



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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www.workersliberty.org

Solidarity interview with Jeremy Corbyn

“Create jobs, create a welfare system, defend our planet”

“End the inequality that exists in our society”

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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!

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Leaving the vulnerable to charity

By Esther Townsend

Kids Company — a charity that provided practical, emotional and educational support to deprived and vulnerable inner-city children and young people, in London, Liverpool and Bristol — closed its doors on 5 August due to a lack of funding.

Founded in 1996 by Camila Batmanghelidjh, Kids Company attracted significant "celebrity" and governmental support — in 2013 23% of its income came from central and local government and much of the rest from high-profile supporters, including Prince Charles, Coldplay, Richard Branson, J.K. Rowling and others.

Why did it fail? The simple answer seems to be a failure to plan for interruptions in funding. Such an interruption occurred when concerns were raised about how the charity was run and spent its money and also over safeguarding issues.

The Metropolitan Police have launched an investigation after young people disclosed experiencing sexual abuse and exploitation by other, older service users and reported that staff did not take this seriously or pass concerns onto the police or social services. Batmanghelidjh denies any awareness of sexual abuse or exploitation and claimed that such incidents would have been reported.

Much of the media coverage has focused on Batmanghelidjh as an individual — a controversial figure, portrayed as a "radical outsider" who was loved by the rich and powerful. But the story of Kids

Company raises more fundamental issues about how services should be run.

Third sector organisations have long been central to the delivery of social care services. Many provide important and essential services to vulnerable people and, often, go the extra mile in doing so. Batmanghelidjh started Kids Company because she believed social services were failing children experiencing poverty, abuse and trauma.

CRITICISM

The criticism is not unfair — but where does the problem come from?

Since 2008 child protection investigations have increased by 60%, child protection plans by 50%, care proceedings by 104%. At the same time funding is being dramatically cut. Caseloads are escalating; services are overstretched; thresholds are rising; and services are struggling to recruit and retain workers. In these circumstances vulnerable children and families fall through the gaps.

Social services that remain in the public sector are increasingly case management and firefighting severe crisis situations, rather than direct work with young people. We're told the solution is outsourcing to companies and charities that can work more creatively. But is the solution really contracting out these essential services? The closure of Kids Company suggests not.

The criticisms of Kids Company's mismanagement and concerns around professional boundaries highlight the issue of how accountability can cease to exist when the state contract

essential social services to charities which it funds (just about) with public money but does not control, and which are not subject to the same inspections as statutory services.

Kids Company also demonstrates the precarious nature of a model where projects are run from one funding bid to the next. The closure of such a high-profile charity has triggered anxiety across the sector as a whole as many organisations struggle to stay open in the face of funding cuts.

Contracts are not just being awarded to not-for-profit charities run by people who want to improve lives and communities. We've already seen public services, from the NHS, to schools, to benefits assessments opened up to private companies to run and make profit. Surely children's services are a step too far? Not for the Tories.

VALUE

One major concern of government ministers and officials was whether Kids Company was offering "value for money".

What do they mean by value? The Tory's latest plans to cut £12 billion from the welfare budget are a clear indication that this "value" is not the quality of lives of vulnerable young people. The "value" is in the potential to make profit. When services are assessed on that basis the door is opened for privatisation and marketisation and young people's needs go out of the window. Familiar names like G4S and Serco are already running children's residential placements and, in some boroughs, services to exam-

ine children who may have been sexually abused. All they have to do is set up a not-for-profit subsidiary which then pays the parent company for management, administration, etc to generate profit.

It shouldn't be possible for essential services to "go out of business" leaving vulnerable people stranded. Kids Company service users and supporters marched from Camberwell in south London to Downing Street to call for greater awareness of the young people left without vital support by the closure.

The public sector as it exists is not perfect, far from it. But the answer to services being overstretched is in fact a reversal of outsourcing not more of it. Services should be run by local social services, and re-organised under workers' and service users' control allowing a level of accountability and democratic control. The loudest voices should not be those of trendy individuals or celebrities, but those of young people and the people who work with them on a daily basis.

We need decent funding which is reliable and allocated according to need, not dependent on an individual's ability to make a decent pitch.

We need to employ more social care workers and others in the public sector, and reduce case-loads to allow workers to do the creative work we came into social care to do — listening to and working with young people to tackle the very real challenges they're facing.

IDS on your bike, we deserve the right to strike!

On Saturday 8 August more than 15 activists with Right to Strike took a trip to Chingford to serve Iain Duncan Smith with a high court injunction.

Tories and bosses are so keen to take out high court injunctions against our democratically decided strikes that we thought we'd give them a taste of their own medicine.

The Tories are proposing that unions in key sectors must get 40% of their members to vote yes in a ballot (not just of those that vote) to have a legal strike. But it

turns out Iain Duncan Smith only got elected on 31% of the electorate, and the whole government on only 24% of the electorate. Well short of the targets they set for us.

So we took a high court judge to Chingford and sentenced Iain Duncan Smith.

Chanting "IDS on your bike, we deserve the right to strike!" and "IDS hear us say, union laws — no way!" we leafleted passers by and took signatures on our petition for the Right to Strike.

Our next action will be targetting the bill's sponsor,



Sajid Javid, elected on 37% of the electorate.

Join us at 6pm, Wednesday 9 September,

Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 1 Victoria St, London, SW1H 0ET.

Corbyn: the times, they are a' changin'

Solidarity's Max Munday spoke to Jeremy Corbyn.

If Labour is elected to power in May 2020, what would be your policy priorities be for that government?

To expand the economy to create jobs, particularly for young people. To create a welfare system that works for all and an environmental system which defends our planet. But above all, a government that would be human, inclusive for everybody and would end the ghastly inequality that exists within our society.

The campaign has got lots of people, from many different backgrounds, involved and excited. Win or lose how will those people be kept mobilised and organised?

Yes, there is a fantastic mobilisation of people around this campaign, which is exciting, because it's about hope. It's about inclusion. It's about saying we can all do things strongly together, whatever our ethnic background, faith, or anything else. Whatever the result, we're going to stay together.

We'll have to have regional conventions. [After 12 September], we'll have to have national conventions on economic policy, social policy, environment policies, peace policies.

We've got a social movement here, and it's having a huge effect on politics in Britain. Look at the way the political debate has already changed in the past two months. Austerity has now been questioned for what it is: a political

process, not an economic process.

When Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman come out in our support, Nobel Prize-winning economists, I think that shows we are having an effect. We're not electing a dictator, we're not electing a celebrity, we're not electing a personality... what we're doing is electing ourselves.

If the sort of ideas you're advocating are the programme for the next Labour government, what's to stop a massive financial assault — we saw the ECB hammer Syriza and hold it to ransom, what's to stop a reaction like that?

Well we're not in the Eurozone and therefore not under the same control levels of the European Central Bank. But it's a fair question that the financial institutions have often assaulted the Labour governments in the past that have done their best to try and redistribute wealth. We've got to be strong, we've got to be determined; we've got to re-balance our economy away from one that's solely dependent on financial services into manufacturing. This is a forward looking campaign. This is about developing sustainable green industries, a million jobs through a green energy revolution.

Mainstream politics is often about highlighting things that threaten us; whether it be terrorism or "swarms of migrants" as Cameron put it. That's so much easier than a positive politics

of hope and optimism. How do we achieve that positive politics?

The right play on insecurity, the right play on fear, the right play on the negative. This campaign is about positives. We are not blaming migrants, we are not blaming the poor, we are not blaming the marginalised. We are for a decent fair society does not allow people to sleep on the streets, doesn't blame victims of war for being victims of war but looks to the causes of war, and presents a foreign policy that does not promote yet more wars and more weaponry in the Middle East.

Would being part of the European Union stop some of your programmes such as nationalisation?

There are big issues surrounding Europe. One is the one you've just referred to — challenging the European Union on its Rail Directive. David Cameron appears to be trying to sign away what remains of the Social Chapter — workers rights, environmental protection and social solidarity.

I think all of us should be part of that debate now — demanding workers' solidarity, universal workers protection, but above all, closing down the EU-sanctioned tax havens which means that companies like Boots can evade their tax responsibilities in Britain by shifting themselves to Switzerland.

Are there different strategies for winning back Ukip voters who



Jeremy Corbyn spoke to crowds in Tredegar, Wales on Tuesday 11 August.

were former Labour voters, or SNP voters in Scotland, or non-voters and people that were lost under Tony Blair or since?

The strategies are the same for all of them. I spent a lot of the last election campaign in Thanet where Nigel Farage was trying to become the MP. What I found was, once you get past the blame-game on migrants, of Eastern Europeans or Roma and got onto issues of wages, jobs, security, lack of investment by councils and central government in education and health, you began to develop a whole process of solidarity.

You have to end the blame-game; re-discover ourselves as a party based on working-class culture and working-class values of providing collectively for all, rather than individually for the

few. And it does win people back, trust me!

The right in Labour is very entrenched. How are we going to tackle that?

Well Labour's membership is going up very fast. I want the supporters to become members. I want the party to become more democratic, policy-making from the grass-roots up, not from the leader's office down.

I'm sure my colleagues in the Parliamentary Labour Party will understand that an election that's involved up to 450,000 people is a voice of people who actually are the ones who knock on doors, who promote the party, and I'm sure they will fully understand that "the times, they are a' changin'".

CEO pay 184 times average worker's

By Matt Cooper

CEOs of FTSE100 companies saw their average (mean) pay increase to nearly £5 million in 2015.

Although this was only a slight increase on 2013, these executives have seen their pay go up by over 20% since 2010.

Within these figures there are even higher rates of pay. Top of the heap for the second year running is Martin Sorrell, CEO of the public relations and advertising company WPP, who saw his remuneration go up from £30 million in 2013 to £43 million in 2014 — not bad for a company that produces nothing useful at all.

In 2014 chief executives earned 184 times what the average worker in their company was paid. This is a sign of increasing inequality,

the figure is up from 182 times average earnings in 2013 and 160 times average earnings in 2010. Estimates of the position in 1998 suggest chief executives earned only 47 times what their average worker did. Thus, this form of inequality has increased more than threefold.

However, this 184:1 ratio is likely to under-estimate this inequality for two reasons. First, the figures exclude outsourced workers many of whom are amongst the lowest paid (such as cleaners and delivery workers).

Second, the ratio is calculated on the mean earnings (that is by taking the wage bill of the company and dividing it by the number of full time equivalent workers). This figure will be skewed upwards by a small number of very well paid

executives. If a company has one-hundred employees, with ninety-nine earning £20,000 a year and one earning £5 million, the mean salary is £70,000. A more realistic measure of the average worker would be to take the worker in the middle of pay distribution, the 50th worker in this example, who earns £20,000.

Over the last few years in Britain median wages have been around 75 per cent of mean pay. This means that a CEO's pay could be pushing at 200 times the pay of the median workers in their company.

It would of course be wrong to liken the chief executives to engorged pigs at a trough. However corpulent a pig is, at least it does not exploit the other animals in the farmyard.

Fascists seen off in Liverpool

By Joe Cullen

The anti-fascist demonstration against National Action's "White Man March" in Liverpool on Saturday 15 August, was a resounding success.

The demonstration saw hundreds of loud and proud anti-fascists heavily outnumbering about 20-25 racists trying to organise a march in the city.

The fascists were completely unable to organise from the outset, and were besieged several times, including a inside a pub and behind the shutters of the train station's lost luggage office. They received little to no support from the public and were eventually escorted away by swarms of police officers.

A Unite Against Fascism demonstration on the pier-head (approximately 2 km



from the fascists' start point) happened simultaneously. However it is reported that many of the people attending soon left to join the demonstration in the city centre.

Although the demonstration prevented any fascist organisation, it felt at times like being part of a vigilante mob, chasing around a small group of people, rather than a group with an

important political message. Opportunities for good chanting were missed (for example, pointing out the heavy police protection the racists received).

On the whole it was a great effort from many brave comrades in the face of heavy police intimidation tactics, in which a few arrests were made.

Student movement should find better allies than Cage

Following the passing of a motion at NUS conference, in April 2015, resolving to work with Cage, the student left has been discussing its view of this organisation. Omar Raii argues that Cage is not an organisation we should support students working with.

Issues of the role of the bourgeois state, freedom of speech and Islamism have never been more pressing.

David Cameron recently gave a speech in Birmingham highlighting what he regarded as the continuing problem of Islamist extremism. In his “struggle” against this phenomenon, Cameron’s government has brought out policies that will have an alarming effect on freedom of speech in universities and elsewhere. The student movement has, on the whole, rightly, condemned the hypocritical and reactionary measures, that will mean more surveillance of students and a limit to what can be said on campuses.

There is however one small problem. One of the organisations that the NUS decided to work with in combatting the government is Cage (formerly Cageprisoners), founded in the wake of the war on terror by former Guantanamo Bay prisoner Moazzam Begg.

Cage, officially, works to campaign against state policies, implemented by the UK in connection with the war on terror. This is of course, unobjectionable, and along with opposition to state surveillance and obstruction of freedom of speech, socialists should indeed advocate that the student movement campaigns on this.

The problem is however with the political nature of Cage, and many of its key figures. Cage claims to be a human rights advocacy group with an “Islamic focus”, but many of its figures have been shown to have reactionary politics that are, to put it mildly, soft on Islamism.

Cage resembles the Stalinist “peace” organisations that existed in several NATO countries during the Cold War. These officially stood for opposition to nuclear proliferation and war, but often held a pro-Soviet agenda.

It’s been said before that the left (particularly the British left), including in the student movement, has lost its way on the issue of political Islam in recent years. But this still needs pointing out. Our opposition to the government’s reactionary and hypocritical agenda should not mean forming alliances with organisations led by reactionaries.

The detainment and torture of Cage’s founding member, Moazzam Begg, by the US government is something that any decent democrat, let alone a socialist, must unequivocally condemn and oppose. This does not mean however, that we must fool ourselves into thinking that Begg himself is a progressive figure.

A closer look at Begg’s politics shows that he is one of the few people in Britain that, after thousands of Afghans had fled Taliban-run Afghanistan, actually moved there, with his family and children.

In his book *Enemy Combatant* he explains “I wanted to live in an Islamic state — one that was free from the corruption

and despotism of the rest of the Muslim world.... I knew you wouldn’t understand. The Taliban were better than anything Afghanistan has had in the past 25 years.”

This “free from corruption” Islamic state was one where the education of girls was prohibited, the female population of the country was put under virtual house arrest, where Shia Hazaras were massacred among other human rights abuses.

One almost has to admire the man for practising what he preached. There were plenty of virulent defenders of Stalin’s Soviet Union or Mao’s China that wouldn’t have dreamt of actually going to live in those countries.

He is wholly uncritical of the Taliban, but then again Margaret Thatcher wasn’t wholly uncritical of Augusto Pinochet. A principled student movement should not give brownie points for pointing out minor flaws in an otherwise glowing review of a monstrous medievalist cult like the Taliban.

The NUS Black Students’ Campaign even invited Begg as a keynote speaker at their Summer Conference. Championing the human rights of Islamists like Begg is noble and the right thing to do, but putting them up on a pedestal as if they themselves are champions of human rights is absurd and would be laughable if it wasn’t so dangerous.

AMNESTY

When the Indian secularist Gita Saghal criticised Amnesty International for its associations with Begg in 2010, she was made to leave the organisation.

Years later, after it became clear that Mohammed Emwazi, the shadowy Daesh (ISIS) member notorious for committing beheadings in Daesh videos, had links with Cage when he was living in the UK, Saghal was somewhat vindicated.

This year Amnesty released a statement saying:

“Amnesty no longer considers it appropriate to share a public platform with Cage and will not engage in coalitions of which Cage is a member.

“Recent comments made by Cage representatives have been completely unacceptable, at odds with human rights principles and serve to undermine the work of NGOs, including Amnesty International.”

The “recent comments” in question were made by another prominent CAGE figure, Asim Qureshi. After slightly embarrassing himself in a press conference where he described Mohammed Emwazi as having been “a beautiful young man” prior to becoming Jihadi John, he appeared on television where he responded to a question about whether or not he supported the views of a preacher who advocated Female Genital Mutilation and stoning for adulterers with the phrase “Look, I’m not a theologian”. (bit.ly/1UReei9)

At a rally organised by the Islamist organisation Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Qureshi is on record as supporting jihad in Iraq, Lebanon and many other countries. (bit.ly/1Nrvng9)

I suspect that Qureshi, like many people (including many on the British left) who were so enamoured by Hezbollah during its 2006 war with Israel, is now somewhat embar-



Moazzam Begg of Cage speaking at an Amnesty International event in 2010. Amnesty International has since dropped links with Cage.

rassed for this support, not only for the bad PR it has given Cage, but also given the Hezbollah’s notorious role in fighting on behalf of the murderous dictatorship of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria.

CALIPHATE

In an interview for *Russia Today* (bit.ly/1J17dGa), it is clear that while people like Begg and Qureshi oppose the repressive measures of the US and UK governments, they do not oppose executions or stoning in principle and in fact personally support a caliphate that would in fact have those punishments at their disposal.

One can’t help feeling that any organisation led by people who, while denouncing Daesh, still believe in principle in the idea of a caliphate that executes apostates and stones adulterers is about as principled as a Maoist group opposing the dictatorial regime in the Soviet Union while supporting the Stalinist regimes that existed in China and Albania.

And it is hard not to suspect that an organisation that say, stood against nuclear weapons, who worked with and even employed figures that held such retrograde views, would probably not receive support from the NUS, and rightly so.

According to former NUS President Toni Pearce, NUS are refusing to work with Cage (<http://bit.ly/1KucBPW>).

Socialists should argue that it is right to combat the government’s measures that restrict the right of students, including Muslim students, to worship freely and to invite to their campuses speakers who may have controversial views. However it is pure folly to work with organisations that regularly align themselves with groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir, who even fall under NUS’s current no-platform policy.

Our opposition will only be successful if it is principled and consistent.

Yes to automation, under workers’ control

Letter



Bruce Robinson replies to me on automation (*Solidarity* 372) that he opposes, not all automation or sidelining of traditional skills, but automation of complex and skilled processes (as in the chemical industry) and driverless vehicles.

I’ve spent most of the last week or so at a picket line outside a container terminal in the port of Brisbane. The terminal we’ve been picketing has driverless vehicles (automated stacking cranes) which run on rails; the next-door terminal, just over a fence, has driverless vehicles without rails (automated straddle carriers). I’ve heard from miners on the picket lines that mines in Australia increasingly have driverless trucks.

Plainly the software used to guide the vehicles has to be good; and there are battles to be fought over job losses and retention of union coverage. But the workers and the union are

not opposed to driverless vehicles as such, and I think they are right about that.

According to a report by Lloyds List Intelligence, in traditional dock work “physically demanding work conditions led to workers routinely suffering accidents and sustaining personal injuries”. “Reports by the US Department of Labor from 1940–1950 [showed] it as the most dangerous form of labour in the United States”.

UNION

Safety depends on union organisation as well as technology.

The Lloyds List Intelligence report finds that injuries spiked again after the National Dock Labour Scheme was abolished in Britain in 1989 and the ports were re-casualised. But automation or semi-automation has made it easier for unions to win safe conditions. The report finds that injuries in US ports decreased by 90% between 1984 and 2006.

Other hazards in traditional dock work including “inhaling dust [from] bulk cargoes... long-term breathing disor-

ders... asbestos, poisons, acids, and fertilisers”. With containerisation and modern bulk-terminal technology, impossible without some degree of automation, it is much easier for unions to limit those risks.

This is not the sort of case where Bruce thinks automation ok, where “there [was] little skill to start with and the worker already function[ed] almost as an extension of the machine”. Being able to handle cargoes manually was not at all being an extension of a machine, and surely required more skill than driving a car. Being a dockworker in a modern container terminal requires more varied skills again. Some have engineering degrees.

Equally, to do calculations on an abacus required more hands-on skill than using times tables, and to do them on a slide rule, more dexterity than using a calculator. It does not follow that we should eschew computers, calculators, or times tables — and the new skills that accompany them — for the sake of protecting the old manual skills.

Martin Thomas, Islington

Beyond Corbyn: agitate, educate, organise

The fact that Jeremy Corbyn has an excellent chance of becoming Labour Party leader should raise the confidence and courage of everyone who wants to see a fighting labour movement in Britain, and a revival of socialism.

Alongside mindless claims that Corbyn is “unelectable”, numerous senior Tories have started to express fear about what his election would mean for British politics.

If we are going to make the most of the opportunities that are opening up, this has to be about more than electing one person. The class-struggle left needs to get organised to change the Labour Party and transform the labour movement, and Marxists need to help create the strongest, clearest possible voice for socialist ideas within the left.

ORGANISE

To fight on any front, the wonderful but rather formless movement that has swirled around the Corbyn campaign needs to develop organisation.

We need the most united, democratic organisation of the Labour left possible, bringing together the existing organisations and networks and many presently unaffiliated Corbyn supporters to work together after the election, win or lose. Without that, resisting the inevitable counter-attack by the right wing in the party and pushing forward the necessary changes will be impossible.

The Corbyn campaign, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Red Labour, the Labour Representation Committee, the Labour Campaign for Free Education, Scottish Labour Young Socialists and others should organise a conference to regroup and renew the Labour left. We should attempt to get pro-Corbyn unions, or at least groups of activists within them, on board too.

Within that left there will be many political differences, small and big – differences which should be debated in an open, comradely, manner. As a minimal united platform, we propose the adoption of a series of basic but radical class struggle demands we

want carried out by a Labour government – demands like repealing all anti-union laws, taxing the rich and nationalising the banks – as well as the democratic reforms needed to carry out this program, including stronger rights for local parties to deselect MPs.

CLASS STRUGGLE

Another plank should be Labour support for grassroots working-class struggles.

If Corbyn wins, that does not mean we should wait for a Labour election victory to sort things out. If we wait, the Tories will crush us and almost certainly win the next election. We need to use the momentum from the campaign to step up working-class struggle on every front – in workplaces and industry, in communities, on campuses and on the streets. We should demand 100 per cent support for these struggles from the Corbyn campaign and from a Labour Party Corbyn leads. In general Corbyn’s record on such things is excellent, though during the campaign there has been a bit of mumbling – for instance around the last Tube strike.

Many hundreds of Labour councillors support Corbyn, more than any other candidate. Under a Corbyn leadership, will Labour councils continue to implement the Tories’ cuts? Or will they stand with local communities and workers who want to fight them?

Key to all this is transforming our trade unions. The fact that the leaders of Unite, Unison and other unions decided or were bounced into supporting Corbyn is very welcome. It does not mean they have fundamentally changed their spots or can be allies in a serious political fight. These are the same people who have repeatedly undermined working-class struggles – including in the Labour Party – since the beginning of the crisis, and in many cases much longer. We need to transform the unions, from bottom to top, democratise them, push them into struggle and recruit a new generation of workers, all at the same time.



SOCIALISM

The super-rich and their lieutenants in Parliament, whether Tory, Lib Dem, UKIP or Blairite, have reduced political “debate” to minimal shifts within a supposedly unchallengeable technocratic worldview.

In fact, they are highly ideological; their views are inspired by “big ideas” about the world. The point is they do not want those ideas challenged. To gain ground in the long term, the labour movement needs its own vision of the future, and needs to be prepared to argue for it loudly. Otherwise we are arguing and fighting on the chosen ground of the ruling class and the establishment.

The vision of socialism which Corbyn and many of his supporters believe in is different in many respects from that of Workers’ Liberty. Nonetheless, it would be a step forward if they argued openly for it, instead of keeping it for the most part on the bookshelf. Having “socialist values” and left-wing policies is good, but it is not a substitute for popularising socialism.

Workers’ Liberty argues for a clear, sharp

vision of how capitalist society works and how we can replace it with a better one. We insist society is divided into classes – the ruling minority which owns the means of producing wealth, and the majority who work for a living and who the minority employs and exploits.

This second class, the working class, is the only force that can challenge capitalism across the board and replace it. And it can only replace it with socialism: a system based on common ownership and production by the community for need instead of profit. From that other ideas follow: about the nature of the existing state; about the difference between capitalist nationalisation and genuine common ownership; about workers’ control; about immigration controls; and about international politics and conflicts.

We will argue in this new movement for our revolutionary, class-based, Marxist ideas, seeking to convince people and to create new socialists – while encouraging our friends and allies in the movement to be true to and proud of their own socialist ideas too.

Why the *Times* hates democracy — and Jeremy Corbyn

The *Times* is establishing itself as the leading advocate of direct action to stop Jeremy Corbyn leading the Labour Party, or leading it for long.

Its regular anti-Corbyn editorial diatribes have included a call for Labour MPs to overthrow Corbyn if he is elected, and now (18 August) a call to suspend the election on grounds of supposed irregularities.

“Democracy” plays a central role in all this. The *Times* argues that a victorious Corbyn should be overthrown because he stands outside “Labour’s democratic traditions”; and now it has suddenly discovered that the party’s new system of electing leaders is not democratic either. The paper is not just expressing its frustration; it is preparing the way to undermine Corbyn’s legitimacy as Labour leader even — or particularly — if he is elected by a clear majority.

What the *Times* means by “democracy” is an easy life for Britain’s capitalists. It is outraged by the suggestion that the British ruling class be challenged by the British working class in any noticeable way. It is outraged by the idea that workers should



One example of the cartoons the *Times* has been printing during the election campaign.

have a political voice. Anyone who doubts this should note its editorial horror that Unite members will make up over 18 per cent of the Labour Party electorate – a fact liberally covered by sensationalist “stories” in the rest of the paper too. Not only are people going to vote the wrong way, but many of them are workers and members of trade unions!

Workers’ Liberty has its disagreements with Jeremy Corbyn, including over his past unwillingness to criticise regressive forces in conflict with Western imperialism. But it is the *Times*’ “democratic tradition”, not Corbyn’s, that needs to be interrogated.

A hundred and fifty years ago the *Times* supported the Southern slave-owners in the American Civil War — and at the same time denounced the idea of British workers, who opposed slavery, getting the vote. Having lost that battle, it objects strongly to the idea that the working class should use its votes to challenge its natural superiors.

When Augusto Pinochet, close political friend of the *Times*’ heroine, Margaret Thatcher, overthrew democracy in Chile, what was the paper’s response? “... whether or not the armed forces were right to do what they have done, the circumstances were such that a reasonable military man could in good faith have thought it his constitutional duty to intervene”. Yes, you read that right.

In the early 80s, the *Times* cast doubt on

whether Labour should be allowed to form a government if it won the next general election — precisely because it was horrified by the part-democratisation of the party’s structure in 1980-81.

In this topsy-turvy bourgeois viewpoint, Thatcher, who supported Pinochet and apartheid South Africa, while dramatically curtailing human rights in Britain, is a great democrat.

So are Labour right wingers who accept and defend the British state’s abuses of democracy, and who have done more than anyone to turn politics into an elite game played in the media above the heads of working people. But Jeremy Corbyn, who whatever his real flaws, has spent forty years fighting the Tories and the right of his party to defend and expand democracy in Britain is – an enemy of democracy.

All this from a newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch! Both the interests of democracy and the interests of the working class demand that we expose this cynical charade.

Unity can only be built on democracy

Jon Lansman



As ballot papers start hitting doormats and inboxes, there's no doubt Jeremy Corbyn's entry into the contest didn't just ignite the debate about Labour's future and shift it leftwards, but it defined the debate.

And whatever the outcome, that has already changed the Labour party beyond recognition. What has inspired hundreds of thousands of people to join the party as members or supporters is a yearning not only for a different type of politics but for a different type of politician.

The wider public too want politicians with honesty and integrity and passion who sound like they believe what they're saying, not just tailoring different messages for different audiences. If Labour fails to deliver that, we will lose again and again. Those enthusiastic new recruits won't stay and the SNP and Greens will reap the rewards. And UKIP will continue to win the support of working class voters who have lost confidence in us.

Liz Kendall is the only other candidate who does appear to be motivated by her political convictions. Unfortunately, even if we wanted her to, she can't perform in 2020 the trick that Tony Blair performed just once in 1997 of winning the backing of right-of-centre voters in the South disillusioned with the Tories whilst retaining (or now winning back) our core voters, working class and liberal middle class, from the SNP, Greens and UKIP. Even by 2001, 2.8 million voters had deserted us.

So what of the others? And how would they lead us to victory? The consensus seems to be that unity is the key. It doesn't seem to matter that achieving unity was exactly what Ed Miliband put greatest store upon and was very successful at but led Labour to a defeat after which so many rushed to disassociate themselves from so many aspects of the programme around which they united. The *Mirror's* editorial argues that:

Andy Burnham is the leader who will unite his party and deliver for the people who need Labour most. He combines proven experience with passion and principle. The boy from an ordinary working class background who went to Cambridge, he understands the everyday issues facing Mirror readers. He is deeply committed to Labour principles, but with the strength and leadership to make difficult decisions.

The *Guardian's* editorial on the other hand says Burnham "is personable and has passion, but has zig-zagged too often in this campaign to be seen as a leader" and so:

The right leader is the person who can bring both Jeremy Corbyn and Liz Kendall together in one big, progressive tent, offering enough moral common ground to transcend deep disagreements on



Tristram Hunt leads a group of Labour MPs who plan to start a "resistance" to Corbyn if he is elected as Labour's leader. They are setting themselves against the grassroots of the Party.

policy.... The person best placed to do that is Yvette Cooper.

Let us not dwell on the fact that these pleas for unity around a candidate are divided between which candidate that may be. The "Anyone but Corbyn" bandwagon has gathered pace and will have some effect (unless Jeremy wins on first preferences as many now suggest) though there are plenty of people too whose first preference is for Andy, Yvette or even Liz whose second will be for Jeremy. The important issue is whether unity around a leader can resolve Labour's fundamental problem.

DIFFERENCES

There are deep differences within Labour about policy, strategy and tactics, and about the professionalisation of politics.

But although many party members align themselves with a candidate, the deep differences are not so much between factions of left and right nor even between activists and less active members. Jeremy's support includes people who voted for David Miliband last time and there is no clear difference between activists and grassroots members. The real divide tends to be between the professional politicians (elected representatives at every level and the people who are employed working for them) and ordinary members.

At nomination meetings, especially those comprising delegates rather than all-member meetings, the influence of the professionals is greatest. Back in the 1980s, the Labour establishment used to claim that activists were well to the left and unrepresentative of the members. Even if it was true then, it isn't now. In the Labour heartlands at least, there is a payroll

vote at every level. And one-member one-vote has proved to benefit the left.

The response of Labour's political establishment has been to do what they have so often accused the left of doing after election defeats. Blame the electorate. They attack the concept of primaries — opening up elections and selections to registered supporters — that were introduced as a concession by Ed Miliband to their campaign which the Left opposed. We warned about "manipulation by the party's opponents" then but were ignored; now they complain about it, though the numbers are a small proportion of those joining.

If they get a result they don't like some have threatened a "coup on day one". Hostile shadow cabinet members are meeting to plan the resistance even before the result is announced. The common feature of those planning to bring down a Corbyn leadership is that they are Labour members of parliament.

We mustn't exaggerate how many would be involved because, in spite of the threats "not to serve" in a Corbyn shadow cabinet, you should never underestimate the desire of most members of parliament to advance their careers. For every one who declines to serve, there will be others willing to take their place. But it does highlight the problem that the threat to party unity comes not from the division between left and right, but from that between professional politicians and the grassroots.

Fortunately, there is a solution. The Labour party has a well defined structure of internal democracy, rooted in local parties and the internal democracy of its affiliated trade unions, internal elections based on one member one vote, with final decisions resting with party conference and an elected national executive. Electing the leader is not the end of the debate about the future direction of the party, it is the start. The position the party takes on important decisions will of course be greatly influenced by its new leader, but not decided. It is the members, collectively and through their representatives, who make our policy. If Jeremy Corbyn as leader wanted to oppose the renewal of Trident missiles, the best and perhaps only way to unite his party behind that decision is to win the debate and the vote.

Unity of purpose can only be built on a foundation of democracy.

It's been decades since Labour has practised this, so it will need the encouragement of our new leader but command and control cannot produce it. And in the battle ahead to defeat the worst Tory government in my memory, we will certainly need it.

• Taken from Left Futures blog: www.leftfutures.org

Corbyn: "economically illiterate"?

By Ralph Peters

To judge by what you hear from the camps of the other candidates for Labour leader, or the media you might believe that Corbyn's economic policy could only be implemented by a storming of the Westminster Palace with a troop of Red Guards. That is far from the truth.

Corbyn's proposals for renationalisation of the rail network and a gradual takeover of the private energy corporations are classified as "old policies" by Corbyn's opponents who attempt to portray them as unpopular. These policies would indeed have been mainstream in the 60s, 70s and 80s, prior to pro-market policies of the Tories, and the Blairites adoption of Tory policies.

But have things really changed? The wasteful competition, the absence of accountability and the huge profits of the private companies that have taken over the rail, utilities and telecommunication industries are widely known. The privatisation of everything has happened all over the world. But, unlike in for example the US, there is in the UK also a memory, however nostalgic, that things weren't always like this and shouldn't be like this.

So the Blairites' unexplained designation of "old policies" as unpopular therefore makes little sense to working-class people who are joining the Labour Party in their tens of thou-

sands. Corbyn's policies are far more popular than the other contenders and there is little doubt that in spite of the media attacks they could win him this election.

The problem I have with Corbyn's policies is that they don't go far enough. Why are the hugely profitable and competitively wasteful telecommunication industries also not brought back into public ownership? Why do we need to "buy back" these industries that have already made excessive profits over the years at the peoples' expense? Why don't we bring all the banks under democratic public control?

Corbyn also underestimates the obstructions that might be put in the way of a government trying to reverse an overwhelmingly privatised economy.

Chris Mullin has recently reversioned his 1981 novel, *A Very British Coup*. The original was written at the time when the left got close to taking the leadership of the Labour Party. Mullin's narrative is flawed in many ways but it does highlight the sabotage that the "establishment" — the senior civil service, powerful well-connected capitalists and media moguls — are capable of.

And that is why any programme of re-nationalisations needs to also advocate democratic workers' control of those industries and the need to mobilise workers at every level of society.

Public ownership is not enough. Look at the record of some

of the heads of those industries in the past. At Ian McGregor who first demolished the British Steel Corporation and then the National Coal Board when the Thatcher was in power. Or, more recently, Bob Kiley, who was appointed by Ken Livingstone to run London Transport on a very high salary and who had a very poor relationship with tube workers.

Any attempt to seriously regulate private and profit-driven corporations would be completely frustrated by powerful senior civil servants and capitalists with their own vested interests.

So the issue of who controls the economy and for what purpose has to go hand-in-hand with who owns it and how it is regulated.

The restoration of workers' and trade union rights is a unique and positive element of Corbyn's programme. As also is the desire of both him and John McDonnell MP, possibly the Shadow Chancellor under Corbyn, to have a thorough-going debate in the Labour Party.

Yes, we must end the domination of the Labour Party by pro-market politicians but we need further debate on how we ensure that workers can be involved in rebuilding an economy run for the needs of the people and not for profit.

• *The economy in 2020*: bit.ly/1h1diEs

Seize the chance the left now has!

Reason in Revolt By Sean Matgamna



In the three months since the general election hundreds of thousands of people have joined the Labour Party, the party that lost the election.

Over 600,000 people have signed up to vote in the Labour leadership election. 300,000 have become full members of the Labour Party. The rise in Labour Party membership started immediately after the general election. Twenty thousand joined in the first couple of days after the defeat. Opinion polls report that in his campaign to become leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn has the support of between 50 and 60% of those eligible to vote. He has the backing of the bulk of the trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party.

Dave Ward of the Communication Workers' Union explained that what the trade union leaders are trying to do in backing Corbyn is to shift the political axis of mainstream labour movement politics radically from the politics that has ruled the roost in the labour movement for the last 21 years, since the Blairite coup in the mid-1990s. Jeremy Corbyn, Ward said, is the antidote to "the Blairite virus".

The confluence of large numbers of rebellious people joining the Labour Party and union leaders looking for an "antidote" to neo-Thatcherism — that is what "Blairism" in the labour movement is — has produced something very like a mass movement to reclaim the Labour Party for the working class and the left. This mass movement has to be judged for what it is, not by how it measures up to our own working-class socialist politics. It would be a miracle indeed, if such a movement began with adequate working-class socialist politics.

CONVINCE

It is for socialists to work to convince this movement of the need for socialist politics.

To do that socialists must be part of the movement, engage in dialogue with it. The alarm at the idea of a Corbyn victory in the press and in the ranks of the Labour Party Blairites tells its own story. The war criminals, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, architects of British participation in the invasion of Iraq, warn against electing Corbyn. Tony Blair: "If Jeremy Corbyn becomes leader it won't be a defeat like 1983 or 2015 at the next election. It will mean rout, possibly annihilation."

Their's is the voice of the Blairite virus. Their warnings that a Corbyn-led Labour Party would be unelectable is beside the point: a left-wing Labour Party could and would have to inform, shape, educate and re-educate "public opinion". That is what a proper opposition party does. A serious political party is not, should not be, what the Blair-Thatcherite Labour Party now is — an election machine to install venal careerists in ministerial office. The influx into the Labour Party is itself evidence that this is possible. In any case, it is necessary.

There are vast numbers of people in Britain who have been deprived of a political voice and a political party by Blairite rule in the Labour Party. For a quarter of a century, at least, the working-class and the labour movement has been deprived of genuine representation in Parliament. British politics has been dominated by the political-personal rivalry of different strands of Thatcherism.

In a world on which the banks and their relentless greed have brought down catastrophe, Britain's "public discourse." has focused on the hunt for "cheating claimants" and an unending outcry against immigrants. The ideas, norms, consequences and ideology of market capitalism has not been contested by the political labour movement. All that can now be changed.

But let us take the worst possible case: what if the Labour Party in the course of educating "public opinion" were to lose an election? In 1931, when the Labour Party leader, Ramsay MacDonald and his associates went over to the Tories and to a Tory-led coalition government, with Macdonald as Prime Minister, the Labour Party was reduced to about the same number of MPs it had had in 1906, at its beginning. But if the Labour Party had not stood up to Macdonald and to the bourgeois economic consensus of that time then there would have been no 1945 victory for a Labour Party committed to the radical reform-socialist program which created the modern welfare state.

In the Labour Party drift to the right of the late 80s, "anti-Toryism" — "we must get rid of the Tory government" and never mind what is to replace it — played a deadly role in de-politicising the Labour Party. Thereby it prepared the party and the unions to accept Blairism in the 1990s and afterwards. We should also remember that when the Labour conference adopted the politics of serious reform that the Labour government implemented after 1945, Herbert Morrison, Home Secretary in the wartime coalition, shouted "You have just lost us the election!"

This, of course is not the first effort of the trade unions to reshape the Labour Party. After the 2010 general election Ed Milliband won the leadership election only because he had the backing of the unions. So had Blair in the 1990s.

Elected to Parliament in 1983, Jeremy Corbyn has for a third of a century defied all the "establishments". He has stood with the working class movement and the left, or what he thought was the left. He shares many of the weaknesses of the conventional left. The *Jewish Chronicle* indicts him for his attitude to Hezbollah and Hamas and other "terrorists" and anti-Semites.

In fact Corbyn has come out for the two states solution to the Israel-Arab-Islamic conflict. In a recent interview with the *New Statesman*, Corbyn responded to the question "Do you support Israel's right to exist" with "Yes". That makes him qualitatively better than most of the left, which is for the destruction of Israel and the removal of self-determination from the Jewish Israelis which it embodies.

The truth, though, is that it is a healthy instinct that makes young people side with the Palestinians and against their Israeli oppressors. The pseudo-left then leads them into vicious Arab and Islamic chauvinism and indifference — at best — to rampant anti-Semitism. The *Jewish Chronicle* is mistaken however, that the major problem is the willingness of left-wing leaders to share platforms and other forms of association with anti-Semites.

The basic problem in the left is "absolute anti-Zionism" — opposition to the existence of the Jewish state. From that all the rest follows. There is nothing to be done about it except to confront it politically and — for the benefit of young people and people new to politics who have not considered the complexities of the issue — argue and debate the question. That Jeremy Corbyn is for two states can be an important, positive, factor here.

WIN

What if Corbyn wins? What will the Parliamentary Labour Party do?

The precedent here, perhaps, is with what happened when the Labour Party conference in 1960 came out in support of unilateral British nuclear disarmament. The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), led by Hugh Gaitskell, refused to accept the decision. They expelled from the PLP MPs who voted in Parliament according to the party conference position — Michael Foot was one of them. In the course of a year, they battered down the rest of the party. Foot and his friends buckled and looked for compromises with a right wing that refused to compromise. They rejected a policy of deselecting MPs — that is, a serious fight with Gaitskell and his friends. The unilateralist policy was reversed at the 1961 Labour Party conference. As a result of this performance the Labour left was content for very little for a very long time afterwards.

The other precedent is, of course, when Michael Foot won the leadership of the party at the beginning of the 1980s. Michael Foot was the candidate of the left. His record, despite what happened over nuclear disarmament in 1960/61, was not that of a contemptible man. He spoke during his election campaign of mobilising a great crusade in Britain against the Thatcher government. He did not. Why not?

He was faced with a political situation that demanded extra-Parliamentary action — strikes, demonstrations, occupations — against the government. Against the properly elected government, backed by a majority in parliament. He couldn't handle it.

Amongst other things he was afraid that if the class struggle flared high in Britain, there would be a military coup, like that which in Chile had overthrown a left-wing government in 1973. He made himself the champion of "parliamentary methods" against the class struggle left (see Workers Liberty's pamphlet *Socialism and Democracy* — bit.ly/1NrA-



Crowds at the launch of Corbyn's student and youth manifesto (top) and at a rally in Llandudno, Wales, just some of those to join the Labour Party in recent months.

MUz). When he retired after the election defeat of 1983, his chosen successor was Neil Kinnock, a vaguely left demagogic MP without any record worth mentioning. Over a long period Kinnock steered the party to the right, to the all dominating idea that getting rid of the Tories was more important than having a socialist policy that was an alternatives to their politics. Kinnock prepared the way for the Blairite coup in 1994.

BEGINNING

If Jeremy Corbyn wins it won't be the end but the beginning of the fight.

A leader of the French Revolution once observed that "those who make half a revolution, only dig their own graves". A Corbyn victory will at best be only half a revolution. It will energise the PLP and its backers in the press for a serious fight back. If we don't respond blow for blow, with determination to win, then the right-wing counterrevolution will win. There will be a severe repression of the left. The chance of a new beginning for working-class politics will be squandered.

If Corbyn wins, then the left should immediately go on the offensive. Irreconcilable MPs should be de-selected. A real political life can be restored in a Labour Party that has received an alluvial flood of new members. Labour Party democracy needs to be restored. Labour Party Conference must again become the democratic labour movement forum it once was.

The Tory anti union legislation that outlaws solidarity action, the very core of labour movements, must be repealed. It is one of the great crimes of the Blair Labour Party that in over a dozen years in power it did not repeal those laws.

The labour movement has a ready made, clear-cut political focus — a mass movement in defence of the NHS. Everything is encapsulated there. The entire premise of what the Tories are doing to the NHS is the idea that the poor do not deserve the same chance of life as those who can pay for advanced medical treatment. That is an outrage against everything the labour movement believes in. Against everything most people in Britain believe in.

If we don't seize the chance which the left now has, it will not come again. Seize it!

Australian dockworkers win a first s

By Martin Thomas

On the evening of Thursday 13 August the Federal Court ordered reinstatement of 97 dockworkers whom Hutchison Ports summarily sacked with immediate effect at their Brisbane and Sydney container terminals by email at 11:30pm on Thursday 6 August.

It was a first semi-victory, but only that. In the small print the Federal Court decision says only that the 97 must be on payroll until 31 August, not that they get back into the workplaces. And it looks now as if Hutchison is trying to move out all the containers they have in the terminals so that they can shut down the business temporarily or sell it off.

Resistance inside the terminals, and at the terminal gates, will continue. On 17 August, the day shift went in as usual, but raised safety issues which resulted in the management sending back almost all the trucks which have arrived at the terminal without loading them.

Since the morning of 14 August, a crowd often of hundreds and never of fewer than two dozen has sustained a community assembly at the terminal gates in Brisbane. A large proportion of the 41 sacked workers (and many of the workers not sacked, too) have been there, together with workers from the other two container terminals in the Port of Brisbane, large contingents from other unions — the ETU (electricians), CFMEU construction and mining divisions, AMWU (manufacturing), United Voice (the former Liquor, Hospital, and Miscellaneous Union) — students, and left-wing activists.

Although the container terminals are 20-odd km from the city, on reclaimed land at the mouth of Brisbane River, the community assembly was quickly well organised, with vans provided by the ETU and AMWU, an electricity generator, an efficient kitchen, toilets, marquees, tents, entertainment for children. The main marquee illustrated the breadth of support: supplied by and emblazoned with the name of local state Labor MP Nikki Boyd, it was festooned with union flags from many unions and, for a while, an anarchist flag and a placard from the University of Queensland Queer Collective. Local singer-songwriter Phil Monsour has written a song and come to perform it.

Jackie Trad, Deputy Premier in Queensland's Labor state government, and Curtis Pitt, Treasurer, has come to bring support from the state government. John Battams, president of the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU) and no left-winger, and QCU secretary Ros McLennan, have been there a lot of the time.

Tactics have been a little different in Sydney, but in Brisbane, the dockworkers rostered on for each shift have first joined a meeting at the community assembly at the terminal gates, then marched in to work cheered by the other workers

and supporters and carrying union flags. In work, they have monitored the refrigerated containers, but insisted on safety and union negotiations before doing other work.

The first day, management returned every couple of hours to try to instruct the workers, but from 10 to 13 August the managers just went through the motions of instructing the workers at the start of the shift and then retreated to their office. Trucks have turned back on seeing the community assembly at the terminal gates.

The first semi-victory was won by astute industrial resistance and splendid solidarity. Negotiations will follow, and the workers will have to struggle — with the support of their local officials in Brisbane — to ensure that they control the negotiations. In Sydney, some workers were refused entry when they tried to resume normal work on Friday 14, and that leaves unresolved issues.

The background to tactics is Australian labour law. Industrial action is “protected” from legal reprisals only if it is about the terms of an enterprise bargaining agreement, and at agreement renewal time. “Unprotected” industrial action is common, but usually brings court orders to return to work, maybe fines on individual workers or the union, and often then a climbdown by the union.

The Brisbane tactics, apparently more “moderate” than a conventional strike, but as effective or more so in asserting union power, and less vulnerable to being countermanded by the national union leadership under legal pressure, have been possible only with an unusually strong workforce and an unusually strong local union leadership.

MEETINGS

The dockworkers have met at least twice a day at the terminal gates.

They have elected a committee, though in practice that hasn't got much further than being a list of people responsible for different jobs. After each dockworkers' meeting, the union's new state secretary, Bob Carnegie, elected only weeks before the dispute, has reported its decisions to the community assembly.

The contrast between the way Bob ran the meetings, and the way union officials usually run meetings, brought to mind Leon Trotsky's comment in his pamphlet *Whither France?* “Agitation is not only the means of communicating to the masses this or that slogan, calling the masses to action, etc. For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out its moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results. Only the Stalinists have transformed agitation into a noisy monologue. For the Marxists, the Leninists, agitation is always a dialogue with the masses”.

Unusually astute and democratically-minded leadership has helped. But just as remarkable has been an unusually united workforce. Almost all the 84 workers at Hutchison's Brisbane terminal (there are 110 in Sydney) are members of the union, the MUA, Maritime Union of Australia. That high union density is not unusual on the waterfront. Unusual was the solidarity which enabled the action to be “carried” by small groups of workers who hadn't been sacked going into work and defying management pressure.

Men and women (yes, there are women dockworkers, two at Hutchison in Brisbane, seven in Sydney: one of the Brisbane women, Hannah Matthewson, has been a leading activist in the dispute); European-Australians and Maoris; workers of more than 20 years experience on the waterfront, and workers who had come into the industry only since Hutchison started up in Brisbane in early 2013 — all treated each other with respect, and insisted the bosses treat them all with respect. Every Brisbane Hutchison's worker I have talked with has said, yes, they knew no other workplace so free from the faultlines frequent even in militant unionised workplaces, where one group of workers thinks itself a cut above another.

Maybe the fact that everyone is relatively new in the termi-

nal (operating only since early 2013), and so everyone has been part of developing it, helps. Maybe the fact that in normal times the job is organised by the workers themselves, with managers mostly staying in their office to do admin. Maybe the fact that all workers are trained to do a variety of jobs in the terminal, so there are no sharp “craft” divisions. In any case, this group of men and women have not been made united just by circumstances; they have made themselves united.

DIVISION

The one serious division in the workforce before the dispute was between operations workers and maintenance workers, created by the fact that the maintenance workers had different breaks, were based in a different building, and had a separate lunchroom.

That division was partly healed in the action: maintenance workers on each shift joined the operations workers in their lunchroom.

The Hutchison workers have also been open and welcoming to other workers coming to support them, without the attitude historically common in strong unionised workforces, of thinking themselves self-sufficient and uniquely stronger and tougher than other workers.

Hutchison, based in Hong Kong, is the world's biggest container-terminal operator. From about 2004 Australia's official Competition and Consumer Commission (set up under the Keating Labor government in 1995) had been pressing for the introduction of a third stevedoring company on the Australian waterfront, otherwise dominated by DP World and Patricks. Hutchison was named as the third operator for Brisbane in April 2007, and for Sydney in December 2009; the two new terminals opened in 2013.

The investment decisions — over \$700 million by Hutchison in the two terminals — were conditioned by an assumption on all sides that the rapid increase of container traffic worldwide and through Australian ports which had escalated since 1980 would continue. In fact world trade slumped in 2009 and has recovered only slowly since 2010.

Hutchison responded by trying to “crash” its terminals. In the run-up to the sackings, it subcontracted all its work out to other operators. Its plan must be to break the union and then either restart with lower labour costs and worse working conditions or sell off the terminals.

Our MUA, here to stay!

Our precious land, our coat of arms, no backward step be taken,

Touch one, touch all, comrades in arms, will never be mistaken,

For some corporate lie, their jelly shake, perhaps a hol-low wave,

For this, our birth right fire tested, tis cradle to the grave.

Be this the start, or this the end, with you my comrade

we shall defend,

Courage through time, to hold the line, and the powerful message it sends.

All unions unite to take up the fight, so all workers shall have their say,

And that our brothers in arms, the MUA, will always be here to stay.

By Jeff Christotell, an electricians' union member.

Full poem online at: bit.ly/MUAHereToStay

Solidarity from the U



At a recent Right to Strike protest about the new anti-union laws outside Iain Duncan Smith's constituency office, campaigners showed solidarity with Hutchison workers.

And Jeremy Corbyn took time out from his busy schedule to show some solidarity.

emi-victory

“We worked to keep this place going because we saw it as our future”

Solidarity spoke to two of the dockworkers on the picket-line.

Damian McGarry: I came from a wharf in Sydney where, while we were strong unionists, there was an us-and-them attitude. The older men had been on the waterfront thirty years, and we were only a year or two in. They did not let us have the same rights as then when we came in the gates. We were the casuals.

I was one of the first ones to come up here to Brisbane, and I decided that I would never let it get like that again. I wanted everyone who came into this place to be on an equal level. Yes, I had twenty years experience, but with the new kids coming in, we did not go down the path of “I’m the crane driver, I’m the team leader, I’m better than you”.

A lot of the new workers were non-union. I said to them: you’ve heard a lot about unions, but it’s what we do in here that will define us as a union. The type of people we are, we will look after each other. We’ve got to work the joint, and we will work all as one. So we’ve got a good close working relationship with everyone. We worked to keep this place going because we saw it as our future.

That rug has been pulled out from under us now due to gross mismanagement. It all started six months ago when they brought new managers in. Now we know what their plan is: it is to get rid of all of us.

I think this is a Free Trade Agreement blue now. I think Hutchison are heading down the path of “when we invest in your country, we expect the same results as back home. Do they get their own way back in China? My word, they do”.

Solidarity: Not entirely. The Hong Kong port workers had a big strike in 2013 and won some things, and although



MUA members outside the port gates in Brisbane

proper unions are illegal, there are probably more strikes in mainland China than in the rest of the world put together.

DM: Ok. But it worries me. There’s so much Chinese investment in Australia now. If they get away with this here, then they’re going to do the same thing in the mines and all the other places where they invest. While it’s our blue, it’s also a blue for everyone in Australia.

What now? We’ve made a decision to abide by the court orders. My view, on the ground, is that we keep those containers in there. If there comes a time when we don’t have many containers in there and we’re at risk of losing our bargaining power, I’d put a stop to it. We will see whether they’re working in good faith if they start running boxes in. If they just run out, and they don’t bring any exports in, the game has changed.

Hannah Matthewson: There are a lot of strong individuals in the workforce, and not just people who have been in the industry a long time. We’ve always seen the first 18 who started, the Phase Two boys, as seniors, but they don’t look down on us. We’re all multi-skilled, and everyone was being trained at the same time. No-one is better than another person here. We’re really lucky with that.

I’ve talked with other women on the waterfront, and here is completely different. There are two girls, me and Crystal, and we don’t get picked on or anything like that. We’re treated the same because we work the same.

Before, I was a vet nurse for seven years, and this is so much better. I loved vet nursing, but here you have the camaraderie, you feel you are part of a collective, whereas before I was a head nurse at the university and it was very divided. Here, we’re all one, and the managers are... up there. Here, the work is hard, but you’re working with your mates every single day. And the money is so much better.

What next? I reckon we just have to show a presence, make sure the company knows we’re still here and we’re not going anywhere. I don’t think the company understands how strong people are here.

Solidarity: We’re socialists, so the big picture, as we see it, is that all this stuff should be owned by the community, democratically controlled by the community, and the workers should decide how things are done in the workplace. Does that make sense to you?

HM: A hundred per cent. At first, when we said we were going to go on picket, I thought it would be twenty of us, sitting out in front. Never in my wildest dreams did I think all these people would turn up. Before we started, I didn’t understand how close-knit unions are. I’ve never been in anything like this before. I’ve only been on the waterfront two years, and I wasn’t in a union when I was a vet nurse.

Help us raise £15,000

Tube workers will strike on 25-26 and 27-28 August.

Workers’ Liberty’s rank-and-file bulletin, *Tubeworker*, has played a politically important role in the dispute, reminding the company, and the union, that the dispute is not just about pay. Raising, and popularising demands around job cuts, ticket office closures and working conditions.

Tubeworker, as a non-union-specific bulletin, also plays a vital role in cross-union and cross-grade organising. Even though Aslef have suspended their action, Aslef drivers tell *Tubeworker* they will not cross RMT/TSSA/Unite picket lines.

Tubeworker also allows us to talk about socialist ideas in the workplace, linking conditions on the job to wider politics of how society is run.

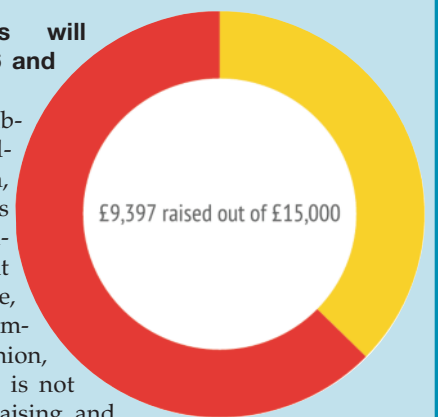
If you are a tube worker please consider subscribing to *Tubeworker*. If you are not a tube worker but live in London please consider subscribing to *Tubeworker* and distributing them at stations near you.

Whether or not you can distribute *Tubeworker* please also 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 David, Bastian and Norwich branch. So far we have raised £9,397.



40 people of all ages attended a sports day and picnic held by Lambeth Left Unity in Brockwell Park (South London) on 15 August, to raise money for the Greek Solidarity Campaign’s Medical Aid for Greece initiative. In addition to football (including a Workers’ Liberty team) and rounders, we did sack races, three-legged races and egg-and-spoon. The event raised about £100 and also took a solidarity photo for the Hutchison port workers in Brisbane and Sydney. Well done to Lambeth Left Unity — this is a positive example of socialist organising.

Syriza hard left prepares to fight cuts

By Theodora Polenta

On Friday 14 August, the Greek Parliament passed a new anti-working class memorandum. With 222 MPs in favour, but only 105 of the 149 Syriza MPs, Alexis Tsipras had to lean on support from the ruling class pro-memorandum parties of Pasok and Potami. Thus Syriza's betrayal of their popular mandate was complete.

Of the 44 Syriza MPs who did not vote for the new memorandum, 32 voted against (these, predominantly from the Left Platform), 11 declared themselves "present", and one MP was absent. Three differentiated by voting "yes" in principle and "present" for individual articles. These losses indicate weak parliamentary support for Syriza and does not justify Syriza maintaining itself in power.

Tsipras will now seek a parliamentary vote of confidence on 20 August and is threatening to call fresh elections in September. The last vestiges of the "Government of the Left" (albeit in a very diluted version) will be substituted with a government of "national unity/salvation".

On 14 August Europe's finance ministers also approved the third memorandum. In an interview on 15 August German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble expressed his satisfaction with the political agreement reached with Greece, his appreciation for the government's efforts and his intention to support Alexis Tsipras. In that same interview Schäuble highlighted how Tsipras had realised that if Greece was to remain in euro, implementation of the third memorandum was inevitable.

As with the previous two memoranda parliamentary procedures revealed the illusory character of democracy in bourgeois parliamentary democracy. The same people in Alexis Tsipras government who used to denounce the governments of Papandreou, Papademos, Samaras and Venizelos for unacceptably quick "debates", used the same methods and techniques in the name of the "emergency" and "special con-

ditions". MPs were given the 500 pages of the memorandum at 4.30 am on 13 August. This was "discussed" in the late afternoon of the same day in parliamentary committees, with MPs having the "right to state their opinion" for just two minutes. The "debate" was moved to the whole of the Parliament in the early hours of 14 August, with just short speeches by the leaders of the parties and their parliamentary representatives until dawn. The new memorandum was voted on at 4.30 am.

This is Greek democracy now. Greek citizens vote for a political party which promises to repeal austerity, then in government it violates commitments and implements the exact opposite, using laws that serve the interests of the ruling-class social minority and the imperialist creditors.

It is within this context we should assess the open bullying of the president of the parliament, Zoe Kostantopoulou, who has been banned from chairing any of the "critical voting" in parliament. With the effective endorsement of Syriza's leadership, the ruling-class parties are asking for her to be removed.

And so a new cruel assault on the living standards of the working class and the popular strata begins.

The new memorandum will remove any remaining working-class rights and living conditions that were not attacked by the previous two memoranda. Pensioners old and new will face the brunt of it. Projected cuts of €7 billion will be made to pension funds within the next 18 months. The abolition of "early retirement" and the progressive extension of retirement age to 67 will be introduced. Even disabled pensioners will see cuts in welfare benefits and pension rights.

The abolition of protection of Sunday as the rest day, and legislation to help capitalist bosses make collective redundancies will be passed.

Taxation for small and medium-sized farmers is increasing dramatically and the criteria for classification as "professional farmers" will become more stringent. This process will accelerate the concentration of agricultural production in even fewer hands.

The rigorous pursuit of government primary budget surpluses will inevitably require new cuts in health spending, education, welfare and insurance funds.

Finally the government will keep intact all the unpopular measures that were passed in the last six years though the first and second memoranda.

ESCALATION

In fact the third memorandum will escalate the onslaught of the Greek capitalist class, the EU and the IMF, against the working class, deepens their exploitation, intensify poverty and unemployment. In Greece the capitalist monopolies will be strengthened against the petit bourgeois layers, privatization will be generalised and the public wealth plundered by multinationals.

Despite the slander put about by the government and ruling-class parties about the "affinity" of Schäuble and the Left Platform for an "unorderly Grexit", Schäuble has been confirmed as a strong supporter of the Syriza-Anel government! Schäuble is now expected to help ensure German Christian Democrats MPs vote for the new Greek bailout in the German parliament.

The circle around Tsipras are saying that fresh elections can only be prevented if all 162 of the Syriza-Anel coalition give a vote of confidence to the government. This is impossible. The Left Platform, which consists roughly of 32 MPs, led by Panagiotis Lafazanis, has said that they will not give that.



Panagiotis Lafazanis of the Left Platform

However, they will probably not be voting "no" against the government; more likely they will abstain or state present" in order not to be directly responsible for overthrowing the government. But Syriza's leadership is saying that Tsipras refuses to govern by "borrowing the votes" of the other parties and so new popular mandate is needed. They are using the smokescreen of democracy to justify its opportunism.

What do they want?

In the 20 August vote of confidence they want to shift the "responsibility" of "express" parliamentary elections and the overthrow of the first "government of the Left" onto the Left Platform.

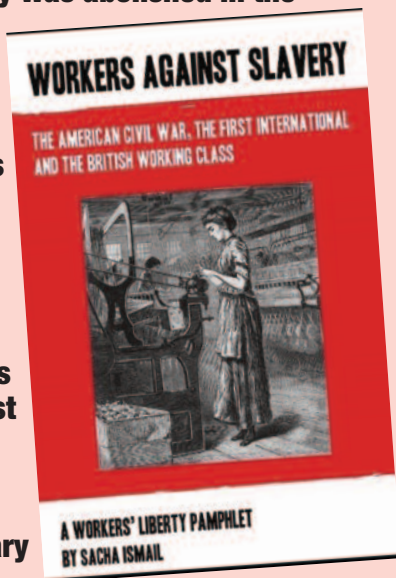
Tsipras also wants a new quick mandate before the terrible effects of the third memorandum hits his supporters. Under the pretext of "emergency elections" he can make use of his constitutional right to bypass his party and decide on the electoral list candidates, getting rid of the Left Platform candidates, replacing them with candidates that are close to the leadership, and officially transforming Syriza to a ruling-class party that at best would be a form of social democracy, the political representation of the "memorandum with a human face". The role of Syriza's emergency conference, planned for the end of September, will be "cosmetic" and reactive.

Tsipras and Syriza's leadership are aiming to disempower the Left Platform, forcing them hastily form a new party or electoral front. The Left Platform and Revolutionary Left are now discussing precisely that, a group that can represent the "Oxi" of the recent referendum and broaden the anti-memorandum struggle. They also want to weaken the parliamentary representation of the Left Platform. Therefore they hope to put an end to social movementism and the "old Syriza" of the radical left. At the same time Tsipras will be able to claim a victory for the new memorandum party of Syriza as the tough measures of the new memorandum are put through.

Ultimately Syriza will need the approval and ratification of the Greek ruling class and most importantly their EU partners/creditors to call an election. Ideally the Greek ruling class would like to avoid elections, believing these would become a cause of instability at a critical time. The other three ruling-class parties also do not want elections, due to their unpopularity. However, the Greek ruling class does not want to re-run a national salvation government within the context of the current parliament where 25% of the power is with the Left Platform; that could lead to further radicalisation of Greek society and the strengthening of the Left Platform. They fear that such a scenario will wear Tsipras out at a time when they have managed to control him. All these special circumstances make the Greek bourgeoisie "tolerant" of the possibility of an election. For the same reasons, EU lenders are bit fiercely opposing a Greek election.

The European imperialists have achieved their core political and economic purpose of subjugating and humiliating

In 1865, slavery was abolished in the United States at the end of a four year Civil War. This pamphlet looks at the stand taken during the war by workers in Britain, who organised mass protests against slavery and against British ruling-class plans for military intervention in support of the slave-owners. It tells the story of how this internationalist and anti-racist struggle revived the British labour movement, gave workers the confidence to fight for the vote, and contributed to the birth of Karl Marx's International Working Men's Association, the "First International".



Including postage the pamphlet is £3 waged, £2 unwaged. Cheques to AWL, 20e Tower Workshops, London, SE1 3DG. or online at: www.workersliberty.org/node/25435



Roughly 45% of Greek pensioners are living below the poverty line

Syriza and simultaneously maintaining the fragile cohesion of the eurozone, without substantial concessions, with the Greek people paying the cost yet again. Germany in particular has managed to present the prospect of a Grexit as a counter-example and a threat for any other potentially rebelling South European state. Given all that, the creditors do not have a good reason to prevent an election.

The voting through of a third memorandum has set back the prospect of radical change. Tsipras and his leadership will seek to transform Syriza, against the will of its members, into a political force devoid of its pro-working class radicalism and to support “critically” and as a “necessary evil” a pro-memorandum government.

A government that implements a programme which strengthens big business interests through throttling the incomes and bargaining power of the working class and the social majority, is nothing more and nothing less than a government in the service of the capitalist class. This categorisation holds, independent of any Syriza PR propaganda and attempts to distance itself from the implementation of anti-working class policies.

We need a movement of resistance, disobedience and subversion in line with the pronouncements, the programme and the struggles of “our” Syriza. The creation of a party that will be the vehicle of these struggles. A coalition of a left is urgent.

The defeat and collapse of the strategy of Syriza, which led to the mutation of Syriza, poses the need for political reflection, open discussion and self-criticism on the left, in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes. A political, organisational and programmatic break with the Syriza of the third memorandum is also necessary.

Within the left the most important political discussions are the internal conflicts within Syriza, the opposition led by Panagiotis Lafazanis and the Left Platform. The expulsion of all the Left Platform MPs from the cabinet, the scapegoating of the former Minister of Finance, Varoufakis and the President of Parliament Zoe Kostantopoulou has exposed the split within Syriza very clearly. The 30-plus Left Platform MPs who have consistently voted against the government, are touring and rallying under the slogan “The Oxi referendum was not defeated, the struggle continues”. There has been a re-opening of communication between the Left Platform and other sections of the revolutionary left. All of this indicate a new party formation and/or electoral coalition will soon be announced.

The splitting of Syriza is the natural and inevitable result of the betrayal. And it is Tsipras’ group that is responsible for that split.

One could criticise the leadership of the Left Platform of not breaking up Syriza and overthrowing the “first government of the Left”. One could accuse them for not being bold enough and exploiting the favourable conditions within the party follow earlier betrayals. For not attempting to reinvigorate Syriza’s rank and file during the referendum struggle.

The Left Platform was hesitant (i.e. Lafazanis and other MPs made confusing initial statements, said they were supporting the government but not supporting the memorandum). It did not aim to gain control of the party or renew the party’s democratic functioning. Or call for an emergency conference to confirm the Syriza’s commitment to the anti-austerity fight and subsequently expel the current leadership for their political and class betrayal. The Left Platform leadership did not provide a clear political direction to the escalating opposition inside the party especially among the youth, trade union front META, the regional and local constituents, the community and solidarity networks, the majority of the central committee. They did not go back to the streets and demonstrate outside the parliament.

EQUIVOCATION

More recently the Left Platform should have moved boldly to gain the control and the leadership of the party.

The most effective tool would have been a call for an emergency conference prior to the ratification of the third memorandum. The correlation of forces inside Syriza was and is in favour of the Left Platform. Moreover Syriza’s constitution requires only 15% of Syriza’s member’s signatures for an emergency conference to be called. The Left Platform passed symbolic resolutions at intermediate bodies and during the last Central Committee they called for a “Continuous Conference” which according to the Constitution does not have the authority to change the leadership and therefore is politically toothless.

All this equivocation gave space and time for the Tsipras leadership to use party mechanisms to fight back and get a slim majority on the Central Committee for a conference at the end of September, i.e. after the ratification of the third memorandum and possibly even after parliamentary elections. At the same time the most radical members of Syriza’s rank and file and leaving the party, compromising further the ability of the Left Platform to fight the internal battle.

Earlier the Left Platform did not openly oppose Syriza’s unacceptable alliance with the right-wing, bourgeois party of Anel. Or the decision to appoint a conservative politician, Pavlopoulos, as the President of the Republic. And the Left Platform’s political message has centred around the currency and the return to the drachma. It’s basic political premise (as epitomised by the analysis of Costas Lapavistas) is that the currency and the devaluation of the exchange rate can be for a tool of social struggles, and that is wrong.

So the Left Platform has been consistently weak. But the Left Platform has been the medium of opposition within and without Syriza and still has the political credibility to channel and lead an anti-memorandum and “Oxi” movement against the betrayal.

A political formation led by the Left Platform could play a key role in representing the political interests of the working class and the poor popular strata. The consistent stance of their MPs in voting against the memorandum government

in all three critical votes, increased its prestige in the eyes of thousands of members, supporters and voters of Syriza and has already created strong support for a new left party/united front.

In these conditions such a new party can develop quickly and contribute decisively to reconstructing the left. Mass parties are born in the conditions of major historical events and the betrayal of “Oxi” and the broader six years of anti-memorandum struggle is such a “big event”. The Left Platform and other leftist collectives decision to take an initiative and seek to organise this large class movement is correct.

The new party should not be “imposed” on the rank and file “from above” and should not exhaust its energy in the fight for strong parliamentary representation in the upcoming elections. It should not try to be a replica of Syriza. It could establish itself through a bold call to be self-organised in committees, it can develop workplace and neighbourhood organisations, base itself on appropriate policy, and try to move towards a founding congress.

Above all it needs strong political commitments. The new left party should defend its Marxism and a strong political condemnation of the betrayal of social democracy. The new party must be rooted in the most progressive class of society, the working class, especially in the most militant and advanced class-conscious elements, and also be clear on the political principles that will allow it to be the vehicle of struggle for radical social change.

Within this overall framework, the new party must avoid being identified as the party of the “drachma” and a quasi-nationalistic road to socialism. That can only be a distraction from tackling the problems of the working class in its conquest of power and the socialist reorganisation of society. The reintroduction of a national currency would reflect an attempt by sections of the Greek ruling class to load the burdens of the crisis on the working class and strengthen the position of the major export monopolies. Of course the introduction of the national currency will be a mandatory technical method for independence from the stifling monetary control of the ECB, a necessary technical means to operate a pro-working class programme, an anti-capitalist, socialist economic model of socialised, democratically-planned economy. But it is the economic model that should be at the centre of the program of a left party, and not the technical device or currency that will serve it.

Of paramount importance is the question of political alliances, the new left party should firmly pursue the joint, class unity of action with the entire revolutionary left including the KKE (Greek Communist Party), against the common enemy, of capital and the governments which serve it.

The workers have no need to return to the “good Syriza of 11-12”, the “good old Communist Party” or the revolutionary left of “self-sufficiency”. The working class, the youth and the popular strata are looking for new answers.

Aiming again at a “left government” from above when the Syriza government has tragically proven that the imposition of cracks and the victory against capital requires more advanced weapons — those of the most extensive democracy, those of worker power, workers’ militias and control of production and distribution — is not going to work. A strong left equipped with the anti-capitalist programme and with Bolshevik emphasis on revolutionary strategy and tactics is needed.

From today begins the struggle for the overthrow of the third memorandum and repeal of the previous memoranda. This struggle is directed against the government of Syriza-Anel and aims at its immediate overthrow.

The dominant fight in Greek society is between capital and labour. This is on the one hand the fight of capital to demolish the post-war consensus and install as society of destructive capitalism to meet its current needs. On the other side is labour, the unemployed and youth fighting for radical subversive changes that put the working class at the steering wheel. The left’s direction now can only be anti-capitalist and the character of the programme can only be transitional — financial, social and political measures, binding social alliances and political experiments that link to anti-capitalist strategic goals. The experience of the new potential social power of the subordinate classes will show that the rupture with the capitalist system is necessary in order not to live as slaves.

We are living through historic moments, with great potential and high risks. Only a left that that does not tell half-truths, that does not stay in the middle of the road, that does not promise workers’ power in the long distance socialist future by refusing a policy of rupture today can meet the extreme social and class polarization that has now emerged.

The two Trotskyisms

This month marks the seventieth anniversary of the murder of Leon Trotsky by an agent of the Stalinist USSR's secret police. Next month Workers' Liberty will publish a second volume of documents from the movement which kept alive and developed the revolutionary socialist politics Trotsky fought for. Just before Trotsky's death, the American Trotskyist organisation split after a dispute triggered by Stalin's invasion of Poland. The majority was led by James P Cannon, the minority by Max Shachtman. Shachtman's "heterodox" side would later repudiate Trotsky's analysis of Russia as a "degenerated workers' state"; but that was not their view at the time of the split. Cannon's "orthodox" side continued to hold onto the degenerated workers' state position and from that would flow many political errors. This extract from the introduction to *The Two Trotskyisms Confront Stalinism* by Sean Matgamna puts the record of the two sides into perspective.

The honest critic of the Trotskyist movement — of both the Cannon and Shachtman segments of it, which are intertwined in their history and in their politics — must remind himself and the reader that those criticised must be seen in the framework of the movement as a whole. Even those who were most mistaken most of the time were more than the sum of their mistakes, and some of them a great deal more.

The US Trotskyists, Shachtmanites and Cannonites alike, mobilised 50,000 people in New York in 1939 to stop fascists marching into Jewish neighbourhoods of that city. When some idea of the extent of the Holocaust became public, the Orthodox responded vigorously (and the Heterodox would have concurred): "Anger against Hitler and sympathy for the Jewish people are not enough. Every worker must do what he can to aid and protect the Jews from those who hunt them down. The Allied ruling classes, while making capital of Hitler's treatment of the Jews for their war propaganda, discuss and deliberate on this question endlessly. The workers in the Allied countries must raise the demand: Give immediate refuge to the Jews... Quotas, immigration laws, visa — these must be cast aside. Open the doors of refuge to those who otherwise face extermination" (Statement of the Fourth International, *The Militant*, 3 April 1943).

We, the Orthodox — the writer was one of them — identified with the exploited and oppressed and sided with them and with the labour movements of which we ourselves were part; with people struggling for national independence; with the black victims of zoological racism. We took sides always with the exploited and oppressed.

To those we reached we brought the basic Marxist account of class society in history and of the capitalist society in which we live. We criticised, condemned, and organised against Stalinism. Even at the least adequate, the Orthodox Trotskyists generally put forward proposals that in sum meant a radical transformation of Stalinist society, a revolution against Stalinism. Always and everywhere the Orthodox Trotskyists fought chauvinism. When some got lost politically, as they sometimes did and do, it was usually because of a too blandly negative zeal for things that "in themselves" were good, such as anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism. We mobilised political and practical support for movements of colonial revolt.

French Trotskyists, living in a world gone crazy with chauvinism of every kind, set out to win over and organise German soldiers occupying France. They produced a newspaper aimed at German worker-soldiers: some twenty French Trotskyists and German soldier sympathisers lost their lives when the Nazis suppressed it. The Orthodox Trotskyists even kept some elements of feminism alive in a world in which it was long eclipsed: Michel Pablo, in a French jail for helping the Algerians in their war of independence, applied himself to studying and writing about "the woman question". Large numbers of people shared the view of the Trotskyists on specific questions and worked with them or in parallel to them. The Trotskyists alone presented and argued for a whole world outlook that challenged the outlook of the capitalist and Stalinist ruling classes. We embodied the great truths of Marxism in a world where they had been bricked up alive by Stalinism. We kept fundamental texts of anti-Stalinist Marxism in circulation.

Read the accounts of the day to day mistreatment of black people in the USA in the mid 20th century — Jim Crow in the



Max Shachtman (left) and James P Cannon

South, where blacks had been slaves, segregation in the North, all-pervasive humiliations, exclusions, beatings, burnings, mob lynchings, the systematic ill-treatment of children as of grown-up black people. Work through even a little of that terrible story and you run the risk of despairing of the human race. The Trotskyists, challenging Jim Crow, championing and defending the victims of injustice, showed what they were. To have been less would have been despicable. That does not subtract from the merits of those who did what was right and necessary, when most people did not.

HEROES

James P Cannon and Max Shachtman, the main representatives of the two currents of Trotskyism, were, in my judgement, heroes, both of them. Cannon, when almost all of his generation of Communist International leaders had gone down to Stalinism or over to the bourgeoisie, remained what he was in his youth, a fighter for working-class emancipation.

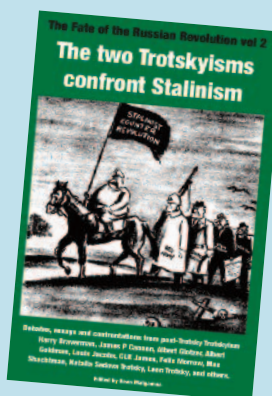
Published in
September 2015

The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism

For the revolutionary socialists, the Trotskyists, it has been a very long march through the 20th century and beyond, and over sometimes uncharted, unexpected terrain. Central to it has been the fight against Stalinism, the attempt to understand it, the battle to wipe the labour movement clean of it. This book documents the formative debates between the two main strands into which Trotskyism divided in the 1940s.

800pp £19.99/ €30 / US\$30 / AUS \$45.

To pre-order send cheque, adding £2 postage to AWL, 20e Tower Workshops, London, SE1 3DG.



I make no excuses for the traits and deeds of Cannon which are shown in a bad light in this volume. It is necessary to make and keep an honest history of our own movement if we are to learn from it. After Trotsky's death Cannon found himself, and fought to remain, the central leader of the Trotskyist movement, a job which, as the Heterodox said, he was badly equipped politically to do. He did the best he could, in a world that had turned murderously hostile to the politics he worked for and the goals he fought to achieve. More than once he must have reminded himself of the old lines, "The times are out of joint/ O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right". James P Cannon remained faithful to the working class and to revolutionary socialism. Such a book as his *History of American Trotskyism* cannot be taken as full or authoritative history, but it has value as what Gramsci called a "living book": "not a systematic treatment, but a 'living' book, in which political ideology and political science are fused in the dramatic form of a 'myth'."

Socialists today can learn much from both Shachtman and Cannon. In his last decade (he died in 1972), Max Shachtman followed the US trade unions into conventional politics and dirty Democratic Party politicking. He took up a relationship to US capitalism paralleling that of the Cannonites to Stalinism of different sorts and at different times. Politically that was suicidal. Those who, again and again, took similar attitudes to one Stalinism or another have no right to sneer and denounce. Shachtman got lost politically at the end of the 1950s; the Cannonites got lost politically, in relation to Stalinism, twenty years earlier! When Trotsky in 1939-40, living under tremendous personal strain, reached a crossroads in his political life and fumbled and stumbled politically, Max Shachtman, who had tremendous and lasting regard for Trotsky and a strong loyalty to what he stood for, had the integrity and spirit to fight him and those who — Cannon and his comrades in the first place — were starting on a course that would warp and distort and in serious part destroy their politics in the decade ahead and long after.

The Prometheus myth has been popular amongst socialist, supplying names for organisations and newspapers. As punishment for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to humankind, the Titan Prometheus is chained forever to a rock in the Caucasian mountains and vultures eternally rip at his liver. Shachtman picked up the proletarian fire Trotsky had for a moment fumbled with and carried it forward. Generations of mockery, obloquy, misrepresentation, and odium where it was not deserved, have been his punishment for having been right against Trotsky and Cannon.

This book is intended as a contribution to the work of those who strive to refurbish and renew the movement that in their own way both James P Cannon and Max Shachtman tried to serve, and served.

Race, class and the English worker

Michael Johnson reviews *Racism, Class and the Racialised Outsider* by Satnam Virdee.

Virdee covers two-hundred years of working-class history, but not as we know it. This is history, he says, “through the prism of race”, a contribution towards “unsettling the academic consensus which equates the history and making of the working class in England with the white male worker.”

From the movement to abolish slavery to the rise of black self-organisation in the British labour movement in the 1980s, taking in the struggles of Irish and Jewish workers, the rise and fall of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and the struggle against Enoch Powell and fascism along the way. Virdee has made a major contribution towards the way historical materialists view the interplay of race and class in history.

Virdee challenges “race-blind” accounts in which racial minorities figure as interesting “add ons” which nevertheless do not alter the contours of working-class history. He criticises the tendency to restrict discussion of race and class to “official” episodes, such as Cable Street in 1936 or the Grunwick strikes in 1976. Virdee notes that “the working-class in England [was] a multi-ethnic formation long before the Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury in Essex in the summer of 1948, carrying 493 passengers from Jamaica.” Race, therefore, is not peripheral but integral to understanding the making and re-making of the working-class, its composition, its struggles, and its capacity for class solidarity.

Virdee has an expansive and historically sensitive notion of race, moving “beyond currently dominant conceptualisations of racism as a colour-coded phenomenon, to bring into view other modalities of racism that have been much neglected in sociology, including most notably anti-Irish Catholic racism and anti-Semitism.” Though it is largely beyond the scope of the book, such a conceptualisation of race and of racism can be helpful in understanding the specificity of anti-Muslim racism in Britain today, where Muslims face a prejudiced hostility on the basis of presumed religious affiliation in a way which is distinct from and not reducible to the anti-South Asian racism of in the 1970s and 80s.

Virdee’s historical account begins with the rapid expansion of the Irish population in Britain in the period of the Industrial Revolution, settling in London, Liverpool and Manchester to work in the building trade, and on the docks, the canals and the railways. Though Protestantism was a constituent part of British national identity in the period, a counter-tradition of support and solidarity emerged, with English and Irish Catholic workers taking part in naval mutinies during the Napoleonic Wars, sharing an enthusiasm for Jacobinism, and a commitment to opposing the aristocracy and the institution of slavery.

As working-class pressure forced the abolition of the anti-trade union Combination Acts in 1824, it was an Irish cotton worker, John Doherty, who was behind the formation of the Grand General Union of the Operative Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland in 1829 and, later, the National Association of the Protection of Labour that united 100,000 workers across trades to defend working-class interests.

Virdee gives us a “bottom-up” account of the anti-slavery movement in Britain, turning away from the usual narratives about elite figures such as William Wilberforce, and highlighting black radicals such as Robert Wedderburn, born in 1762 in Jamaica to an enslaved African woman and a Scottish doctor.

After the Chartist movement for political democracy fell away, there was a turning point. Fearful of the working-class Chartist movement, English elites begin to focus on its ostensibly foreign and alien character, holding up the examples of Irish and African involvement as proof that it did not represent the aspirations of the workers.

Virdee argues that “this form of elite racism continued to gather momentum and began to embed itself in the wider political culture of British life”, giving the example of *Punch* magazine which referred to the 1848 Chartist conspirators as “Mooney, Rooney, Hoolan and Doolan” and a *Times* editorial which claimed it was appalled by “that extravagance of wild sedition which, for want of any other adjective, must be denominated ‘Irish’.” Thereafter, “any attempt to remake the solidarity between the English working-class and racialised minorities from the mid-nineteenth century onwards would have to contend with and overcome the growing penetration



Many of the young matchworkers who struck in 1888 were from Irish Catholic backgrounds

of racist and nationalist sentiment in British public life, including within parts of the working class.”

(An odd gap in this narrative is the movement of British workers’ against the Confederate South during the American Civil War, 1861-5. Lancashire cotton workers’ played a crucial role, against their economic-corporate interests, in stopping British intervention on the side of the cotton-owning slave-owners.)

Later in the nineteenth century, more skilled and better-off sections of the working-class were integrated into a re-imagined Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation, as the ruling-class reluctantly learned to supplement coercion with a more consensual style of rule. This was typified by the 1867 Reform Act designed to enfranchise the “respectable” sections of the working class. The integration of that section into the Liberal Party and moderate craft unions accentuated racial divisions within the working class.

For Virdee New Unionism in the late 1880s was a revolt of the “residuum”, putting the stress on the catalytic role of Irish Catholic workers, many of them young women, and leaders of Irish descent such as Will Thorne and Ben Tillett. In the solidarity shown between English and Irish workers, “the new unionism posed an alternative working class vision, one of solidarity and collective action whose success as dependent on the suppression of such racist divisions within the working class.”

SOCIALIST NATIONALISM

There are limits to this, however. Virdee rightly highlights what is called “socialist nationalism” in the workers’ movement; “an almost unthinking loyalty to the British nation” as opposed to a thoroughgoing “socialist internationalism”.

In the formally Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF), though the majority of the party “undoubtedly held a more democratic conception of the nation than that currently advanced by the ruling elites...their expanded socialist vision remained firmly located on the terrain of the nation, with Irish migrants and particularly their English-born children re-imagined as part of the English race.”

Their hope was “to expand the concept of the imagined national community so that it might encompass the majority of the working class who currently remained unenfranchised and disadvantaged... they sought the establishment of a broader, more inclusive British democracy.”

The boundaries and limitations of this “socialist nationalism” were exposed sharply by the attitude taken by some socialists to Jews migrants from eastern Europe, who resisted such straightforward assimilation even into a more expansive imagined British nation. The TUC in 1888 noted that “it was the duty of the trades to keep the matter of Jewish migration under close consideration” and Tillett, referring to Jewish workers, declared: “yes, you are out brothers and we will stand by you. But we wish you had not come.”

The tragedy of this period was that the nation was broadened and remade but “only at the expense of consolidating another modality of racism — anti-semitism.” Soon after followed Britain’s first immigration controls, the 1905 Aliens Act, aimed at Jewish migration from eastern Europe, which

was only opposed by a minority in the movement.

Virdee also gives weight to the important revolutionary internationalist minority in the British workers’ movement, so “crucial in determining the scale and scope of anti-racism that is likely to emerge within the working class.”

Socialist internationalists, particular from racialised minorities, he writes, “proved to be the conduit through which anti-racist ideas, consciousness and political practice... came to be transmitted to the left wing of the organised labour movement and beyond.”

The importance of figures such as William Morris and Eleanor Marx in keeping alive the idea proletarian internationalism is heralded, and mention is made of their fight against chauvinism through the pages of the Socialist League newspaper *Commonweal*. Other figures highlighted in carefully chosen vignettes include James Connolly, who fused socialist internationalism with anti-imperialism and anti-racism, and Theodore Rothstein, Zelda Kahn and Shaper Saklatvala from the early Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).

Virdee’s emphasis on the importance of internationalism as a component of socialist consciousness, is directed at “economism”, or the view that an upsurge of struggle on the economic front is sufficient to make a workers’ revolution. Citing the SWP’s Chanie Rosenberg’s claim that 1919 Britain was “on the brink of revolution”, Virdee notes that “what such accounts have ignored is how this upturn in class struggle was accompanied by an intensification of racism and anti-semitism amongst all social classes.” For example, there was a wave of racist riots that same year through several of Britain’s largest ports, as recently demobilised soldiers and sailors returned from war to compete with black and Asian seamen.

Virdee’s account of the early CPGB notes how it consisted, in Henry Pelling’s words, “to a remarkable degree, of persons of non-English origin”, and he cites a Special Branch report characterising an early meeting comprising mainly “Aliens, Jews and Sinn Feiners”. It is no surprise that the party’s strongholds included Glasgow and east London, areas respectively of Irish Catholic and Jewish population.

The communist movement exercised a pull for minority activists due to the tremendous inspiration of the Russian Revolution as a liberatory moment for the oppressed and exploited worldwide, and Lenin and the Communist International’s firm position on the national and colonial questions in opposition to the imperialism of the social-democrats. In a sense, the CPGB mirrored the Bolshevik party itself, which was led in large part by comrades from all across the Russian Empire, “including Ukrainians, Latvians, Georgians and Jews.”

One strength of the early British communist movement was its solidarity with racially oppressed workers. In 1930, for example, rank-and-file activists in the CPGB-led trade union Minority Movement organised solidarity between white workers and Arab seamen in South Shields.

However, the Stalinisation of the CPGB, and the rise of its cross-class Popular Front politics, led to tension between many activists and the party leadership, most notably when the former tried to prevent east London activists from confronting the British Union of Fascists at Cable Street in 1936. Thereafter, it retreated from such confrontations “indicating its increasing subservience to the shifting priorities and realpolitik of the Comintern...under Stalin’s leadership” as the strategy of the Popular Front subsumed class war and proletarian internationalism “in an emergent discourse that spoke increasingly of the ‘British nation’ and the ‘British people’.

Virdee argues that, despite the best efforts of mainly minority CPGB activists, when black and Asian workers arrived in Britain in the 1940s and 50s, “there was no progressive, anti-racist political ideological framework which would have enabled the working class to ‘make sense’ of a black presence in Britain.”

In its place, workers were drawn to Enoch Powell’s attacks on new migrant communities, who “represented the living embodiment of the Empire now lost”. This was demonstrated most notably by the racist strikes which followed the infamous “Rivers of Blood speech” in April 1968 that led to Powell’s sacking from the Tory cabinet.

Powellism showed up the left’s lack of rootedness in migrant communities, as many minorities turned to self-organ-

Continued on page 14

The shop stewards who represent the future

Martin Thomas reviews *Workers and Trade Unions for Climate Solidarity*, by Paul Hampton.

Under the carapace of often sluggish official union responses, a network of “thousands of union [workplace] reps [is] making a substantial contribution towards curbing carbon emissions across the UK”.

The movement to have workplace reps active on environmental issues, or to elect special environment reps, was stimulated by official union and Labour government policies, and in some workplaces even by bosses wanting to show a green face.

But Paul Hampton’s research finds that “even less adversarial union reps tended to go beyond the parameters laid down by government and employers”. And sometimes where “the company says it is interested in climate change”, still “when proposals are put forward by union reps, they are rejected allegedly on cost ground every time”.

“No buy-in from senior management. Seen as trouble-making!”

At least one workplace reports a “greater appetite amongst rank and file members to get involvement with tackling environmental issues than... for... traditional trade union areas. We have no problem recruiting green reps”.

The numbers are still in the thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands, and there is always the danger of union reps being channelled into just cajoling workmates about switching off photocopiers and the like. But Paul Hampton finds some workplaces where union initiatives have led to sizeable cuts in emissions, 40%, or 55%.

Official union attention to climate change tends to fade when severe immediate economic problems hit, but Paul Hampton also finds that rank and file reps, once activated, retain their interest even when climate change is out of the news.

His chapter on workplace reps is joined in the book by chapters on the interrelation of climate politics and class politics; on union debates and policies worldwide and in the UK; and on the 2009 Vestas occupation, in which workers at a wind turbine factory in the Isle of Wight occupied the workplace to try to stop closure.

Older union responses tended to be reactive and conservative, focused on defending existing jobs with little regard to long-term social viability. Paul Hampton reports exceptions from long ago, such as the New South Wales (Australia) Builders Labourers Federation’s “green bans” in the early 1970s, the action which first gave the name “green” to a strand of politics. But the TUC congress did not debate cli-

mate change until 1988.

Soon the idea of “just transition” became hegemonic. Paul Hampton recounts the origins of the idea in the late 1960s, in the thinking of Tony Mazzocchi, a radical left-wing official in the US Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union.

The “GI Bill” of 1944 had provided four years of income, health coverage, and college fees for demobilised soldiers. Mazzocchi argued for similar provision for “demobilised” workers in irreparably-polluting industries.

The formula has gone through many reworkings. It now appears in official UN documents. In 2009, in the same year as it was refusing to save the Vestas factory by nationalising it or to give legal back-up to union environment reps in workplaces, the Labour Government announced a “Forum for a Just Transition” as a joint body of bosses, unions, and government.

Elsewhere, “just transition” has been seen as a matter of pressing for worker-protection clauses in emission-reduction policies which it was assumed capitalist governments would push through anyway, rather than as a matter of the workers’ movement formulating and pressing independent policies for emission-reduction.

MODERNISATION

Most trade union policies operate within the discourse of “ecological modernisation”, which Hampton identifies as one of the two main bourgeois responses to climate change (beyond, of course, the out-and-out right-wing response of ignoring it).

Neo-liberal climate-mitigation policies see the answer entirely in terms of tweaking markets, by carbon taxes or emission trading schemes. Ecological-modernisation policies include more direct government action and the nurturing of a “climate change advocacy coalition” around “an awkward alliance of technocratic civil servants, opportunistic environmental NGOs, and profit-seeking financiers”.

However, more independent working-class responses continue to emerge. Paul Hampton describes the campaigns for “energy democracy”, centred around public ownership and control of energy industries, and for “one million new climate jobs”, to be created by direct employment in a public climate service. He explains the difference between “green jobs”, which can be more or less anything, and “climate jobs” working specifically on climate mitigation.

He also describes some unions with more advanced policies. “Considered to have the most progressive union environmental policy” is, perhaps surprisingly, the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union, which “argues for a com-

prehensive industrial policy, laying the foundation for a just transition to a low-carbon economy”.

The chapter on the Vestas factory occupation in 2009, where Workers’ Liberty activists were central in building initial momentum and organising support, tells the story of the most radical recent working-class climate action at a rank and file level.

Framing all the detailed research is an argument against seeing the climate question as one of whether an undifferentiated “we” can save the planet. “‘We’ should not assume that the same structures that gave rise to climate change in the first place will continue... ‘we’ cannot rely on the same business and state actors who caused the problem to tackle it”. The working class is the social force which has the strongest interest in tackling climate change, and the embedded sense of social solidarity and social cooperation necessary to tackle it.

Inevitably, the book bears the marks of its origins in a PhD thesis. It has one shortcoming which must be due to that, since Paul Hampton has been trenchant on the question in other writings. The limits and potentialities of trade-union thinking and action on climate change are discussed in abstraction from the issue of building a socialist working-class political party.

But if we have not built such a party, and so long as that party has not won a leading role in the unions, then there is no vacuum. Other parties, other political formations, other ideologies dominate. There will always be sallies and spurts of working-class initiative going beyond those political and ideological influences of the old society, but trade-union organisation of itself, without a socialist political-party backbone, can never stably transcend those influences.

I would also have liked to see more discussion is market-tweaking policies. Paul Hampton makes a convincing argument that current such policies are “at best insufficient and at worst a distraction”, and slams the inefficacy of the European Union’s Emissions Trading Scheme.

But markets will exist for some time even after a socialist revolution. A workers’ government would not only tolerate those markets, but also judiciously manipulate them, for example to make energy from renewables or nuclear cheaper than energy from fossil fuels.

Market-tweaking policies are surely insufficient, but they have to be part of the package even under a workers’ government. Which ones are useful (although insufficient), and which ones are merely “a distraction”? They will all have downsides: how can those be mitigated?

Race, class and the English worker

isation outside the structures of the labour movement in movements such as the Black People’s Alliance and the Indian Workers Association. This only began to shift in the mid-70s, as an upturn in industrial militancy fused with an increasingly leftward shift in the rank-and-file trade union movement, bringing socialist activists (including Trotskyists and the Labour left) into positions of influence.

In 1973, socialists were instrumental in winning the TUC conference to a call on Labour to repeal the racist 1971 Immigration Act. The rise of the National Front injected a new degree of urgency into the fight against racism, sparking movements such as Rock Against Racism (RAR) and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). In 1974, under growing pressure from the revolutionary and Labour left, the TUC General Council admitted for the first time that black workers were subject to racism and discriminatory practices, and in 1976 called unions to take steps “to strengthen the organisation among immigrant and black workers and unity between work people.”

This period then saw the introduction of the 1976 Race Relations Act by a Labour government, a moment which with all its limitations was a “testimony to the remarkable changes brought to bear on formal institutional politics in British society by the combined forces of black self-organisation, and socialist activism in the organised labour movement.”

Though eventually sold out by the TUC and defeated, the strike of a mainly Asian women workforce in the Grunwick print facility in 1976-77, and the solidarity it elicited from sections of the wider labour movement “helped crystallize how

— in the space of less than a decade — parts of the organised working-class had undergone a dramatic, organic transformation in their political consciousness.”

Virdee ends with an account of Thatcherism which stresses how the neoliberal restructuring of the economy was racialised, disproportionately affecting black and Asian workers. Rising levels of unemployment combined with increased state harassment of black youth, leading to a social explosion in the early 1980s.

Running alongside this restructuring, however were two important processes. One was an upsurge in the socialist left in Labour, especially in municipal government, which did much to push anti-discriminatory measures and support the idea of self-organisation. There was a sharp increase in black and Asian employment in local government, for example, more than trebling in the Greater London Council (GLC) between 1981 and 1986.

This tendency was given impetus by a second process, the increase in black self-organisation within the local government trade union movement. Many black and Asian workers entering the National and Local Government Officers’ Association (NALGO) and experiencing fighting racism and fascism continued in the same spirit inside the trade union movement.

The National Black Members’ Co-ordinating Committee, established in 1983, led the fight for self-organisation of black workers inside NALGO, arguing that “it is not self-organisation for the sake of being separate. It is to ensure... that black issues and rights are addressed by the trade unions to which we belong in a way acceptable to black members.”

It achieved this goal in 1985, and the principle of self-organisation was won, often in opposition to union leaderships,

across the public sector. By the end of the 1980s, areas of non-manual local state employment had been decisively opened up to black workers. Though work was “increasingly proletarianised in nature, characterised by growing routinisation and de-skilling...black and Asian workers were now no longer overwhelmingly restricted to largely unskilled and semi-skilled manual work... as they had been in the 1960s and 70s.”

This was a remarkable achievement given that “this social change took place in an era of consolidating neoliberalism” and demonstrates that class struggle has the power to challenge and shape even the most vicious of capitalist offensives.

Virdee argues that the collective action of black and Asian workers, together with socialist activists, consolidated a current of working-class anti-racism in the labour movement. It was an anti-racism “bequeathed to English society by the racialised outsiders of Irish Catholic, Jewish, African and Asian descent”, without which, “English society would have been comprised of two communities stratified by racism.”

Yet, Virdee cautions, despite the capitalist crisis today, “the elaboration and support for emancipatory projects that seek to transform our existing social relations and free us from exploitation and oppression remain marginal, especially in the West.”

This book uncovers a working-class history of immense value to socialist activists. It is up to us to absorb and expand upon the lessons and take to heart the key insight that a movement which does not have at its core the fight against oppression will be not be able to effectively challenge, let alone overthrow, the capitalist system of exploitation.

Indefinite strike at gallery

By Phil Grimm

The long-running dispute over outsourcing at the National Gallery in London has escalated, with workers taking indefinite strike action.

The bosses claim that pay and conditions will not be affected by this change, but workers are deeply sceptical. As one PCS member argued: “if privatisation will keep the same pay and conditions (at presumably the same cost as the Gallery is paying) then where is their profit going to come from?” Tellingly, outgoing Gallery director Nicholas Penny rounded off a letter to the Guardian with the hope that privatisation might see an end to the “frustration” of “many years of strike action”. The implication is clear — Gallery management thinks outsourcing to a private firm will be an effective way of breaking the union and attacking conditions.

The campaign for sacked

rep Candy Udwin’s reinstatement has won a small victory, with a court ordering the gallery to pay full pay while she fights the decision. Other workers fear victimisation, saying they have faced bullying and refusal to negotiate. The Gallery has brought in a number of managers with experience in privatisation from Government in a bid to defeat the strikes.

The strike has been effective. Bosses have had to hire external security to keep the entrances open. Many rooms, including the most popular ones featuring works like Van Gogh’s *The Sunflowers* have been forced to close due to the strikes.

Staff say that many visitors are sympathetic with the industrial action, despite disappointment about not seeing all the paintings. One striker told *Solidarity* that “people appreciate Gallery staff knowing something about the art. A skeleton staff of private security guards just isn’t the same.”

Protests at Pizza Express

By Vijay Jackson

Unite Community has stepped up this year’s activity with a focus on zero-hour contracts and tip-pinching by Pizza Express.

Zero-hour contracts are prevalent in retail, and Sports Direct is an egregious example, employing 1 in 5 of all zero-hour retail workers; despite boss and majority shareholder Mike Ashley (also owner of Newcastle United) being worth over £3.8 billion, and earning £100 million in the 2014-15 fiscal year.

As an example, the Sussex Coast branch of Unite Community – based in Hastings – is holding regular monthly pickets and leafleting of the local store. By some miracle fatcat Ashley has enough personal wealth to pay all his staff the proper living wage for the next 13 years, even if he and Sports Direct never made another penny.

Also in the works is a campaign to stop Pizza Ex-

press deducting an 8% admin fee from tips given by credit or debit card. Unite estimates that these deductions total £1 million a year. Many other restaurant chains have stopped the practice after public pressure, but “Pincher’s Express” is one of the last hold-outs to still use the practice. It’s recommended that you only ever leave tips in cash, wherever you are.

Kelly Tomlinson, a regional organiser for Unite based in Portsmouth, said “I’m so excited that the Sussex Coast branch has so many dedicated active members in Hastings – there are lots of events and campaigns being planned. Hastings is affected deeply by austerity, and Unite Community is a great place for locals to meet and organise with other likeminded people who oppose this Government’s austerity agenda.”

Unite is continuing to organise protests outside Pizza Express. Find out more at: bit.ly/UnitePizza.

Tube workers set for more strikes

By Ollie Moore

London Underground workers are preparing for further strikes in their dispute over terms and conditions, job cuts, and other issues.

Strikes are planned for 25-26 and 27-28 August, amounting to close to a week’s worth of disruption. These dates follow strikes on 8-9 July and 5-6 August.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, three of the four Tube unions (RMT, TSSA, and Unite) will take part in the strike. Driver-only union Aslef, which participated in the two previous actions, has suspended action following the promise of separate talks with the company over rostering arrangements for the introduction of all-night running (“Night Tube”). London Underground has suggested that the introduction of Night Tube, planned for 12 September, may now be pushed back.

Many Aslef members are disappointed with what appears to be a retreat from their union. The rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* commented: “*Tubeworker* supporters in depots around the combine say that many Aslef drivers aren’t satisfied with the union’s decision not to call further strikes, and want to see the dispute through — i.e., win some concrete concessions, rather than merely ‘winning’ a vague promise of further talks. Even if Aslef doesn’t officially participate in the upcoming strikes, we know there’ll be widespread refusal by many Aslef drivers to cross picket lines.”

London Underground bosses remain intransigent,

with Chief Operating Officer Steve Griffiths (recruited from Virgin Atlantic) spluttering with disbelief in an Employee Bulletin that the unions have demanded the hiring of “even more staff”.

Despite year-on-year increases in passenger footfall, and the planned expansion of services for Night Tube, London Underground is reducing its staffing level, with stations facing a net reduction of around 500 posts by 2015, and more jobs set to go in other areas.

SHIFTS

Unions are also demanding assurances around work/life balance, and protections from the detrimental physical effects of long-term shift working (and particularly night working).

London Underground has claimed that the current set up, whereby workers are guaranteed at least two days off in every seven, is adequate — failing to mention that, for workers working seven consecutive night shifts, one of their two “days off” is the day on which they finish their nights (and which they will therefore have already worked seven hours of).

Proposed new rosters for station staff will also see a drastic increase in weekend working, with some workers facing as few as five weekends off *per year*. LU has so far only committed to attempting to ensure that 75% of staff will work a “comparable number” of weekends (compared to their current rosters) in future. Unions have argued that this mealy-mouthed promise amounts to saying that all workers will face an



increase in weekend working, with 25% of workers facing a drastic increase.

RMT, the majority union on the Tube and the only one to represent workers across all grades and job roles, is demanding an increase in staffing levels to facilitate a reduction in the working week, ensuring that no worker is forced to work more weekends or nights than they do currently, and that adequate recovery time after consecutive night shifts is guaranteed.

PAY

Tube bosses have also bundled the 2015 pay settlement into this dispute.

Unions are demanding an increase in line with increases in living costs.

Steve Griffiths has argued that “there is no more money available” to finance increases in staffing levels, and has disingenuously and falsely accused unions of wanting fare hikes to fund their demands. *Tubeworker* commented: “There was still money available when LU wanted to close ticket offices (£134 million, to be precise); still money available to pay an external company to deliver condescending ‘customer service training’ (£4.2

million); still money to hire nearly 100 new ‘Area Managers’ on inflated salaries... it seems that, whenever LU wants to do something that fits in with its grand plan to de-staff the network and bring a corporate/retail culture to the Tube, it can find some dosh. But when the workers who make the Tube function make some demands of our own, suddenly the coffers are empty.

“The assertion that passengers would have to foot the bill if LU met our demands only makes sense if you share LU bosses’ view that the Tube is essentially a business that should be run on the basis of a private-sector, profit-driven culture. But, despite the wilder dreams the Tories, it isn’t. It’s a public service. If it needs more funding to increase staffing levels, ensuring workers’ wellbeing and safety and security for passengers, government should increase funding.”

Talks at conciliation service Acas were ongoing as *Solidarity* went to press.

• For regular updates on the dispute, see *Tubeworker’s* blog at workersliberty.org/twblog or follow @Tube_Worker on Twitter.

Fight against privatisation continues

By Gemma Short

Over 100 workers at outsourced refuse collection service in the London borough of Bromley will strike on 24 August and on 3 and 4 September in a dispute over pay.

Workers employed by Veolia have suffered years of below inflation pay awards. Unite, the union organising the workers, put in a claim for a 4% pay rise to make up for below inflation pay rises, but the company has only offered 1.5%.

Unite is also fighting to prevent more privatisation across the council. On 1 June council parks were transferred to the Landscape Group, who announced redundancies a day later. Workers and campaigners are still trying to prevent the privatisation of 14 libraries and other services.

In response to the campaign Bromley council has sacked Unite rep Alan Brown. Trade unionists and local campaigners organised a lobby of Alan’s hearing on 16 August. In response the

council tried to change the time of the hearing to avoid the protest.

The fight against privatisation also continues in Barnet. On 12 September campaigners will stage a “children’s march for libraries” marching from East Finchley Library, through Finchley Church End Library and onto North Finchley Library.

• More information: Bromley: bit.ly/BromleyUnite Barnet: bit.ly/BarnetUnison



Jeremy Corbyn supporting sacked Bromley Unite rep Alan Brown



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Calais: Let them in!

The solution to the Calais “migrant crisis” is very simple. The British government should help the migrants come to the UK.

Once here the migrants should be provided with healthcare, housing and education.

The benefits and help offered to migrants should be adequate and generous, not mean and miserly. The migrants should be treated with respect, not reviled as they have been by our filthy press and politicians.

If this happened we would quickly find these poor, unhappy, desperate people would become happier, normal, useful members of our society. And the act of solidarity would make our society a better, more caring place, too.

The alternative is to continue building up defences around the Eurotunnel en-

trance at Calais, at great expense and with little concern for the damage caused to the migrants who will inevitably try to find a way in.

In June and July nine migrants died in attempts to get from France to the UK. They fell from moving vehicles or we’re crushed by trucks. Many have broken arms or legs attempting to scale fences.

Why do so many risk so much to get here? Many of these migrants are refugees from the war in Syria, or from the despotic and paranoid Eritrean state. Many are fleeing war and persecution.

Why do some want to come to the UK and not France? Some speak English, not French; some have family or friends here.

The Mail and Express insist these people are attracted to the UK by high

benefits. That’s almost laughable. The treatment of refugees in the UK is a national scandal. Almost all asylum seekers are prevented from working. Asylum seekers do not jump council housing queues and money for their accommodation does not come from council funds. The weekly rate for a couple seeking asylum in the UK is £72.52. A single asylum seeker gets £36.95. Asylum seekers are not entitled to JSA, Income Support or Housing Benefit.

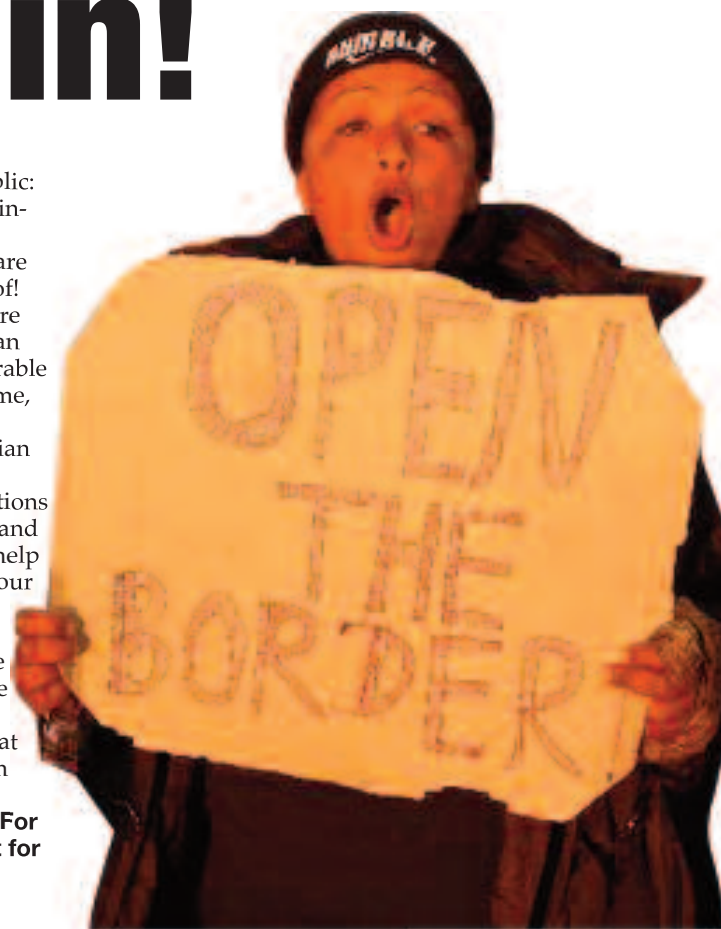
Could you live on that? No! So why should they have to? Migrants and refugees are lambasted by the press and condemned by our Prime Minister using language that normally is reserved for insects. Cameron panders to all the worst, most anti-social, prejudices

amongst the British public: small-mindedness, our insular, curtain-twitching petty meanness. These are not things to be proud of!

Cameron claims to care about the plight of Syrian refugees, but his Vulnerable Person Relocation scheme, begun last year, has allowed less than 200 Syrian people into the UK.

There are better traditions in the UK, of solidarity and internationalism. Let’s help the migrants. If it costs our society more money to help these people, let’s spend the money. There are plenty of rich people in the UK, who could pay a bit more tax — that would sort that problem out.

Let the migrants in! For freedom of movement for all!



Erdogan turns to repression as he loses support

By Ralph Peters

In the last week of July Turkey began its bombing of Kurdish forces of the PKK in Syria and Iraq.

The cover given for the bombings was Turkish President Erdogan’s eventual agreement to take action against Daesh (ISIS) and support the US’s bombing of them. But the truth is very different.

The bombings began as the two year truce broke down between Turkish armed forces and the Kurdish PKK — the militia, primarily based in Turkey, which has had an on-off war with Turkey for 30 years.

It also followed the massacre of young pro-Kurdish socialist activists in the town of Suruc who had gathered there to travel to Rojava in order to help with reconstruction efforts.

The Suruc massacre was committed by a Daesh suicide bomber. It caused outrage as the Turkish security forces have continued to turn a blind eye to Daesh activity in south eastern Turkey — the area where Kurds form an overwhelming majority.

Major protests had already happened across Turkey about Turkey blocking aid to those defending Kobane from Daesh, which, in turn, led to President Erdogan losing his government majority. The pro-Kurdish, pro-Rojavan HDP (Peoples Democratic Party) achieved 13% of the vote allowing them into parliament in significant numbers for the first time.

The HDP has taken a primary role in trying to mediate a continuing truce between the PKK and the Turkish government over the last years. On a number of occasions during the

siege of Kobane there were rumours that the PKK had pulled out. But a return to warfare by the PKK would have rekindled memories of civilian atrocities had been committed during their last war.

PROVOKE
Turkey’s bombings and threatened repression are clearly intended to provoke violence with the Kurdish people across Turkey.

They have been coupled with threats made both against the legality of the HDP as well as on the freedom of some of its leaders. Two weeks ago Erdogan called for immunity from prosecution to be withdrawn from Kurdish politicians who had links to the PKK.

The PKK is still classified as a terrorist organisation both in Turkey and by Turkey’s NATO allies in

Europe and the US — a classification that has long infuriated the majority of Turkey’s Kurds.

The HDP tried to rally its forces in a political demonstration on 10 August. At the same time its co-chair Selahattin Demirtas said the “PKK weapons must be instantly silenced; their hands have to be taken away from triggers.”

The HDP has probably little likelihood of countering demobilisation on the PKK whilst the Turkish aerial bombardment of PKK bases continues.

They are probably hoping that US pressure may be brought to bear on Turkey to stop the bombardment. After all the US has had a scarcely hidden relationship with the Rojava Kurdish fighter of the YPG/YPJ who are the only forces on the ground to have beaten back Daesh in Syria.

The duplicity of the US has been an open joke to many observers. On the one hand they want to be seen to be supporting the secular militias of Rojava against ISIS: on the other hand they allow the Turks to bomb the PKK, many of whom have evacuated from Turkey and are in the same areas of Northern Syria as those Rojavan militias and civilians.

SECTARIAN
But the US can’t be trusted.

Saudi Arabia, with whom Erdogan is close, has also stepped up its activity in Syria. The US may hope that the Saudis can bring together a less wild but undoubtedly brutal and sectarian Islamist force that can reduce any need for the secular Kurds of Rojava with their radical politics and the fighting capabilities against the Daesh.

On the other hand Erdogan is also losing support not only politically but geographically. In the Turkish province of Şırnak, an area to the north of the Syria/Iraqi border, a People’s Assembly is said to have declared the province autonomous from Turkey.

Erdogan is still weak after the elections. Of course the Kurdish forces will need to defend themselves from the repressive acts of the desperate Erdogan government.

An escalation of the repression has to be combatted primarily by the Kurds and others of the HDP joining with trade unions and workers and others in a political campaign, rather than a divisive military one to make sure that Erdogan is not able to re-make his government in an environment of repression and growing violence.”