is wracked with doubt
Perhaps, no — maybe, probably —
I'm sitting this one out

What's wrong with capping benefits?
Could someone please explain?
There's good things, bad things — call it quits
I think I'll just abstain

Yes, voting No to welfare cuts
Would lead to Labour losing!
So we must show no heart or guts —
My, this is so confusing!

It's been explained to me at last
The logic's mighty fine
To be against, we let it pass —
I'm going to toe the line



Looking the other way. Three out of four Labour leadership candidates abstained on cuts to tax credits. Only Corbyn voted against

The fallout for a hungry kid?
Now that just leaves me cold
What impact on my Leader's bid?
I'm doing what I'm told

The Whip's my master and my guide
We're called the Opposition
But when it's time to take a side
Abstention's our position

Of course I'll still expect my flock
To vote me in again
On polling day I'll be quite shocked
When voters too abstain

Janine Booth — www.janinebooth.com

Cameron's hypocrisy on extremism

By Pat Murphy

On 20 July 20 David Cameron spoke to a selected audience at an academy school in Birmingham about tackling violent extremism in Britain.

While there were fleeting references to the far right and Islamophobia, the main focus of his speech was the extremism that led, among other things, to hundreds of young people leaving their homes in Britain to join Daesh (Islamic State). The speech was fundamentally about *Islamist extremism*.

Cameron's approach to tackling extremism was, as he claimed, based on four core principles. His government would confront the ideology, tackle non-violent as well as violent extremism, embolden and empower reforming and moderate Muslims and build a more cohesive society.

Confronting the ideology means challenging the mythologies perpetuated by extreme Islamists (whether violent or not). For instance, the idea that western foreign policy amounts to a war on Islam or that there is a Jewish/Zionist conspiracy against Muslims.

It was while talking about this first principle, however, that Cameron raised the need to champion what he called "alternative values", defining them as free speech, freedom of the press and sexual and other equalities.

But his commitment to free speech as a value seemed to be in tension with the determination to tackle non-violent extremism ("groups that may not advocate violence but which promote other parts of the extremist narrative").

To embolden the moderates he promised to work with those within Muslim communities who wanted to promote a mainstream, tolerant, liberal narrative.

On building a more cohesive society, the Tory leader promised actions to boost employment opportunities, especially for women and support for learning English.

How any of this would be done was left unexplained except for a vague commitment to avoid the mistakes of the past when "funding was simply handed over to self-appointed community leaders who sometimes used the money in divisive ways".



Not "one nation", but a very divided and unequal nation

The initial reaction to Cameron's speech was fairly predictable. And a central problem with most contributions to this debate is that they emerge from their own preconceived ideas and prejudices. Hence a lot of the hostile reaction didn't engage with the speech at all, preferring simply to recycle generic responses to any attempt to critique Islamist terror.

The "root causes" brigade put forward once again the idea that the Iraq War explained jihadism.

A number of Muslim commentators accused Cameron of stigmatising their religion and thereby adding to the threat of alienation and radicalisation.

Clare Fox of the Institute of Ideas (descended from a weird sect, the Revolutionary Communist Party) complained that Cameron was allowing the terrorists to win by threatening free speech on campuses. Cameron suggested colleges ban extremist speakers.

There is something to be said for all these reactions but, for the most part, they are beside the point. The central atrocity in modern jihadism, 9/11, predated Afghanistan and Iraq. And of the millions of people vehemently opposed those wars, all but a tiny handful have managed to avoid the impulse to murder innocent fellow humans.

Cameron was actually careful to distinguish between the extremists and mainstream Islam ("it cannot be said clearly enough: this extremist ideology is not true Islam. I have said it myself many, many times, and it's absolutely right to do so. And I'll say it again today"). And he at no point called for the banning of non-violent extremist speakers.

The comparison he made was with Holocaust denier David Irving. When he is invited to speak at university campuses, said Cameron, "they (the university authorities) don't deny his right to speak but they do challenge what he says". The implication being that we need a more robust approach to these people, seeing them as morally and politically analogous to the far right and denouncing them.

Even if it is Cameron saying it, that appears to me to be entirely right.

So the well-rehearsed reactions to Cameron miss the real problem with his speech and his approach, which is its hypocrisy and lack of seriousness.

BUDGET

One week after the speech, for example, the Runnymede Trust reported that the first budget of the new Tory government would make millions of minority ethnic people poorer at a faster rate than their white counterparts.

The report also found that one of the worst affected groups would be British Muslims. There is not the slightest chance that the economic and social policies of Cameron's government will "build a more cohesive society".

Cameron says in his speech that "It cannot be right that people can grow up and go to school and hardly ever come into meaningful contact with people from other backgrounds and faiths". Meanwhile his government continue with their obsessive promotion of free schools which has seen the number and proportion of religiously-controlled schools expand dramatically.

His promises to help

women from minority communities to learn English must have had teachers of English as a Second Language tearing their hair out. ESOL courses have seen the worst and deepest cuts in education spending. As has the whole adult and further education sector. The financial and ideological assault on local authorities undermines at a stroke any possibility of creating this more cohesive society Cameron cynically promises.

And the hypocrisy doesn't stop with domestic policy. In the section of his speech on confronting ideology, Cameron promises to give a platform to "the UK's Syrian, Iraqi and Kurdish communities, so they canspeak out against the carnage ISIL is conducting in their countries". Less than a week later his government is supporting (or complicit in) the Turkish government's ruthless bombing of the very Kurds who are in the frontline of the fight against Daesh.

The results of this hypocrisy for Muslim communities will be bad. It is likely that they will experience the government's new approach to extremism as a security clampdown that targets their young people.

The promised support and empowerment is unlikely to be delivered but the surveillance and repression will. The recent pattern of local agencies (schools, councils) overreacting under pressure to avoid the blame for the next atrocity will continue.

Cameron is not wrong to see Islamist terror as a problem, or to see the links between the violent and the non-violent form. He is also not wrong to say that a more cohesive and integrated society would help undercut the attraction of simple but reactionary cults. But the neo-liberal economic and social policies which are at the absolute core of his government are incapable of creating such a society. On the contrary they magnify and exacerbate the levels of inequality and alienation we already endure.

It's the job of the socialist left to create that society but we can only do it if we too challenge religious fundamentalism and violence and take the side of democratic, secular forces within Muslim and other communities.



Glasgow Free Pride retracts ban on drag performers

QNews



By Kate Harris

"Free Pride" is an event being organised by LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning, intersex, asexual, other) people in Glasgow in response to the commercialisation of the Pride Glasgow.

It is a two day "festival" and ticketed event, with prices from £8 for a day ticket to £55 for a "VIP" pass —with separate toilets and bars for those who can afford this price tag! Worse, Pride Glasgow has a vomit-inducing "happiness" theme with the Twitter hashtag (of course there's a hashtag) #behappy.

Trying to reclaim Pride so it is both political and accessible is entirely admirable and worthwhile. But given how much oppression LGBT+ people still face both in Britain and around the world, it is sickening of Pride Glasgow to turn Pride into a corporate-sponsored, expensive, happiness festival.

I would also implore Free Pride Glasgow's organisers to protest against the main event and march in the streets as well as holding a separate event. We should make our anger heard.

Free Pride Glasgow were, however, entirely wrong to ban drag artists from performing on stage. The justification — that drag makes some trans and gender-questioning people feel "uncomfortable" — was extremely weak and stems from basing political decisions on listening to whoever is deemed the most oppressed (by whose standards, who knows) rather than thought-through considerations and arguments.

Many trans and gender-questioning people are drag artists. Many are fans of drag. Granted, some drag is not only offensive: some

drag is racist, some drag is lesbophobic, some drag is transphobic as hell. But drag, as the organisers later stated after changing their policy, is a varied art form. Drag can also be incredibly transgressive, politically astute, hilarious, serious, moving and important.

Free Pride's reasoning still troubles me though. In their recent statement, they write, "The most useful comments and advice that we have been sent from around the world have been from trans people of colour and working class trans people who support drag and have let us know that, without it, they might not have had access to trans/queer culture at all. We are extremely grateful to those individuals who have contacted us to explain this."

I think it's fantastic that Free Pride have changed their minds based on arguments from our community. But it seems to fetishise the views of the most oppressed in the hierarchy of oppression. Prostrating ourselves to whoever we think is the most oppressed is not a sensible way to do politics.

Practically speaking, people disagree vehemently and a minority view within an oppressed group is not necessarily the wrong view — nor is it necessarily the right view. Further, we should seek clarity in our ideas, informed by a culture of discussion and debate.

Finally, while it's wrong to say or do things in order just to recruit people to a movement, we shouldn't seek to exclude people: in many places around the world, we are actually losing the battle on LGBT+ rights and need each other's support.

• Free Pride Glasgow is being held on 22 August at Glasgow's School of Art. For further details, go to www.facebook.com/freeprideglasgow

The problem with Bernie Sanders

Eric Lee



The Bernie Sanders campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination is probably the most exciting development in US politics since the 1930s. And it's not a coincidence that both the resurgent left of that decade and the Sanders phenomenon have followed the spectacular economic crashes of 1929 and 2008.

The Sanders campaign is a phenomenon. He's not only rising rapidly in the polls, posing a clear threat to Hillary Clinton, but he's raising millions of dollars in small donations and filling arenas with supporters — including in some surprising places, like Phoenix, Arizona.

A self-described democratic socialist and a former member of the Young Peoples Socialist League (YPSL), Sanders was influenced by an early visit to a kibbutz in Israel in the 1960s, and by the model of Scandinavian social democracy. He's proposed a number of radical reforms that put him far to the left not only of any other mainstream presidential candidate this year, but to the left of anyone in living memory.

There's not been a campaign like this since Norman Thomas led the Socialist Party to its second-best result ever in 1932, polling just under 900,000 votes. (The Communist Party back then polled only a fraction of the Socialist vote.)

But there's a problem with Sanders' call for a "political revolution" in America. It's not going to happen without organisation. And a presidential election campaign is not an organisation.

In 2008 Hillary Clinton ran for president and built a huge base of supporters, coming close to defeating Obama for the

Democratic nomination. She managed to sign up about 2.5 million supporters. Keeping in mind that Clinton has always had money and staff, and always intended to make another try for the presidency (as she's now doing), the recent *New York Times* story about her campaign contained this stunning fact: of those 2.5 million names, only 100,000 turned out to be valid email addresses just eight years later.

Hillary Clinton managed to lose 96% of her supporters' contact details in just eight years. And she's struggling to raise money from individual small donors, which Sanders is doing exceptionally well.

That's what happens when you run a presidential campaign every four or eight years. You can't sustain the organisation, and you lose valuable contact details from people who clearly support you and your ideas.

Even worse than Clinton is the example of John Edwards, who ran an unashamedly social democratic campaign in 2008, far to the left of both Clinton and Obama. Of the hundreds of thousands of people who signed up to support his agenda for change, there is nothing left at all.

Bernie Sanders will understand all of this. On the wall of his office in the US Senate is a framed photo of the legendary American Socialist Eugene V Debs. Debs, as Sanders knows, founded one organisation after another in his life, starting with railway workers, and continuing with the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party.

That party for all its flaws managed to build a nationwide organisation with hundreds of elected officials, thousands of local branches, and hundreds of local and national publications. Though the party had a "near death experience" in the 1920s, it was still around — if crippled and weak — in time for the Great Depression, and its revival.

There is nothing like this today in the US. The last remain-

ing survivors of Debs' and Thomas' party helped found the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) more than 40 years ago. But DSA has not thrived, and never achieved its goal of creating a powerful democratic socialist presence in the country.

There needs to be such an organisation, whether it's a socialist party, or a labour party, or even something like DSA, but with real clout. Without those things, electoral campaigns become meaningless expressions every few years of protest or hope — and not sustained movements for social change.

So what happens now? The most likely thing is that Sanders will wage a good fight, and then Hillary Clinton will capture the Democratic nomination. When that happens, Sanders himself and most of his supporters will support Clinton, because the alternative of someone like Donald Trump winning the presidency is truly terrifying.

But a second Clinton presidency will almost certainly disappoint most of those who voted for it, just as the first did, and some will grow disillusioned and withdraw from politics. This may be particularly true with young people for whom the Sanders campaign is their first taste of politics.

Sanders is calling for a "political revolution", and for giving the "billionaire class" (as he calls it) a good kicking.

But revolutions take time, and even the lengthy presidential campaign in America is not long enough.

What America needs is a mass party of the left. This can be built inside the Democratic party or outside of it. But it cannot be replaced by a presidential campaign, no matter how charismatic the candidate or how compelling the message.

I doubt very much if anyone in the Sanders campaign is giving any thought to this at all. And that's the problem with Bernie Sanders.

Bill Hunter 1920-2015

Bill Hunter died on 9 July. He was a leading member of the early British Trotskyist group, the Revolutionary Communist Party, later a member of the organisations led by Gerry Healy, but joining the faction which opposed and split from Healy in the 1980s. Sean Matgamna remembers Bill Hunter.

Insofar as it is possible to separate personal qualities from politics, Bill Hunter was a model revolutionary: selfless, dedicated, always striving to be "objective" — that is, not to let personal feelings intrude on political attitudes and decisions — willing to pay whatever personal price his politics demanded of him.

When I first encountered him, early in 1960, I thought he looked the part, with a long ascetic face (after a near-fatal car crash in 1962, his face had to be reconstructed), spare frame and his general air of driving political seriousness. Without these qualities no revolutionary movement is possible. They are not enough, of course. Bill's political life was a tragic proof of that.

I have a fond memory of Bill from the early 60s. I came upon him in Manchester waiting in the little van he drove — he was Lancashire-Cheshire organiser for the Socialist Labour League — deeply engrossed in *The ABC of Communism*, the early 1920s book by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky. It was perhaps the sixth time he'd read it, he told me; he reread "the books" of the movement frequently.

He'd been a Trotskyist then for at least 20 years. The title he put on his autobiography, *Lifelong Apprentice* summed up his attitude. It was the right attitude.

• The next issue of *Solidarity* will carry a longer obituary.



Bill Hunter's self-portrait

Automation, deskilling and safety

Letter



Martin Thomas' criticisms of my review of Nicholas Carr's book on automation (*Solidarity* 370) focus on two related issues: the deskilling effects of automation and my rejection of the full automation of safety-critical systems through e.g. driverless cars or pilotless planes. On deskilling, I think there is one misunderstanding and one difference.

Firstly, I do not "want to have all traditional skills kept in general use" indefinitely. I am not proposing we return to handloom weaving or horse-drawn carriages. But I doubt that Martin as a maths teacher believes that his students should not know their times tables because they can now use a calculator. The point I — with Carr — was making is that automated devices that are easy to use lead quickly to the atrophy or loss of skills which may be important in everyday life, in certain necessarily skilled tasks or, at the most extreme point, in certain fundamental human functions and capacities.

Martin argues that new skills will replace old skills and that we should therefore not worry too much. This ignores that the shift may lead to the loss of valuable knowledge and experience that may be important in particular labour processes.

One example is the shift in control of industrial production processes such as the production of chemicals that results from computerisation. In place of hands-on physical control and direct knowledge of the process, the operator of a computerised process is seated in front of a screen in which the process is represented symbolically through software. The operator is only able to interact at one or more remove from the real process and only by means of the tools the system designer has provided to manipulate the representation on the screen, leading to a decline in skills associated with direct interaction. The operator becomes totally dependent on the software.

This can have dangerous effects in humans' ability to control the automated task (and also on job satisfaction). It may be, as Martin writes, that most deaths in the US take place in private non-automated planes but Carr describes several incidents in which hundreds of people died as a result of pi-

lots either misinterpreting the messages from the system controlling the plane or having lost the ability to respond to them correctly. As systems become more complex and integrated, they become less transparent to the users especially in emergencies. The human may either not be allowed to intervene or lack the skill to do so.

Even the most highly automated tasks require scope for human intervention or override. Martin is quick to point out the deficiencies and inconsistencies of humans — pilots can be "inattentive, distracted, unwell, drunk, sleepy" — but does not list any of the limitations, dangers or deficiencies of automated systems based on software. Software is always a model of a partial slice of the world and there will always be contingencies it has no ways of dealing with. Software testing can never be 100% effective once programs are of any size. Software also has to assume certain ways of human working that may not correspond to the way people actually do their job. In large systems, neither the designers nor the programmers may have a detailed understanding of how the system as a whole works.

These problems can be mitigated, but not overcome, and it may be that we would accept in many cases a reasonable statistical likelihood that something will work; is that true of pilotless planes, though? There are choices and socialists should not have the default position that machines are superior to humans (or vice versa). These choices include how humans and machines should interact and an assessment of what types of skill and knowledge are maintained or how they should be modified in automation.

Where there is little skill to start with and the worker already functions almost as an extension of the machine, there may be little worth preserving skill and automation can be as extensive as is safe and feasible. But sometimes it is necessary to take conscious measures to ensure certain skills do remain, ranging from teaching times tables to ensuring that those surgeons, who Martin assures us will retain manual skills despite the superior performance of robots, receive a practical training.

We need to assess individual technologies critically, uncovering the social, economic and technical choices and aims they embody before deciding whether they should be accepted, rejected or modified to be more compatible with our aims. As I said "Another automation is possible", but it's also necessary.

Bruce Robinson, Manchester

Back Corbyn, fight for working-class politics!

The huge support for Jeremy Corbyn's campaign for Labour leader is a reminder that what seems like an overwhelmingly dominant right-wing "consensus" in bourgeois politics can be limited and unstable.

It shows that large numbers of people, including working-class and young people, still want a politics that is different to, and to the left of, the consensus of neo-liberalism — that the "market" must rule, the welfare state must be pushed back and getting rich is the best thing to aspire to in life.

Workers' Liberty supporters are active in the Corbyn campaign in many areas of the country, in the trade unions, the Labour Party, Young Labour and the student movement. We urge everyone who wants to strengthen the left to join the party or register as a supporter to vote for Corbyn, and fight to make the biggest possible progress for working-class and socialists politics. But Workers' Liberty will also be arguing for a renewal of those politics.

CLASS

Some on the left — people who have been demoralised by the dominance of right-wing capitalist ideology, or grown up in a period when working-class struggle is not very strong or visible — have argued that a left politics based on class is either no longer viable or effective. That is wrong.

First of all, as far as the employers who rule our society are concerned, the class struggle has not disappeared. They are highly "class conscious", acutely aware of their collective identity and interests, and organised to ensure working-class people are low paid or impoverished and that unions are seriously limited in their power to defend workers.

To counter this, the largest possible numbers of workers — teachers and train drivers, cleaners and social workers, factory and office workers, IT workers and childminders — must become class-conscious and organised too. That is how big changes, like workers' rights, the welfare state and NHS, and even the vote, were won in the past; it is how progress can be made now and in the future.

Elemental conflict in the workplace between bosses and workers over wages, conditions, etc., helps drive the process of social progress, but the building of self-conscious working class political organisations is the only way to really make progress. And those organisations will not appear overnight, they will not get built unless left-wing people and socialists intervene to make it happen.

The idea that in the past all or most workers were automatically class conscious, (and ready to build organisations for



political change), but now that distinct working-class consciousness is no longer possible doesn't add up. Throughout the history of capitalism the working class has always been divided along various lines and, at least to some degree, dominated by various bourgeois ideas. There have always been working-class Tories for instance. There have been ups and downs, steps forwards and steps backwards. The ebbs and flows were dependent on the state of working-class organisation, decisively political organisation.

Constituting the working class as a conscious, united force requires strong and consistent anti-capitalist political ideas and organisation.

The weakening of working-class consciousness today is a result of a vicious class political project by those with power and wealth, and the consequent defeats for the labour movement. Seriously reversing those defeats requires building up working-class political consciousness in the labour movement and the wider society. Success for the Corbyn campaign will give us all confidence. That's good, but socialists should see the campaign as a fresh start, as a way to begin to renew socialist political ideas.

SOCIALISM

All this implies different politics from those argued by the mainstream of the Corbyn campaign.

Those politics are radical compared to the Labour right and Corbyn should be supported for taking a strong stand against cuts, for migrants' rights, etc. There are more radical note in the campaign — a vision of a different society and how to get there — but this is submerged. Socialists need to turn up the volume.

If we don't formulate and push the "big ideas" of socialism, in order to challenge the big ideas of the ruling class, ideas which are pushed non-stop, every day, we will not be as effective as we can be even in immediate defensive struggles. Socialist ideas are necessary to develop working-class policies that have force and clarity.

To get the maximum impact in this campaign, we need to argue, as clearly and loudly as possible, for socialism as a society in which the exploiting class is abolished (as a class) and the means of producing wealth, the offices and factories and

corporations, are owned collectively by the community and run for the common good.

EMERGENCY PLAN

Socialism will only become possible when a solid majority of the working class, and the people, are convinced of replacing capitalism and ready to make it happen.

A Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn after the next election, say, could not implement socialism if it wanted to. What it could do is implement strong measures in the interests of the working class, measures to weaken the capitalists, shift the balance of power and help workers struggle. It could be, at least to some extent, a workers' government.

The alternative to an Alexis Tsipras-style collapse, is moving boldly to implement an "emergency plan" of anti-capitalist measures in the interests of the majority, like:

- Scrapping all anti-trade union laws;
- Public ownership of the banks and heavy taxation of the rich;
- Stopping and reversing cuts, stopping and reversing privatisation, rebuilding public services;
- A decent wage or benefits for all, abolish poverty and attack inequality;
- Stopping deportation and detention of migrants, repealing anti-immigration laws;
- Public ownership of and investment in renewable energy, transport etc to tackle climate change.

Corbyn supporters should take up bold campaigns around these kinds of positive pro-working class measures, moving away from general "anti-austerity" agitation.

LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY

The call from right-wing Labour MP John Mann to suspend the leadership election in order to stop Corbyn is a reminder, if we needed it, of the New Labour machine's total contempt for democracy.

Even if Corbyn is elected, such people will not hesitate to undermine party decisions and democracy (and the party's electoral chances) in order to unfairly take back what they have lost in a democratic fight.

The left should campaign for a thoroughgoing democratisation of party and labour movement structures, including making the nomination procedure for leadership elections more open, replacing Policy Forums by a genuinely sovereign decision-making conference, and making it much easier to replace councillors and MPs. We need to hold to account those who vote for cuts, who refuse to fight the Tories and who spit on the movement's democracy — political representatives as well as union leaders!

At the same time we should demand more democracy in society. We want a democratic federal republic, with a re-empowered local government, more frequent elections, abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.

Whether Corbyn wins or loses, all these struggles demand a renewed left, including in the Labour Party. If you are convinced by our arguments, work with and join Workers' Liberty to help make that happen.

Corbyn and the Middle East: the hypocrisy of the right, a challenge for the left

What should the left say about Jeremy Corbyn calling Hamas and Hezbollah his "friends"?

www.workersliberty.org/node/25380

Help us raise £15,000!

Every year Workers' Liberty organises a summer camp, four days socialising and learning about socialism in the beautiful yorkshire countryside.

This year's summer camp takes place on the 20-23 August at Height Gate Farm, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire.

Learning about socialism does not have to mean sitting in stuffy university rooms. The left has long neglected the sort of "socialist infrastructure" of cultural and social events, film showings, support networks and outings practiced by the socialists on the late 19th century. Workers' Liberty's summer camp is an opportunity to get some "socialist culture".

Putting on summer camp costs us money, to hire the barn, buy food and transport materials. You can help us put on the event by coming to the event and buying your ticket now.

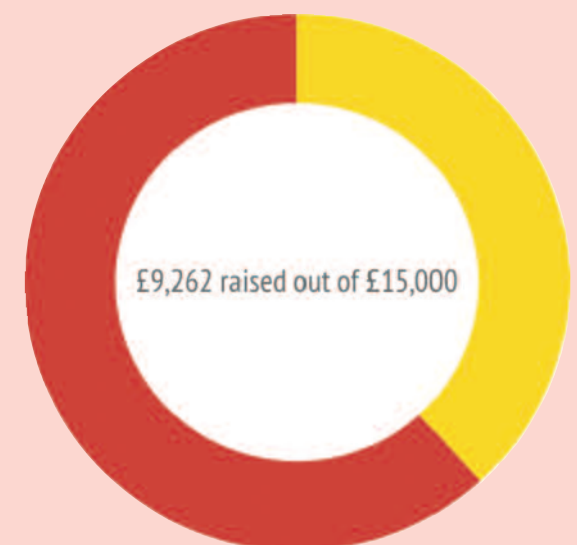
You can find out more information and buy tickets at workersliberty.org/summercamp

Whether or not you can come to summer camp please consider:

- Getting a subscription to our weekly newspaper, Solidarity — workersliberty.org/subscribe
- Taking out a monthly standing order.
- Making a one-off donation
- Organising a fundraising event in your local area
- Committing to do a sponsored activity and asking others to sponsor you
- Buying some of our books, posters, autocollants or pamphlets

For information on standing orders or how to donate visit workersliberty.org/donate For more ideas and information on fundraising visit workersliberty.org/fundraising

Thanks this week to Tom, David and Janine. So far we have raised £9,262.



What's in the new Memorandum?

On 15 July Tsipras won a vote in the Greek parliament to approve his deal, a third Memorandum. Red Network, an alliance of socialist organisations that is a leading force in Syriza's Left Platform, distributed this leaflet on the day of the parliamentary vote explaining what's in the new Memorandum. The text was translated and published by the International Socialist Organisation, socialistworker.org.

"A LIST of atrocities." That is how the German magazine Der Spiegel described the new agreement.

"Tsipras submitted to 'mental waterboarding'" read the headline of the Guardian. Tsipras was like "a beaten dog" in Brussels, according to Bloomberg. These are the comments inspired by a humiliating agreement of extreme social cruelty and colonialist character. It is telling that the measures that will be immediately submitted to parliament are not the entire Memorandum, but only a "down payment" in order to secure financing. The complete Memorandum will be agreed to in a new, exhausting and humiliating round of discussions, which will last up to a month!

What is included in the agreement?

1. The IMF does not leave. Greece is committed to ask for the "support" of the bloodthirsty organisation from March 2016 (when the current financing agreement with the IMF expires), in questions of supervision, as well as financing!

2. The base of the value-added sales tax is broadened in order to increase revenues, with food bought in restaurants transferred to the highest tax rate. The hated Unified Property Ownership Tax (ENFIA) remains in place for the entire duration of the program. It will amass revenues of 2.65 billion euros annually, according to the projections of the previous government, regardless of dwindling real estate values!

3. No more collective bargaining agreements. For those who don't understand the formulation about conforming to "best practices and EU directives" as mentioned in the agreement, there is also the clear-cut formulation, "Labor market policies should not return to past policy settings which are not compatible with the goals of promoting sustainable and inclusive growth." Massive layoffs are explicitly foreseen.

4. An "Armageddon" in the state pension system:

- The Loverdos Act 3863/2010 reducing main pensions is fully implemented.
- The zero-deficit clause is implemented, thus reducing auxiliary pensions. This applies proportionally for lump sum payments as well.
- Strong disincentives regarding early retirement.
- The Pensioners' Social Solidarity Benefit (EKAS) is gradually abolished by 2019.
- Minimum pensions are frozen at current levels until 2021.
- With minimal exceptions, the retirement age ceiling is increased to 67 years by 2022, or to 62 years for those with 40 years of contributions to social security.
- All retirees after June 30, 2015, will receive just the basic pension and the rest of it following the completion of their 67th year.
- Implementation of commensurable measures that will compensate for the cost of court decisions that acquitted pensioners who filed against the constitutionality of laws from 2012 onwards.
- Contribution by pensioners to health funds is increased from 4% to 6%, something also applicable to auxiliary pensions.
- Abolition of all existing social resources.
- Unification of various funds by the end of 2015 and functional unification by December 31, 2016.

5. Real estate property worth €50 billion will be transferred to TAIPED (Public Utilization Fund of Private Properties), which gains full autonomy from government interference. This property will be liquidated to pay back the debt and recapitalize the banks. By comparison, in cur-

rent price estimates, half of the Peloponnese [a large region of Greece] is estimated at €50 billion. Twenty-five billion will certainly be channeled towards debt repayments (it is, of course, doubtful that this figure can be amassed). It is a lie that this fund will function under exclusive Greek control; the fund "will be managed by the Greek authorities under the supervision of the relevant European institutions."

The worst part is that the decision makes no mention of public property, but of "Greek assets," which can also mean bank property (real estate and savings), but also cultivatable private land.

6. Any government involvement in running the banks is prohibited. Thus, the last instrument of some form of independent policy on the part of the public sector is forbidden. The banks will be recapitalized in order to hand them over to the private sector!

7. Forget the ADMIE (the Independent Power Transmission Operator). Electricity distribution is handed over to big capitalists, with all the consequences this entails for the energy security of the population, the quality of service and, most importantly, the price of electricity.

CUTS

8. The activation of automatic mechanisms of public spending cuts are foreseen in case of deviation from goals regarding primary surpluses (everyone knows the goals are unrealistic, so new cuts--in pensions, wages, social welfare programs, etc.--should be considered inevitable).

9. Sunday is explicitly a working day from now on.

10. A "great success" in the agreement is the liberalisation of closed professions. The only ones mentioned are passenger and vehicle ferryboat services in order to allow the entry of foreign capital into Greek shipping.

11. What remains of popular and national sovereignty has vanished. A cynical passage in the agreement reads: "The government needs to consult and agree with the institutions on all draft legislation in relevant areas with adequate time before submitting it for public consultation or to parliament."

12. Excluding the humanitarian crisis law, all other measures adopted by the government in the last five months must be revised. The re-hiring of the cleaners at the Ministry of Finance, ERT workers, school guards and other municipal workers are all up in the air.

13. The financing needs of the resulting bailout will approach €90 billion, according to the agreement. Indeed, what will be the ratio of debt to GDP, especially under a Syriza government?

14. If any part of the agreement does not proceed as expected, the fault will lie exclusively with Greece.

15. The agreement admits that there are concerns regarding the sustainability of Greek debt. But where does the problem with the debt lie? "This is due to the easing of [austerity] policies during the last twelve months, which resulted in the recent deterioration in the domestic macroeconomic and financial environment." Subsequently, any "haircut" — that is, a restructuring and reduction — of notional debt is ruled out. Only longer grace and repayment periods are envisaged. The next generations are certain to be slaves in a future debt colony.

16. Investment package: This is not worth €35 billion, as supporters of the agreement have written boastfully. In the next five years, the European Commission, in tandem with the Greek authorities, will "mobilise" sums up to €35 billion (via different European programs) for investments. Even if some of this money is made available, we know where it will end up.

The only guaranteed money envisaged for investments is... €1 billion, a sum that — even if adequately managed by the government — is truly ridiculous in a country with a 27 percent unemployment rate.

From "oxi"

By Pete Radcliff

The agreement of Tsipras to put austerity measures to the Greek parliament caused outrage and dismay on the streets of Athens.

However speaking to people soon after the overwhelming "oxi" (no) to any acceptance of austerity measures, there was a general feeling approaching euphoria.

I was in Crete the week before Tsipras's turn where there had been a huge "oxi" vote of about 70%. The "oxi" vote there, as elsewhere, defied an immense press campaign predicting impending doom. A taxi driver told me that he had stopped watching the TV news — "all they do is try to scare you" he said.

I talked to Eleuthera, a waitress who came from Athens and now lives in Crete. Her name in English means freedom and gives an idea of her political ancestry. She told me not only that everyone wants to remain in Europe but all the political parties, Pasok, New Democracy were now saying they wanted a better deal.

But there is something particularly surprising when you talked further with those who voted "oxi" who weren't committed political activists. The vote had already become a huge act of "national pride" and there was tremendous pride not only in "oxi" but also in Tsipras.

Only a few days later things were to change dramatically as Tsipras achieved no concessions from the Troika and agreed to propose the extensive austerity plans to the Greek parliament.

DEAL

I arrived in Athens on Monday, 13 July, the day a deal was reached in negotiations with the Eurogroup.

Outrage was widespread but the predominant mood was one of despondency. On that night there was a demonstration in Syntagma square outside the Greek Parliament. It was quite small — probably less than three thousand. There was a wide spectrum of anti-austerity activists present, including Syriza members from the youth wing and the left of the Party. I spoke with a number of the youth wing — tradition-



Syriza's Parliamentary Speaker Zoe Konstantopoulou spoke and voted

to “nai” on a new Memorandum

ally amongst the most critical of any concessions being made to austerity. But it was clear that there was considerable disorientation and understandable disillusionment amongst them.

It was not possible to get any of them to go on the record for an interview. Undoubtedly that was partly because they were all very busy but one key activist admitted to me that he really did not know what to say that was positive.

I asked whether the Syriza organisation could be mobilized against any deal — but no, the general view was that Syriza’s workplace and geographical membership had not coalesced sufficiently for there to be any serious debate. The common view was that Syriza would fracture along pre-existing political alignments.

I also asked whether trade unions might be brought out in major strike action. Activists of the far left coalition, Antarsya, I spoke to, some close to the SWP’s Greek organisation SEK, were highly optimistic of a strike call that had been made by the public sector union ADEDY for the following Wednesday — the day that Tsipras’s austerity proposals were to be put to the Greek Parliament.

The Syriza youth activists scorned that optimism however. “There will be only 300 in the Square on the day” — one prominent Syriza youth activist said. The picture he painted was of a trade union movement still dominated by former Pasok activists where there was no organised anti-austerity movements amongst the rank and file.

STRIKE

Both the pessimistic estimation by activists of Syriza, as well as the optimistic one by Antarsya, about the Wednesday ADEDY strike action were exaggerated.

The strike that took place on Wednesday primarily affected the Metro rail system, although the shutdown was in no way total.

Speaking to union organisers on the day, they admitted that it had been a difficult job getting their members out. No other union had organised action and it had been difficult to map out to their members where they would go from here.

A union demonstration of several thousands took place during the middle of the day attracted the radical left but



K.K.E members marched into, and straight out of, Syntagma Square where other protesters were gathered on Wednesday 15 July.

there were no radical Syriza contingents that I could identify.

A larger gathering and protest was planned for the evening as Tsipras’s proposals were to be put to Parliament. But again the surprising thing was the lack of the contingents from the left of Syriza.

Instead it was the radical left outside Syriza who largely congregated outside Parliament. Undoubtedly Syriza anti-austerity activists would have been busy lobbying Syriza parliamentarians but there seems to have been no attempt made to mobilise the hundreds of thousands who had celebrated the “oxi” vote only 12 nights previously. The reach of the Antarsya and anarchist activists who did congregate outside Parliament clearly did not go as far as being able to organise those hundreds of thousands.

DIVISION

The impression of division on the Greek left was further underlined that night by the KKE (the Greek Community Party).

At 8:20pm a very loud and large demonstration of the KKE and their associated PAME trade union fraction started to arrive in the square. Being somewhat naïve, I expressed my pleasure to some of those already in the Square at a seemingly unusual display of unity from the KKE — who have been highly sectarian and refused to even join the “oxi” campaign, calling instead for an abstention.

“They are laughing at us”, “They are contemptuous of us” I was told. And this wasn’t said by a young anarchist but by a non-organised Syriza supporter who told me how he had served in prison in the 90s for his political activism whilst in the army, and had been in the KKE. He told me that the KKE were as “blind and unthinking” as “a religious cult”.

True to his prediction, the 25,000 strong KKE march entered the bottom end of the square and then left it on the other side — not to be seen again. Throwing tens of thousands of what were essentially recruitment leaflets into the air and onto the floor — for that was their mission on the night.

The 30,000 or so remaining were eventually tear-gassed out of the square after Molotovs were thrown by anarchists at some banks.

The anarchists are strong in comparison with the UK. After



Riot police were deployed to disperse demonstrations for the first time under the Syriza government

the Nazi occupation, the 46-49 Greek civil war and the military dictatorship of 67-74, awareness is strong amongst Greek workers that the battle against imperialism’s demands on Greece usually ends up with violent confrontation.

But what Greek workers need more than pitched battles with the police is debate, argument and mass organisation. The premature curtailment of the protest on that night was unfortunate — it led to a dispersal at the very time when people were joining the protest.

The “oxi” vote and the huge demonstration showed the huge strengths of connecting around a struggle from a parliamentary government such as Syriza. The Greek workers need an anti-austerity left that knows how to build on the parliamentary struggles that Syriza has headed, that is capable of building in working class neighbourhoods and in workplaces.

The collapse of that battle in parliament, as well as the events in Syntagma Square outside, also show how being dependent upon the parliamentary struggle and not energetically enough connecting with or challenging it can allow a crucial moment of mass defiance to be lost.



against the Memorandum

Owen Jones and Little Britain

The Left
By Dan Katz



Owen Jones writes in the *Guardian* that the left should declare itself Euro-sceptic (14 July).

Apparently a couple of other journalists (Suzanne Moore and Nick Cohen) and someone who writes a column in the *Times* agree with him. The list of “leftists” who support him, we are led to believe by Jones, is growing. Even assuming this small list of people who are not really on the left is much, much bigger, this isn’t a good way to start an argument.

Rather than assessing what’s right and wrong by getting the nod from “well known” and “important” people, the question to ask is: does it make sense, from a working-class and internationalist standpoint, for socialists to advocate EU withdrawal? The answer should be: of course not.

However Owen Jones thinks that a resurgence of “left” Euro-scepticism will signal a rebirth of left confidence. He seems to remember the UK referendum of 1975 on Europe, but omits to recall Tony Benn sharing a platform with Enoch Powell.

The left’s nationalist anti-Europe crusade in the 70s was a disgusting sight. It boosted the National Front and legitimised backwardness in sections of the working class. And a “left” that sides with UKIP and the Tory right in the coming EU referendum will disgrace itself again, and show that it has learnt nothing.

Owen Jones puts forward a single argument to vote against Europe: the EU “threaten[s] the ability of left-wing governments to implement policies.” No doubt it is true — and we have seen this clearly in Greece — that bourgeois European governments seek to impose unpleasant bourgeois solutions. In Greece’s case the capitalists trampled on Greek democracy and national rights as well as on jobs and healthcare. But the idea that this settles the question — in or out of the EU? — is ridiculous.

The answer to Jones’ problem — how can we implement reforms here, while being in the EU — is not complex. The idea that a left-wing government shouldn’t give in, buckle and collapse (like Syriza’s leadership did) is not very difficult to understand.

And isn’t this pretty much the same problem that also exists within the UK framework? If a left-wing government was elected to Westminster it would face anti-democratic opposition from the state — the top civil servants, judiciary, the army and police — and the capitalists. The answer is the same: a left-wing government shouldn’t give in at Westminster, either, but rally support and solidarity outside parliament by advocating and legislating for working-class interests and struggle. Leaving the EU doesn’t solve the prob-



lem of bourgeois states or capitalist bullying, because it doesn’t deal with capitalism itself.

So how would a left-wing British government renationalise the railways, Owen asks? It would pass the legislation, take ownership and control, and advocate other workers’ movements in Europe fight on their issues and rally in solidarity.

Would a left wing British government run up against capitalist hostility and EU legal barriers? Yes. But it should defy those barriers, if necessary! Leaving the EU wouldn’t stop the active hostility of the European capitalists and it would somewhat narrow the possibility of rallying working-class support across Europe (because the British left would be cut off from making the case through European institutions, and because the British left would have damaged its credibility by turning its back on European workers).

But Owen Jones also seems to vaguely understand the problem: these attacks are taking place everywhere! In or out of the Euro, in or out of the EU, capitalism still dominates. The idea that we can make (our British) lives better by quitting is a nationalist myth (and one the Greek people seem to understand very clearly — they don’t want to get out of either the Euro or EU).

Owen Jones says the EU is undemocratic. And certainly it is. But what’s the answer? Don’t leave, democratise the EU! What’s so difficult about that idea?

Again, a similar problem exists in the UK. What do we say to people who complain about lack of democracy and accountability here? Do we say abolish Westminster by breaking Britain up into fragments? Of course not. We say abolish the monarchy, annual parliaments, abolish the House of Lords, proportional representation. We say, take the existing framework, and improve it from the standpoint of the majority, of working-class people.

We’re in the business of taking what we can from what the capitalists have created, and using it for the benefit of the working class. That goes for Europe, too. The European cap-

italists have begun to bring down some barriers which separate the peoples of Europe, within the framework of the EU. That work is progressive, notwithstanding the fact it has been done by the capitalists in their own way and for their own reasons. It is not our job to reverse this work.

Socialists must not help UKIP persecute migrants and lockdown the UK. And that is what will happen if the No camp wins the referendum. Owen Jones will not implement a decision to get the UK out of Europe, the right of the Tory Party will. Cameron will go, but not to be replaced by Jones and full employment, but by a new Euro-sceptic leader of the Tory party and a raft of hateful anti-migrant legislation.

A socialist that helps the right and the far right in the UK to win a victory simply shows how disorientated they are.

Workers’ Liberty is in favour of a united, federal Europe. Is Owen Jones? That’s not clear. Maybe he has some fantasy in his head; smash up this European unity now, to build some socialist unity in the future.

But Jones’ underlying idea is for an isolated little Britain. Jones tells us that EU membership “forbid[s] the sort of industrial activism needed to protect domestic industries.” And a left anti-EU campaign would “focus on building a new Britain, one of workers’ rights, a genuine living wage, public ownership, industrial activism and tax justice.”

Whether Jones likes it or not his argument will be heard by British workers in this way: if you vote to get out of the EU you can get jobs and better pay; some migrants in the UK might suffer, but we’d be OK.

Owen Jones’ framework is nationalist and misunderstands socialism. Our role is to defend workers’ jobs in the UK and across Europe — and the world — by advocating the class struggle and solidarity across borders. Our job has never been to “protect domestic industries.”

We are fighting for a new Europe, a workers’ Europe.

EUROPE ON THE WEB

Support the socialist campaign for a Workers’ Europe, for workers’ unity and against UK withdrawal from the EU.

Blog: campaign.workerseurope.net
Email: workerseurope@gmail.com
Twitter: @workers_europe
Facebook: ForAWorkersEurope

Why we need the right to strike!

By Charlie McDonald

The Tories have wasted no time in turning their manifesto plan to further straight jacket the unions in law.

Proposals in the Trade Union Bill include a 50% minimum turn out and a 40% threshold of those in favour of action in certain “key sectors”: health; education for under 17s; transport; fire services; border security and the decommissioning of nuclear plants and management of waste.

Whilst these thresholds are not impossible to meet — the recent national strike action voted for by RMT members at Network Rail would have been legal under the new arrangements — they are extremely difficult.

To give an example: the civil service union that I’m a member of, PCS, has never had a higher than 50% turn out in any national ballot, and we have had many ballots. The highest we have achieved is a 42.5% turn out. For us, this will probably mean a concentration on localised disputes rather than big set-piece national disputes.

There are also plans to increase the notification period for ballots from seven to 14 days. Strike mandates will also have a life of only four months. For the first time the legal frame-

work for picketing will be covered by criminal, rather than civil, law.

Also worrying are the proposals on political funds. Individual union members will need to opt *in* to paying towards the political fund. Whilst not included in the Bill, it is likely that there will be an amendment proposed, and supported by the government, that says not only should union members indicate that they want to pay the levy but they can also nominate which party the funds go to. There is a real danger that unions will have to collect funds for the Tories or UKIP. This amendment is likely to come from the SNP (who want the money) with potential backing from the Greens.

In the long run unions could be discouraged from having political funds altogether. Unions will withdraw even further from the arena of politics.

The Right to Strike campaign has been formed by rank and file union members in branches. As well as campaigning against the changes we advocate positive rights for trade unionists such as workplace balloting, mass membership meetings to decide on industrial action, to strike over “political issues” such as privatisation, the right to take solidarity action in support of other workers, and the right to take effective picketing action including picketing workplaces other

than your own. All of this is currently illegal in the UK.

The labour movement is moving slowly on fighting the introduction of new laws, let alone actually fighting for a positive right to strike. The TUC has called a national lobby of Parliament on the third reading of the bill in November, but is currently ignoring calls for a national demonstration. Little action has been organised by the official labour movement bodies apart from the lobby.

At the most recent Right to Strike London mobilising meeting we decided to organise direct action. We will be targeting Tory hypocrite MPs who were elected on less than 40% of the electorate. We are also organising for a national demonstration, pressuring the unions and TUC, but also calling on those who agree to help us mobilise for one ourselves.

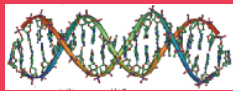
Mobilising meetings have happened, or will be happening, in the North-West, Brighton, Sheffield, Newcastle and Nottingham. We call on activists to attend these or organise their own.

• Get in touch with the campaign at ourrighttostrike@gmail.com or on twitter at @Right2Strike and find resources on the website at righttostrike.co.uk

Chemical warfare in the First World War

Science

By Les Hearn



A hundred years ago, on 22 April, poison gas was first used in warfare. Though about 95% of casualties in World War One were caused by explosives, sickness and malnutrition, there is a peculiar horror associated with the use of chemical weapons. It is also true that, apart from isolated examples, World War One was the only instance of the systematic and widespread use of gases in war (see box on types of gases).

As early as 1854, the British Secretary for Science and Art, Lyon Playfair [sic], suggested bombarding the Russians in Crimea with shells filled with cacodyl cyanide, an evil-smelling substance which vapourises easily.¹ Containing arsenic and cyanide, it is extremely poisonous. It was rejected by the military as being equivalent to “poisoning the wells of the enemy.” Playfair thought this argument was ridiculous since armies were quite prepared to cut people to pieces with shrapnel. He thought poison gas was a more humane way of killing the enemy.²

By 1915, both sides had already used tear gases and irritants and, despite military objections and the banning of poison gas projectiles by the 1907 Hague Convention, both would soon use lethal gases. The Convention was circumvented by releasing these gases from cylinders (Fritz Haber’s idea) when the wind was right: soon it would simply be ignored.

The first was chlorine.³ Commonly used in weak solution as a disinfectant for drinking water and swimming baths, chlorine is a pale green gas with a choking odour. It is one of the most reactive elements, which is bad news if it comes in contact with living cells. It dissolves in their moisture, releasing acid and bleach.

These substances cause irritation in the eyes, throat and bronchi. Victims experience coughing, tightness of the chest, breathlessness, bronchitis, pulmonary oedema (lungs filling with liquid) and, if in high enough concentrations, death.

The effects were terrifying and unprotected troops fled in panic. Wilfred Owen’s poem describes a soldier unable to put on his gas-mask in time during what seems to be a chlorine attack.⁴ An Austrian soldier describes, in his memoir, attack by British gas-bombs which left him temporarily blinded.⁵ Soldiers would be incapacitated and unable to fight even if not killed. Large numbers would be invalided out and suffer long-lasting ill health.

The first use of chlorine was planned as a trial run, using Haber’s gas cylinder method (see box on Fritz Haber). The site was part of the Ypres salient and release of the gas was to be followed by an infantry attack. The local commander requested extra ammunition but this was refused since this was merely a trial. Special pioneer units, including scientists,



Soldier with mustard gas burns

technicians, and a meteorologist, installed the cylinders along the front line.

The Germans were ambivalent about using chlorine. Some felt it quite immoral (unlike blowing men to pieces!); it was of unknown effectiveness, particularly since the wind was changeable and might blow the gas back; and troops in the trenches were worried that Allied shells might smash the cylinders.

During many delays due to weather conditions, British and French troops found German gas cylinders and a captured officer revealed the plan: the information was never passed on to HQ. Again, the plans leaked out and were even reported in *The Times*. Eventually, by 11 April 1915, 5730 cylinders were installed some eight kilometres north of Ypres. The operators were given gas masks and nearby soldiers given pads of cotton waste soaked in sodium sulfate solution to hold over their mouths and noses. The Germans waited for favourable winds.

On 13 April, a German deserter, August Jaeger⁶, told the French and Belgians about the planned gas attack but they did not believe that the Germans would break the Hague Convention. On 15 April, a Belgian spy confirmed Jaeger’s story. No action was taken.

Finally, at 4pm on 22 April, the gas cylinders were opened, the French and Algerian front line troops were either asphyxiated or retreated in disorder,⁷ and the Germans found the way clear to Ypres. The gas attack had been a stunning success but the lack of troops and supplies meant that the advantage could not be pressed home. The Second Battle of Ypres, despite more gas attacks, ended some three months later in stalemate but Michael Freemantle⁸ speculates that the initial advantage gained could have changed the course of the war.

MANY GASES

British commanders condemned chlorine as a cowardly weapon but immediately adopted it themselves.

Their first use was in 1914 in the Battle of Loos and was a fiasco. 140 tons of gas were to be released from 5100 cylinders but a change of wind caused the clouds to be blown back to the British trenches. On top of this, the wrong keys were sent for some cylinders so they could not be opened. Retaliatory gunfire burst some of these, causing further British casualties.⁹

Chlorine’s effects could be quite easily mitigated by a simple wet cloth over the mouth since it is water-soluble. Urine-soaked cloths were even better since chlorine reacts with urea. Quite soon, primitive gas masks were issued and chemists responded by developing different gases.

The French chemist Victor Grignard developed phosgene, the second most used gas of the war. Also asphyxiating, but less detectable than chlorine, it had a delayed effect so that soldiers could continue to fight, rather limiting its value: only the next day would victims become unwell as their lungs stopped functioning. It was by far the most lethal gas, causing 85% of gas deaths. Gas masks were soon modified to protect against phosgene.

Improved gas masks led to a race to develop other gases that could penetrate or bypass these. The most unpleasant and feared was mustard gas, introduced by the Germans in mid-1917.

Mustard causes the skin of victims to blister, while their eyes become very sore or even blind, and they vomit. It strips the lining membranes from the bronchi (tubes leading into the lungs), causing extreme pain. Fatally-wounded victims could take weeks to die.^{10, 11}

The tragedy of Fritz Haber

Fritz Haber, “father of industrial nitrogen fixation”, may be the most important chemist of all time.

With Carl Bosch, he invented a method of making ammonia from nitrogen and hydrogen, enabling Germany to make the explosives and fertilisers essential to be able to fight on. The Haber-Bosch process to make fertilisers allowed world agricultural productivity to soar, acting as the “detonator of the population explosion,” in which the world’s population increased fourfold in 100 years. Haber received the Chemistry Nobel in 1918.

Haber was a patriot who desired his country’s victory, and his process certainly prolonged the war. But he was keen to do more and, in December 1914, he suggested releasing clouds of chlorine gas from pressurised cylinders to drift over Allied trenches. Put in charge of organising this, he recruited 500 “gas pioneers” to try various options and by 1915 the army was ready to carry out his plan.

Chlorine was known to be very unpleasant and should prevent troops from fighting; denser than air, it would blanket the ground and flow into trenches; it was cheaply available from the electrolysis of common salt; it was easily condensed to liquid; steel bottles were easily available and Haber commandeered 6000. He observed their deployment at Ypres (see above). Given the Iron Cross and the rank of captain by the Kaiser, Haber gained the dubious description of “father of chemical warfare.”

His wife Clara disagreed with his development of poison gas and committed suicide shortly after chlorine’s first use.

Keen to help his country after the war, he worked unsuccessfully on methods of extracting gold from seawater to help pay off Germany’s war debts. As director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, he oversaw work on poison gases which later led to the development of Zyklon B. Initially used as a fumigant, it was only after Haber’s death that it was used to murder prisoners of the Nazis.

Since he was of Jewish origin his patriotism counted for nothing when the Nazis came to power. He was forced to resign as director of the KWI and left Germany in 1933, helped by British scientists, and worked in Cambridge.

Chaim Weizmann¹³ offered him a job in a research institute in British-administered Palestine but Haber died of heart failure on the way there in 1934.

Mustard gas was not very effective despite its horrible action: it condensed into an oily liquid and polluted the area for weeks or months, keeping out both sides.

By 1918, all sides were using all gases to support offensives, in artillery shells rather than cylinders, but gas was still only responsible for a small percentage of deaths. There were about 1.25 million casualties from gas, of which fewer than 100,000 died. Most were able to fight again after a few weeks’ recovery.

Many survivors felt that their health had been permanently damaged but a study published in the BMJ in 2007¹² showed they were no less healthy or long-lived than other World War One soldiers. This “gas shock,” by analogy with “shell shock” first diagnosed in World War One, resembles the post-traumatic stress disorder described in US Vietnam veterans.

Gas was understandably more feared than its objective dangers justified; the crude gas masks also induced claustrophobia and panic. In truth, though terrifying and cruel, gas was just not very effective.

Notes

1 Discovered by Robert Bunsen (of Bunsen burner fame) who lost the sight of one eye when some exploded.

2 Discuss!

3 Element number 17, in Group 7 (halogens or “salt-makers”), chlorine atoms have seven electrons in their outer shell, one less than the eight needed for stability. This makes chlorine very reactive. It attacks living cells, useful against bacteria but deadly when breathed by animals. It dissolves and reacts with water, producing hydrochloric acid (probably the cause of the immediate damage) and hypochlorite ions (which cause bleaching). It can be fatal at a concentration in air of 0.1%.

The 168 tons the Germans had at Ypres could have produced a lethal

Types of poison gas used

Tear gases (lachrymators): these irritate the eyes, but are easily defeated by gas masks. Examples: ethyl bromoacetate and xylol bromide.

Sneezing gases (sternutators): agents which irritate the nasal passages. These could penetrate gas masks, forcing soldiers to remove them, making them vulnerable to the choking gases fired at the same time. Example: diphenylchlorarsine.

Choking agents (asphyxiators): agents which irritate the respiratory passages, especially the lungs which fill with liquid, making it impossible to breathe. Examples: chlorine and phosgene.

Blister agents (vesicants): these cause extremely painful blistering of the skin, throat and lungs: they can cause temporary blindness and can kill. Example: mustard gas.

Blood agents: these prevent the blood carrying oxygen or stop cellular respiration. Example: hydrogen cyanide (prussic acid). While not very effective in open air, hydrogen cyanide was used in Zyklon B, the gas used by the Nazis to kill about a million people. Seventy milligrams can kill a person within two minutes.

Continued on page 10

Neither “leaving” nor “reclaiming” Labour will do

By Daniel Randall

Two recent articles, by Michael Chessum in the *New Statesman* and by Ben Sellers on the blog *Left Futures*, ask the question: “Should socialists leave the Labour Party?” Ben says they shouldn’t. Michael isn’t sure, but is certain the question needs thinking about.

Well, there’s no arguing with that. Socialist strategy needs continuous re-examination and reassessment, even in good times, which ours, sadly are not.

Although myself, Michael, and Ben are all coming from slightly different places politically as socialists we all believe in some form of democratic working-class rule, an alternative to the rule of capital.

Comrades might argue that this debate have been overtaken by events (i.e. Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign for the Labour leadership). But it’s still worth discussing the essentials.

Michael rightly points out that fundamental reason for socialist engagement with the Labour Party was not, ultimately, some notion that it could be “reclaimed” for a socialism it never meaningfully espoused, but rather “that left-wing activists should align themselves to, and agitate within, the organised working class, who are still, despite everything, largely affiliated to Labour.”

Indeed, my aspiration is not a revamped left-wing social democracy, nor a “left party” that can occupy a perceived “space” in electoral opinion, but rather independent labour representation — that is, our movement creating a political organisation based on and accountable to workers’ fundamental organisations: trade unions.

Michael starts somewhere similar. Much of his rumination depends on the idea that, with murmurs of Unite, the largest affiliated union, potentially breaking from Labour, the old idea that the Labour Party was the political expression of the majority of the industrial labour movement might simply no longer be the case.

Ben says “that [a Unite split] would change the landscape considerably”, but he doesn’t reckon it likely, as “trade unions are by their nature not risk-takers”. “The main unions, he argues, “will stick to Labour while there is a chance that they can influence the leadership and the policy of the party.”

I share Ben’s scepticism about a Unite breakaway. Even if Unite did break, given the obvious political timidity of its current leadership, there is no guarantee that anything it did set up would even remotely resemble the “English Syriza” that Paul Mason and others have fancifully speculated about.

What we really need to be discussing is not some technical question of strategy, playing armchair generals and debating whether Britain’s pitifully small army of socialists are better deployed within the Labour Party or out of it. Rather, how we can transform the entire labour movement. That is, in fact, a much more daunting task.

If we want to build working-class power, there is no short-cut around working to affect the top-to-bottom transformation of our entire movement.

In 2014, Unite grumbled about the implications of the Collins Review, which will substantially disenfranchise affiliated unions if its recommendation are imposed. Before the



2015 general election, Unite delegates on Labour’s National Policy Forum helped vote down policy that would’ve committed the Labour Party to an anti-austerity political platform.

That record shows how naïve it is to expect Unite to provide the impetus for an “English Syriza” (even if the Corbyn campaign shakes things up, and presently Unite are doing little to back up their formal support for Corbyn).

The record also shows that we cannot hope to transform the Labour Party without transforming the unions that have, in large part, allowed the Labour Party to become what it has become.

The cavalry riding to Ben’s rescue is a rebuilt Labour left. He hopes his Red Labour network can be the basis of that. Ben says: “We have to get together and build a serious, organised, engaged and thinking Labour left, one that leaves behind some of the false walls that have divided us.” But what does he think that Labour left should be doing? Passing left-wing policy in CLPs and at Labour Party conference? Worthwhile initiatives, but to be meaningful they must also involve a drive in the affiliated unions to get those unions to fight consistently within the party and against its leadership for those policies. The affiliated unions are key.

PERSPECTIVE

Debating whether individual socialists should intervene in the Labour Party substantially misses the point.

Where local Labour Parties have life, that may make sense. Elsewhere, it may not. What matters most is our perspective for the whole movement. Our primary aim is to make our movement fit to fight. That has to start with a concerted effort in the unions to address, through the building of rank-and-file networks, the immense democratic deficit between the members and the leaderships, and to break the unions from the various forms of conservatism that currently characterise their conduct on both the industrial and political fronts. A combative, democratic labour movement, that fought politically for labour movement demands, would not flinch from expressing that combativeness within Labour Party structures, in the full knowledge that this may cause a split with the party.

I’m not arguing that nothing can be done until we’ve transformed the entire movement. But if our perspective and aspiration is for that transformation, that should be our starting point and focus. The struggle to transform the labour movement will undoubtedly throw up unexpected openings and possibilities along the way, which we should remain alive to.

And Jeremy Corbyn’s candidacy for the Labour leadership provides an immediate focus. Ben and Red Labour have thrown themselves behind it, and Michael has called for the left to “unite behind” Corbyn’s candidacy.

The candidacy of someone genuinely of the radical left will sharpen the contradictions within Labour. But the leadership election can’t be the be-all and end-all, however it ends up. In his *New Statesman* article, Michael says the election might be “the beginning of the swan-song of the Labour left — another moment at which many of its number finally decide, from a position of strength, to start or join something new.” There is probably a widespread hope in some quarters that Corbyn’s (unsuccessful) campaign will finally make people realise there’s no point engaging with the Labour Party, and he and all his supporters will walk out of Labour to found a new party. But even in the unlikely event that this mechanical teleology becomes a reality, we’d still be faced with a fundamental roadblock: the question of organisation and politics in the whole labour movement.

Could networks developed around the Corbyn campaign be the future infrastructure of the reinvigorated Labour left that Ben aspires to? Well, maybe. If Corbyn wins (an outcome that is becoming less unlikely), the Labour Party will probably fracture, with hard-Blairites perhaps moving to overturn the election result, or simply walking out of the party (maybe to fuse with the rump Lib Dems, their natural allies). That would take us into uncharted, difficult, and unpredictable territory, but would create immense possibilities too. The left will only be able to effectively navigate through that terrain if we begin developing a more sophisticated perspective for winning genuine independent labour representation.

Workers’ Liberty has advocated the initiation of local labour movement conferences, organised through active union branches, or Trades Councils where they have life (and maybe, in some places, by CLPs), to act as forums where these perspectives can be thrashed out.

Whatever we do — within Labour and without, including the Corbyn campaign and the work we must all now put in to win backing for it across the unions — “reclaim Labour” or “leave Labour” are inadequate perspectives, answers to the wrong question, and neither of them quite possible in the way their proponents imagine. We cannot “reclaim” what was never straightforwardly “ours”, but conversely, while individuals can cancel their party membership, we cannot simply “leave” Labour, in the sense of walking away from it, or bypass it, when the bulk of our movement is still essentially tied to it.

Rather, we should aim to develop a campaign of working-class self-assertion on every front. The starting point for that is the rank-and-file push to make our unions fight, and the necessary perspective is for the transformation of the whole movement.

Neither the Unite-led exodus from the Labour Party hinted at by Michael, possibly in the wake of a glorious defeat for Corbyn, nor Ben’s hope that a feathered-up Labour left can drag the party back towards a more radical conception of social democracy, quite cut it.

• Abridged; full text at www.workersliberty.org/node/25315

Chemical warfare

concentration in a cloud over 6 feet (2 metres) deep covering an area of 10,000 square miles. With a density two-and-a-half times that of air, it would hug the ground and flow into trenches and underground bunkers.

4 “Gas! Gas! Quick boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling, Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time; But somebody still was yelling out and stumbling,

And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime...

Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.” (*Dulce et decorum est*).

5 “About midnight, a number of us were put out of action, some for ever. Towards morning I also began to feel pain. It increased with every quarter of an hour; and about seven o’clock my eyes were scorching as I staggered back and delivered the last despatch I was destined to carry in this war. A few hours later, my eyes were like glowing coals and all was darkness around me.” (Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*).

6 Jaeger was exposed in 1932 by a French World War One general and imprisoned for treason by Germany, despite pleading not guilty on ethical grounds. Held by the Nazis as a political prisoner, he was released from Dachau in 1945.

7 “A living wall of green fog, about four feet in height, moved towards the French line and spread out to a width of about 180 metres. As the wall of smoke grew higher the whole area disappeared into it. Suddenly the rifle fire from the French increased, but gradually died down...

“Soon we heard strange shouts coming from the green fog. The cries became weaker and more incoherent. Then masses of soldiers tumbled upon us from out of the fog and collapsed. Most weren’t wounded but they had expressions of terror on their faces. These piteous retreating men ranked with some of the best soldiers in the world; their cold-bloodedness and courage was almost legendary. Now they were staggering along like drunks.” (Eyewitness account by a British soldier in *The Times*)

“Stumbling and gasping in an agony of terror-stricken flight before it, scattered groups of French Algerian infantrymen with reeking, yellowed clothing and ashen purple faces, staggered across the fields, through hedges, over ditches and down the roads, regardless of everything but this unknown devil which had them by the throat. Their yellowed clothes reeked and their faces were ashen. With wild

panic in their eyes they tried to escape from the murderous green mist.” (*Official History of the Canadian Forces in The Great War*)

8 I am indebted to Michael Freemantle whose books *Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!* (2012) and the more extensive *The Chemists’ War: 1914-1918* (2015, Royal Society of Chemistry) provided much information. Highly recommended!

9 You couldn’t make it up!

10 Vera Brittain, then a nurse in France, wrote “I wish those people who talk about going on with this war whatever it costs could see the soldiers suffering from mustard gas poisoning. Great mustard-coloured blisters, blind eyes, all sticky and stuck together, always fighting for breath, with voices a mere whisper, saying that their throats are closing and they know they will choke.” (*Testament of Youth*).

11 The iconic painting *Gassed*, by war artist John Singer Sargent, shows blinded soldiers being led to a treatment station.

12 Edgar Jones, Ian Palmer and Simon Wessely, *BMJ* 2007, 335. www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/publications/assetfiles/cbrn/Jones2007-enduringbeliefs-gassing.pdf

13 Chemist Chaim Weizmann, “father of industrial fermentation” and solver of a major problem for the British, namely the shortage of acetone needed for the production of cordite. A Zionist, he later became first president of Israel.

All-out strike at National Gallery

By Peggy Carter

PCS members fighting privatisation at the National Gallery voted on 24 July for all-out strike from the start of August if the gallery does not back down.

Workers have already struck for more than 50 days, as well as holding various stunts, parties and protests inside and outside the gallery.

Workers will strike again on Wednesday 29 July and are holding an “alternative leaving party” for outgoing gallery director on Thursday 30 July.

Sacked PCS rep Candy Udwin was due to have her appeal hearing with

the gallery on 22 July, after being vindicated by a judge who said that a “tribunal would most likely not find her actions blame-worthy”, but the hearing was postponed as the gallery did not give her union adequate notice of a date.

Workers at other museums and galleries are getting organised. Workers at National Museums Wales strike on Saturday 1 August against plans to cut weekend working payments resulting in a 12-15% pay cut for front of house staff.

• **More information:**
bit.ly/Nat-Gal and
bit.ly/Nat-Wales



Defend Max, Natasha and Frank

Unison members at London Metropolitan university struck on Friday 24 July over the implementation of compulsory redundancies.

Unison and UCU have been fighting 165 job cuts at the university. However the university has gone ahead with a compulsory redundancies program and has started issuing notices to staff to be made redundant.

Unison branch secretary Max Watson is among those to have been notified of redundancy. Unison believes Max has been singled out due to his trade union activity and will be appealing the decision. Unison mem-

bers Natasha Lalovic and Frank Duffy are also appealing their compulsory redundancies.

The strike on 24 July, following those on 4 and 25 June, will be combined with action short of strike action including an overtime ban, not working outside contracted hours, and not covering for leave sickness or training of colleagues.

Unison hopes that strikes in the middle of exam re-sits will show management that cuts will impact on the university's ability to function.

• **Sign the petition to defend Max —**
bit.ly/Defend-Max



Victory for pay regrading fight

By Anne Field

After 17-weeks of an all-out strike, preceded by several weeks of action short of strike action, Glasgow City Council Homelessness Caseworkers voted to return to work last week after their key demand had been met.

The caseworkers, members of Unison, have won their demand for regrading and are to be paid the same as other frontline social care staff, amounting to an immediate increase of around £1,000 a year, and an overall increase of £5,000 by 2018.

In a face-saving exercise by the Council — a continuation of its pretence that the caseworkers do not have a legitimate claim for regrading — caseworkers are to undergo an assessment process for the regraded posts.

Three temporary caseworkers are to be given higher-graded permanent posts elsewhere in the homelessness service. And some management posts

are to be cut through voluntary early retirement.

At the start of the dispute Council officials and councillors refused to countenance the demand for regrading. For the first six weeks of the strike social work management did not even meet with the strikers.

After talks finally got underway, management effectively conceded the demand for regrading but proposed that a third of the posts be axed, so that the regrading would be self-financing.

While refusing to negotiate, social work management was willing to see support and provision for the city's homeless collapse into chaos and virtual non-existence.

But while the caseworkers' dispute may have been resolved, this certainly does not mark an end to industrial and political conflicts in Glasgow City Council.

A number of other regrading claims are in the pipeline. In private, some councillors even admitted that the reason for trying to face down the caseworkers'



demand was the precedent that would be set in conceding it.

Cuts in local authority funding by the SNP government in Holyrood are leaving the City Council facing a funding shortfall of £103 million and around 3,000 job losses over the next two years. Council claims that such job losses can be achieved voluntarily are a fantasy.

The caseworkers' strike also highlighted the abysmal politics of Council and Labour Group Leader

Gordon Matheson, who spent the sixteen weeks of the strike claiming that it was a matter solely for social work management to deal with.

This latest chapter in his sorry record as Council and Group Leader has helped galvanise support among Labour councillors for ousting him from his “leadership” positions.

Labour Party members should be demanding of their councillors that Matheson finally be shown the door.

More tube strikes on 5-6 August

By Ollie Moore

Tube unions accused London Underground of breaching safety standards in an ongoing dispute over pay, terms, and conditions.

With an overtime ban in place, LU has fallen behind on fleet maintenance schedules. Unions say it has put trains into service without preparation being carried out by properly qualified staff, and instructed their members not to drive inadequately-prepared trains. The Office of Rail Regula-

tion is investigating the claims.

In a move seen by many workers as an outrageous provocation, LU threatened to dock the pay of any driver who upheld their legal right to refuse to work if they were not satisfied that safety standards had been met.

The overtime ban has also led to temporary station closures at Old Street, Liverpool Street, and Walthamstow Central.

A strike by all four Tube unions is set to go ahead on 5-6 August. As LU prepares

to introduce all-night running at weekends, unions are demanding a settlement that guarantees work/life balance and protects workers from the detrimental health impacts of prolonged night working and antiso-

cial hours.

The rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker*, published by Workers' Liberty, is arguing for the strikes to escalate beyond 24 hours following the next action.

Outsourcing pushed back

In a separate dispute, Tube union RMT has pushed back the use of agency labour on LU, winning direct employment for agency workers employed as trainers for Fleet

staff.

For more on this, and for regular updates on workers' struggle across London Underground, see workersliberty.org/tw blog

Blacklisting protest wins

Unite rep for agency electrical contractors working on a site at Morgan Stanley Investment Bank in Canary Wharf, Graeame Boxhall, was sacked for demanding workers were directly employed by Phoenix Electrical rather than its subcontractor B&D.

Graeame was swiftly reinstated by the company after activists from Unite, the Blacklist Support Group, Teesside Construction Activists and rank-and-

file site electricians network “The Sparks” protested outside Morgan Stanley.

Activists linked arms to picket the entrance to the site despite a high court injunction banning the protest and a heavy police presence, resulting in workers refusing to cross the picket line.

Activists say they will be back picketing if they do not receive “full capitulation and compliance with the Joint Industry



Board conditions” which state all workers on site

have the right to be directly employed.



Turkey breaks ceasefire with PKK

By Simon Nelson

The bomb attack on the youth wing of the Socialist Party of the Oppressed, the SGDF, as their members travelled to Suruc on the Turkey-Syria border to help reconstruct Kobane, has provoked a wide ranging response from the Turkish state.

According to official accounts the SGDF were attacked by a suicide bomber from Daesh (Islamic State), with over 30 of their members killed.

The SGDF is part of a coalition of groups with close links to the People's Democratic Party. Press reports from across the region quote their members and supporters who are sceptical of the official claims and believe they were targeted by the Turkish state, for their support for Kurdish autonomy.

In response to the attack Turkey has launched "anti terrorism operations" in Northern Iraq. Quoted in the *Guardian*, the Turkish Prime Minister's Office declared that "strikes were carried out on targets of the Daesh terrorist group in Syria and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) terrorist group in northern Iraq," adding that all anti-terror-

ism operations were "carried out indiscriminately against all terrorist groups".

This marks the effective end of the ceasefire with the PKK. The group have responded by attacking a police convoy in Diyarbakir, southeastern Turkey. Although the PKK have not formally lifted their ceasefire it is now likely that their forces fighting Daesh across Rojava may now weaken, as sections resume fighting with the Turkish military.

ALLIES

Turkish fighter jets are also targeting Daesh positions in Syria where, with pressure from the US and other NATO members, the PYD forces are viewed as allies in the fight against Daesh.

Previous actions by Turkey against Daesh have not involved flying into Syrian airspace.

Turkey now claim to be committed to the fight against Daesh, whereas they had previously acted as a conduit for weapons and people attempting to cross into Daesh held territory.

Within Turkey itself the bombing of Suruc has instigated a crackdown on internal dissent with the state announcing that over the



Protesters marched in Ankara, Turkey, holding a banner of the Suruc victims' pictures

weekend 600 terrorism suspects were detained who had links with either Daesh and the PKK.

The subsequent level of tension in the largely Kurdish south-east of Turkey could easily provoke an escalation of PKK activity in the region. Protests that have occurred across Turkey against the Suruc bombing and state oppression have been met with water cannons and other repressive measures.

The People's Democratic Party which operates legally in Turkey and has widespread support amongst Kurds as well as ethnic Turks said in a statement: "We underline again how very much Turkey needs peace and a solution [to the Kurdish issue]. It is possible to solve our socie-

tal, historical and political problems through mutual dialogue, negotiations and through the development of democracy. The increase and perpetuation of violence will not bring a lasting, democratic and egalitarian solution for any side, or any part of society."

Whilst no coalition can be formed following the most recent Turkish elections, the currently ruling AKP is likely to call new elections later this year. Their current strategy could seek to build an electoral victory on a wave of crackdowns within Turkey and an anti Kurdish hostility.

Whether Turkey's new found desire to attack not just the PKK but Daesh as well is a cynical electoral manoeuvre remains to be seen.

Fast track asylum detention unlawful

By Andy Forse

A judicial ruling last month forced the Government to suspend its system of fast tracking asylum seekers' appeals.

This system leaves appellants in asylum cases detained and facing "kangaroo courts", in a process deemed to be unlawful and 'structurally unfair' by the judge.

800 cases are to be reviewed, and 100 asylum seekers recently entered into the fast track detention system are to be released while this goes on. Most of those in the fast track system are to remain in detention because they face imminent deportation.

The use of detained fast track has rapidly increased in recent years, and one in five appeals are heard through this system, which has a 99% rejection rate. Previously, charities have shown that the initial ruling on asylum cases is found wrong on appeal in 26% of cases. For women, this figure rises to 50%.

While the ruling is a positive step, the UK asylum system remains incredibly unjust and punitive — several deten-

tion centres are run for-profit and investigations have revealed that reports of sexual abuse and harassment by guards are common, racism is rife; and detainees receive inadequate health care and poor accommodation.

There have been numerous acts of resistance by detainees in response to their poor treatment and conditions, such as the hunger strike earlier this year, which spread from Harmondsworth to Morton Hall.

The civil rights group "Movement for Justice by any Means Necessary" have been organising demonstrations outside detention centres — the next one is on the 8 of August at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in Bedford.

Immigration and asylum are fundamentally class issues. Asylum seekers seek refuge from the war, torture and political repression that is instigated by capitalist states and anti-democratic regimes.

Socialists must build solidarity with all migrants and puncture the racist narratives of the elite who seek to turn workers against members of their own class.

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