



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 378 30 September 2015 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org



“We need to take industrial action and direct action on the streets” — John McDonnell

STOP THE TRADE UNION BILL

Right to Strike
calls protests
across country
on 2 November.

See page 7



Join Labour! Join Young Labour!

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.



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

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

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

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

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged
£9 unwaged
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged
£17 unwaged
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues)
or 50 euros (44 issues)

Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub.

Name

Address

I enclose £



Not the way to fight gentrification

By Gemma Short

The protest against and attack on the "Cereal Killer" café in Shoreditch, east London, on Saturday 26 September would be funny in its ridiculousness if it weren't so politically misleading.

"Cereal Killer" sells breakfast cereal — but at upwards of £3.50 a bowl. No doubt the owners are pretentious and middle-class.

No doubt they were only able to open such a café due to the changing nature of the area bringing in a clientele with large disposable incomes.

No doubt the laundrettes, greengrocers and corner shops that used to provide for a working-class community have been replaced. However none of that justifies the tactics used by Class War and others in their attack against "gentrification".

The idea or process of gentrification cannot be "personified" or embodied by a single shop. Why this shop, and not any of the other pubs, restaurants, cafés, bars or "pop-ups" across London who may have moved in on working-class areas and charge ludicrous prices?



Because it won't stop gentrification.

Campaigns against evictions, for rent-caps, organising rent strikes, organising to stop the selling off of social housing and campaigning for the extension of social housing will stop gentrification.

We don't want to live in ghettoised working class communities. Fetishising the "working-class street" of a greasy spoon and a betting shop is reactionary. The problem with pop-up shops, "hipster cafes", vintage shops, and "Cereal Killer" is not that they are new, creative, odd, or even that they are socially unnecessary or not fulfilling an immediate working class need.

Working-class people

should be able to enjoy whatever they want to enjoy. The problem with a lot of these middle class things is that they are often too expensive.

The other problem is that soaring rents have driven out "working class shops" and the new shops are part of a process that is driving working class people out of their communities.

Be angry at gentrification, yes. But being angry, swearing a lot and throwing things will not change the world.

Get organised, using direct action if necessary, to fight the root causes of gentrification, and for a world where anyone can run a café serving nice food if they want.

Aids drug hike: nationalise Big Pharma!

By Charlotte Zalens

Last week US based Turing pharmaceuticals hiked the price of Daraprim, a medicine used by Aids patients, by 5,000%.

The drug, which costs \$1 per dose to make, went from \$13.50 per dose to \$750 after Turing pharmaceuticals acquired the rights in August.

Turing pharmaceuticals CEO Martin Shkreli has defended the decision by saying that the \$1

manufacturing cost of the drug does not factor in marketing and distribution.

Drugs should not need marketing! Nor should they be patented. Producing, testing and supplying life saving, life changing, or even just helpful drugs should be a public utility.

Price hikes are not a new thing. And indeed the pharmaceutical industry is a roll-call of what should be scandalous behaviour; with patent races and court cases, the repression of "non-profitable" research, sky high marketing costs and lobbying (or buying off) of medical institutions and professions to favour a particular drug.

According to the OECD

70% of scientific research (not just medical) is privately funded, with 20% funded by universities and just 10% by governments. In 2011 60% of funding on cancer research conducted through the National Cancer Research Institute in the UK came from charitable sources, rather than being state funded — and that doesn't count private research. We are far from having publicly funded, accountable, medical research that benefits all.

Pharmaceutical companies are making a huge profit. According to the World Health Organisation, the global pharmaceutical industry is worth \$300bn a year, expected to rise to \$400 billion within three years. In the US from 1998 to 2014, the top five pharmaceutical companies spent nearly \$2.9 billion on political lobbying — more than any other industry. The industry also doled out more than \$15 million in campaign contributions from 2013-14.

Pharmaceutical companies should be nationalised, and run in the public interest and under the democratic control of their workers and scientific researchers.

Junior doctors plan strike

By Connor Peters

The Junior Doctors' Committee of the British Medical Association plans to ballot its members for industrial action in response to government attempts to impose a new contract from August 2016.

Junior doctors believe the contract would increase the amount of hours seen as "plain time"; an effective pay cut for junior doctors, who do more out of hours work. The contract will also remove financial penalties for employers who overwork junior doctors.

The attempted imposition of the contract has led to a furious response from rank-and-file doctors, who demanded action from the BMA. A petition on the website change.org calling for strike action got over 50,000 signatures. The BMA has responded by calling the ballot, stating it requires key commitments from the government before it will re-enter negotiations.

These conditions include proper safeguards to protect patients and their doctors including: pay for all work done; no disadvantage for those working less than full time or on parental leave; no disadvantage for those working anti-social hours; proper recognition of anti-social hours as premium time.

On Monday 28 September thousands of junior doctors protested in central London when NHS employers pulled out of talks at the last minute. It is clear that there is a strong desire to take on the government. We could be witnessing the start of a new stage in the fight to defend our National Health Service.

We should do all we can to support our healthcare workers in their struggle.

Torn by war

Muhsin Kareem, a member of the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan, was recently in London, and told us about what is happening in Iraqi Kurdistan

A bit more than a year ago, ISIL [Daesh] came to Iraq. When they came to Mosul, there were only 300 Daesh fighters.

Mosul is a big city, with thousands of soldiers and police. Within hours they all left the city. Masoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said it was a chance for the Kurds to enlarge the Kurdish state.

Areas like Kirkuk had been in dispute between the central Iraqi government and the regional Kurdish government. Barzani said he would show the Iraqi government a surprise they had never expected, and took over Kirkuk. So some people think that there was maybe a plot behind the rise of Daesh.

At that point Barzani and his party [the KDP] did not fight Daesh. They traded oil with Daesh. The PUK [the other main politico-military

force in Iraqi Kurdistan, centred in Sulaimaniya] started fighting Daesh, because they saw it as a threat.

There was some help from Turkey for Daesh — for example, Daesh was able to trade oil through Turkey, and Turkey provided a pathway for Daesh people to pass through.

After about two months Daesh attacked Kurdish areas like Mount Sinjar. These were areas that Barzani's party, the KDP, controlled. They didn't allow the Yazidis [a distinct religious community concentrated round Mount Sinjar] to form a militia for themselves, and the KDP forces just left the area.

Later Daesh attacked two small towns near Erbil [Barzani's capital]. Barzani called on the USA to help him, and Iran and the PUK tried to help Barzani's forces in their defence.

When the USA and the Kurdish peshmerga and Iranian forces, in a sort of coalition, attacked Daesh, they took back some areas. But Mount Sinjar is still controlled by Daesh. Even near Tikrit [home city of Saddam Hussein, and not far from Baghdad] many places are still controlled by Daesh.

In Syria, Kurdish forces



Yazidi refugees on the border of Bulgaria and Turkey,

linked to the PKK [a Kurdish-nationalist party mainly based among Turkish Kurds] fought Daesh and succeeded, for example at Kobane. That was inspirational for people in the region and in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Now the peshmerga mostly aren't fighting Daesh. They stay on their side of the line dividing Daesh-controlled territory and Kurdish-controlled.

I don't believe the USA created Daesh, but the USA paved the way for Daesh to emerge as a force.

In Syria the USA supported Islamist groups against Assad. We've had war in Syria for about four years now. On one side the Assad regime is supported by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah. On the other, training camps for Islamist forces are supported by Jordan and Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

TURKEY

Turkey has attacked Daesh, but only occasionally and not very much, and the PKK. I don't support the PKK, but you can't say they are just terrorists like Daesh.

The Turkish government has used its action against the PKK as an excuse to attack the opposition inside Turkey. The Turkish government has arrested about a thousand people, mostly socialists and leftists.

Before the rise of Daesh there was some economic progress in Iraqi Kurdistan, some rebuilding, some new construction. Foreign companies came to Iraqi Kurdistan and invested. There was a sort of stability. Jobs were available.

Now things are different because of the Daesh war and because of conflict between PUK and KDP. The KDP has allied with Turkey, and many Turkish companies are working in the part of Iraqi Kurdistan controlled by the KDP. The

PUK has stayed on the side of Iran. Conflicts between Iran and Turkey have affected things inside Iraqi Kurdistan.

There are two Islamist groups — the Islamic Union [linked to the Muslim Brotherhood] and the Islamic Group — represented in the Kurdistan parliament and active in both the PUK and the KDP areas.

PRESIDENT

They have backed the PUK in a conflict over the Kurdistan presidency with KDP.

Generally they support the AKP [the ruling party] in Turkey. Inside the PUK, since Jalal Talabani has been sick [Talabani, historic leader of the PUK, suffered a stroke in 2012 and has been sick since then], there are many factions and groups.

Masoud Barzani's term as president is supposed to have expired, but the KDP has been able to stop parliament taking any decisions on the presidency, so he continues in office, but not recognised by the PUK.

Many foreign companies in Kurdistan have stopped working. About 750,000 are out of the work. Road-building projects have been stopped. Many companies have been bankrupted.

Public sector workers have been getting their wages late. Pensions are very low, and there are no welfare benefits.

There are protests, but they are often repressed. There is a bit more room for protest in the PUK region than in the KDP area. Many people are now leaving the country because they have no hope.

Our party has open activities, meetings, a radio station, and sometimes gets a hearing in the mass media, but it's not easy. Both the KDP and the PUK have militias.

US and Russia talk on Syria



By Simon Nelson

David Cameron, following US policy, is calling for Bashar al-Assad to take part in an transitional arrangement for a "moderate" regime in Syria.

Cameron has not, so he says, changed his view that Assad must to, or that he should be tried for war crimes. But there has been a policy shift.

At the UN General Assembly Russia and the United States agreed to look for a diplomatic end to the Syrian civil war. How long or whether Assad remains in power is the dividing line between the two powers.

Meanwhile there has been a recent influx of Russian support to Assad. While Russia insists this is part of their fight against Daesh and is in broad agreement with the US, France and other allies which are conducting air strikes, Russian tanks and warplanes bolster the regime (as well as strengthening Russia's only Mediterranean naval base, at Tartus).

Following their meeting at the UN, Putin declared, "We are mulling over what we would really do extra in order to support those who are in the battlefield, resisting and fighting with terrorists, ISIS (Islamic State) first of all."

Obama and Putin both addressed the UN General Assembly/ with Obama emphasising a willingness to cooperate with Russia and Iran to try to end the civil war.

In contrast, Putin focused on Daesh and called for a broader coalition against Daesh that would cooperate with Assad. Russia, Iran and Hezbollah are the key backers of Assad.

Putin said, "We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian government and its armed forces who are valiantly fighting terrorism face-to-face."

"We should finally acknowledge that no one but President Assad's armed forces and (Kurdish) militia are truly fighting the Islamic State..."

The US reportedly believe that Putin's build-up of Russian forces in Syria reflects a fear that Assad's grip is weakening.

Student union reinstates feminist secularist speaker

After refusing to allow Maryam Namazie, an Iranian feminist, secularist and socialist activist, to speak at a meeting organised by the Atheists, Secularists and Humanists' Society, Warwick University student union has now backtracked. On our website: bit.ly/1jvnyek

Turkey's war on Kurds

By Hugh Edwards

After a declaration of "self-government" of Cizre by its council led by the Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party, the Turkish government launched an assault on the city.

A 24 hour curfew was imposed. An interview with one resident by Italian paper, *il Fatto Quotidiano*: "First they cut off the light, water, gas, then entered with tanks and thousands of soldiers and special 'anti terrorist' militia. From there they began to open fire on the population." The interviewee went on to describe an uninterrupted siege of eight days that left 21 civilians, including a 35 day-old baby, butchered; hundreds of gravely wounded people driven to find shelter from snipers and picked off at will if they dared to

go out to hunt for food or water.

Government thugs systematically destroyed ambulances and hospitals. The city now lies in ruin, policed by occupying forces, determined to show the Kurds that their hopes of independence and promise of social progress alongside their fellow Turkish citizens counts for nothing in Erdogan's cynical, murderous calculation.

The press has remained largely silent as this scenario of terror has unfolded, tacitly backing the Turkish government's resumed onslaught against the Kurdish PKK in Iraq as the price to pay for Erdogan's cynical decision to join the USA's war on the terrorists of Daesh (ISIS).

Erdogan's failure to win an outright victory in the recent election has driven him into a poisonous anti-Kurd crusade.

Capitalism makes us ill!

It is good that Corbyn has appointed a Shadow Minister for Mental Health, not least because the government is failing to provide adequate mental health services to meet current demand.

People in mental health crisis are routinely told there are no inpatient beds available. People who have been detained under section can find themselves transported in a cage in the back of an ambulance for hundreds of miles in pursuit of elusive inpatient beds. Neither government, NHS managers or commissioners take responsibility for this situation. There is a desperate need to re-open inpatient wards to stop this abusive practice.

However, the new Shadow Minister should also be concerned that we live in a society that has so many mental health problems. The charity Mind reckons that one in four people will experience a mental health problem each year. The NHS Confederation estimates the prevalence of common mental illness at over 17%. It is one of the main indications that all is not well with our world.

It seems to me that a central cause of mental illness is our alienation from the means of production. Capitalism blunts and limits our ability to express ourselves through our work.

For Marx, work, the purposeful transformation of nature was a defining aspect of being human. The interest most “mentally well” people take in cooking, gardening, music-making, sport and all number of craft activities are somewhat desperate attempts to seize whatever means of production are available to us for free self-expression outside “work-hours”.

Under capitalism the basic human need for work is transformed into its opposite — drudgery, enforced idleness and exploitation. We do not experience the world as something that we are continually playing a part in creating.

The new Shadow Minister should campaign for adequate services for people in crisis, but also aim to tackle the bigger question — what is it about 21st century Britain that makes so many people depressed, anxious and psychotic? Socialists should have plenty to say about these issues.

Todd Hamer, Truro

Nurses won't work for low pay

The editorial in *Solidarity* 377 blamed nursing shortages on a lack of nurse training and a lack of visas for overseas nurses. The picture is more complex.

In March 2014 the NHS employed 371,191 qualified nursing staff. At the same time, the Nursing and Midwifery Council had 680,858 active registrants. Even accounting for those nurses who are working in management, for the private sector, or overseas there must be still tens, if not hundreds of thousands of nurses have left secure NHS employment for agency work.

There is no shortage of nurses. There is a shortage of nurses willing to work for a pitance in understaffed wards. It is a sad fact that many nurses have dealt with low pay

Sticking to The Theory?

The Corbyn surge has drawn into the Labour Party hundreds of thousands of people previously outside it.

It couldn't have done that unless, before the surge, there was enough oomph inside the Labour Party to get the Corbyn candidacy going (which wasn't easy: he was the fourth person approached to be a left candidate; he wasn't keen; enough soft-left MPs had to be pressured into nominating him that enough right-wingers would feel embarrassed about denying him the few extra nominations necessary to get on the ballot paper).

In my letter (*Solidarity* 376) about which Mark Osborn complains (*Solidarity* 377), I quoted reports I'd written from Labour Party conferences since 2010 showing a slight rise of oomph. Reports written by others on Young Labour events showed similar.

I, and the comrades who wrote the YL reports, were surprised even by the size of the initial mobilisation to get a left candidate. We had underestimated.

Mark, by the way, is wrong in suggesting that Labour conferences appeared more lively because Labour leaders felt less need to carve them up. Under Ed Miliband the ruling-out of constituency proposals was

worse than before 2007. One index of the increased liveliness was louder protests against carve-ups.

When Sean Matgamna (*Solidarity* 376) wrote that the unions getting Ed Miliband elected as Labour leader in 2010 was a first self-assertion by them, he hastened to indicate the limits: Miliband made only “timid, half-strangled” moves away from Blairism.

UNIONS

Colin Foster (*Solidarity* 375) had already written that “transforming the unions, too” is necessary, or otherwise “top union officials” will at the next stage stifle the movement.

Mark, however, writes that there was no assertion in the first case, or hardly any, because the unions failed to do what they have never done — push forward a candidate of their very own — and instead backed one of the candidates emerging from the MPs.

That is like saying that rain is dry because it is not a deluge. 2010 and 2015 are the only times in the 115-year history of the Labour Party when the unions have got a leader elected contrary to the choice of the MPs. Always before they have passively accepted



Were there any signs of life at the last few Labour conferences?

whomever the MPs chose.

Mark Osborn thinks Sean, and Colin, and I, all overestimated! It's like a sailor who dismisses his shipmates' mild suggestions that some storm may be coming, and then when a storm breaks, much bigger than suggested, insists: “I admit there is a bit of rain now. But I still deny the clouds you saw!”

“My Theory says you were wrong, and my Theory is always right whatever you mere observers of facts say!”

Martin Thomas, Islington

Something to learn from the past

Although familiar with Martin Thomas's educational agitation, analytical explanations and delivery of argument in discussion over the last five years, I don't share the same historical tendency, having come to political maturity through the Communist Party of Great Britain (original CPGB 1920-1991) in its final eurocommunist stage.

Martin, in *Solidarity* 377 makes some good points in his feature on the possibilities of a Young Labour revival. Orthodox Trotskyist sects and Communist Party national roads to socialism were deeply affected by high Stalinism; influencing some in the Labour Party and post-Soviet rump organisations. They haven't gone away. This is something I recognise and accept as background to Martin's picture of organised youth in Britain.

But I don't feel it contrarian or trivial to add detail about influential Labourite Ted Willis; his role in postwar British youth culture and a couple of thoughts about left-wing

fronts — popular and united. An internationalised western youth culture was effectively built in the twentieth century by at least three generations of what were once termed “hip” capitalists: beginning some years before 1950 and ending in the 1980s with philanthropic global jukebox events, commercially marketed pop sponsorship at one end of the spectrum; and designer-style Red Wedge leftism at the other.

Apart from small scale social media niches, youth subcultures have largely dissipated. The growth cultures now are those of cross-generational ethnicity, sex, religion and gender identity movements. Social media is the place (built by new generations of trending capitalists!) where intersection is engaged with, argued about, and fought through. Martin and myself are part of the first baby boomer cohort. Everything's moving fast. Don't slow down. Resist the temptation to look back...

PAST

But there may still be something to learn from the past.

Writer and popular frontist Ted Willis was a first generation young Labour-turned-Communist as Martin notes. As an older man, Willis helped popularise youth culture in the 1950's with his script for the British film *It's Great to be Young*. A sound bite that successfully travelled across the Atlantic as North American title of early Cliff Richard movie vehicle *The Young Ones*. A decade earlier, before middle age, Willis was part of left-wing team scripting wartime film documentaries with a popular front message. Interestingly, his policeman character George Dixon, first created in this period, was developed by former policeman T E B Clarke (author of obscure early 1930's novel *Jeremy's England*, but more notably scriptwriter of Ealing Studio comedies) for late 40s film *The Blue*

Lamp.

Character police constable Dixon is shot down, social-realist style, by a gun-toting urban thug played by youthful Dirk Bogarde, then hunted in the gritty black and white film as cop-killer. “Dock Green” character George Dixon was later restored to life by Willis (who has meanwhile returned to the Labour Party) for mid-50s-early 70s television.

Unlike Lazarus, this was a half-arsed resurrection. An ageing Jack Warner played a mythological British bobby on the beat, later promoted to sergeant — yet never allowed to die, retire, or let his cosh hang out to dry. Willis himself was given a life peerage in 1964. Sergeant Dixon, now over a hundred, was dug out of his BBC vault once more, another forty years on, as anachronistic coda to David-Bowie-inspired sci-fi television police drama series *Life on Mars* / *Ashes to Ashes*.

The notion of a united front led by the working class (based on only six years 1917-1923 of Bolshevik proletarian internationalism) looks, I would argue, at least from a globalised 2015, like theological faith in some Red Jesus based on orthodox Trotskyism spouting off revolutionary impossible-isms. No different perhaps from neoliberal faith in (old) New Labour as saviours of free market capitalism.

And a look forward. Greece's Popular Unity candidate; former eurocommunist Dimitris Belantis, “is constantly thinking” according to Daniel Cooper's interview in *Solidarity* 376. Constant thinking is a deep rooted Marxist legacy based on political understanding: not real or imagined articles of faith.

A UK organisation of future left-wing European-wide socialist Popular Unity in this present moment of political possibility for the Left?

Michael Weller, south London

Labour: a time like no other

At a crowded left-wing fringe meeting at Labour Party conference, on 28 September, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell said:

"When workers want to take action, we will support them automatically. Our movement should not be divided, there is one struggle. We need to take industrial action and we need to take direct action, on the streets and into the occupations... We are campaigning to close the [immigration] detention centres, we are in solidarity with the people in them.

"The secret we discovered two centuries ago, in the fields and the workshops of the industrial revolution, and the secret now, is that we need unity, we need determination, but above all we need solidarity."

From the floor, Rachel Mullen, a young worker active in the Bakers' Union, talked about the work they are doing to unionise and organise young workers in the fast food and other service industries.

Rhea Wolfson from Labour Young Socialists talked about how LYS is building a united, democratic left in Young Labour and Labour Students. Communication Workers' Union activist Maria Exall called for the building of a united Labour left on a similar model, with strong local groups and democratic national structures, so that we can debate and agree ideas, demands and action.

Inside the conference, on trade union rights, unions had moved weak resolutions calling for opposition to the new Trade Union Bill, but saying nothing about how, or about the restrictions already put on workers by Thatcher's laws. Eleven CLPs put in more radical motions, many modelled on the Right To Strike initiative. Some including demands to repeal all anti-union laws, including Thatcher's.

The unions felt the Corbyn surge too. They accepted clauses on restoring the right to solidarity strikes, and the composite was passed unanimously.

Another successful composite from CWU and UCATT called for a "Working Group of MPs, trade unions and party members" to be established that would bring "a New Deal for Workers" policy to be brought to next year's conference.

It is a time like no other in the history of the Labour Party. Trade union leaders and some centre-ground Labour politicians are trying to keep up, but with some difficulty.

LAG

Most of the constituency Labour Party delegates at the conference would have been elected before the leader election campaign, and some up to six months before. So, we had to expect the conference to lag behind the movement.

The delay of a further conference for a full year would be unfortunate. There has been talk from both Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell about calling an additional special conference before the next regular conference in late September 2016. They should do that. At the moment a year will be a very long time in politics for a Labour Party in such a radical process of change.

Activists should push for fuller debates at local, regional and national conferences, both official and unofficial.

To the dismay of many on the left, Trident lost out in the constituency delegates' vote for areas to debate.

Unions seemed to be worried that if motions not to replace Trident were put to the vote, they would either have to vote against Corbyn, or face a backlash from their own right wings.

GMB was going to vote to replace Trident. Unite has an ambiguous policy from its 2012 conference. It says "it cannot be right to spend large sums on weapons of mass destruction when essential services are facing cuts". But it also says: "support our members and their employment until we have firm commitments to a policy that would see the jobs and skills of Unite members preserved", and right-wingers in Unite have interpreted that as a mandate to back Trident replacement.

Unite was reported as likely to abstain. Unite general secretary Len McCluskey was quoted (*Independent*, 27 September) as saying: "We won't be voting in favour of any anti-Trident resolution". But some said that the Unite delegation might vote against replacement if the issue came to the floor.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and other left groups who supported a discussion of Trident did not have the degree of influence over CLP delegates that you might



imagine. There were some signals that the vote against prioritising was swayed not by the right wing but by Corbyn people. They were worried they would lose, because big unions would vote for Trident; or that they would win narrowly and be pitched into early confrontation with the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Whatever the truth of that, debate on the issue should and will surely be organised. As far as veterans could remember, Labour conference has debated nuclear weapons only once in 26 years since Neil Kinnock managed to bury Labour's nuclear disarmament policy through a "policy review" in 1989. (That one time was 1997, when Tony Blair, triumphant, felt confident to trounce the rank and file). A policy to scrap Trident and use the money to rebuild the welfare state and create jobs is or would be immensely popular.

And we still need to build a democratically authoritative left in the party, able both to make sure debates happen in the wider party, and to organise reasoned debate inside itself.

On Europe, the old nationalistic "left" position of calling for a vote to leave the EU has collapsed. At the TUC in early September, the GMB moved a proposal which suggested the unions might vote for withdrawal if Cameron wins bad exemptions for Britain from EU policies.

(So, if he does that, we "punish" him by voting for even worse departures, and even more re-erection of barriers between nations? Huh?)

But at Labour conference GMB secretary Paul Kenny called for Labour to support "membership of the EU as a strategic asset as well as an economic asset" and "approve of UK membership of the EU". He also called for an independent Labour campaign on the issue, utterly separate from big-business pro-EU campaigns: "no platform with the CBI and no platform with the Tories".

The Labour Party is being rebuilt as never before. We should organise the newcomers into democratic local Labour Parties and constituency Young Labour groups and turn those organisations out to the streets, to campaign for the NHS, for the right to strike, and on many other issues.

The rules introduced by Blair in 1997 still oppress the Labour Party. On the first day of this conference, only 48 minutes were given to debate from the floor. On the second day, 155 minutes of debate, but only 98 of those from speakers from the floor as distinct from movers and seconders.

The new Labour Party is making a good start on changing its culture, and needs to change its rules.

And, as the left organises within this new Labour Party, we must create the space and the culture for reasoned debate within the left.

Help us raise £15,000!

Between the 4-7 October the organised political voice of the British ruling class will gather in Manchester to gloat at their successes, and plan the next assault on our class — welcome to Tory party conference!

Thankfully this year Tory party conference has been preceded by a Labour Party conference which is starting to become our parliament of our movement to counter their parliament of their class.

Hopefully the demonstration at Tory Party conference will be large and lively, but it needs to become one large event in our program of activities, rather than the beginning or end of what we do.

We must become as organised as our class enemies. We need to agitate, educate, organise to build a movement capable of defeating the Tories, but also to propagate socialist ideas and go further than just defeating the Tories.

Workers' Liberty exists for this purpose. If you are interested in our ideas, consider joining and becoming active with us.

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 Sandra, Hereward, Bill. We also raised funds through sales at Freshers' Fairs. So far we have raised £10,554.

The media and Corbyn: in place of fear

By Patrick Murphy

There is no reason why any attentive socialist should be surprised at the treatment of Jeremy Corbyn by the British media. Angry yes, surprised no.

The great majority of the print media is after all Tory. The very rare exceptions to that rule purvey a peculiarly tepid form of liberalism which holds that growing income inequality and poverty are very bad things, but that the collective working class action which would reverse it is, on balance, the greater evil. Across the entire national press only the *Daily Mirror* has shown consistent support for Labour.

Much of the reaction to Corbyn's election as Labour leader, is therefore, just the latest chapter in a very long story. Michael Foot was a scruffy, doddering old dreamer whose donkey jacket insulted our war dead. For Keir Hardie the offending article of clothing was a deerstalker hat. Neil Kinnock was a "Welsh windbag". Ed Miliband a nerd defeated by a bacon sandwich.

The British press don't like Labour and trade union leaders and the less compliant and deferential they are, the more vehemently they must be vilified. The media's essential role in these situations is, and always has been, to teach working class representatives to know their place.

NASTY

There are, however, some unique features to the treatment of Corbyn. For one thing it's nastier — he is an anti-semite, a friend of terrorists and "a threat to the security of your family".

For another, the attack on Corbyn is fed and sustained openly by leading figures in his own party on a scale that is unprecedented. Labour has a history of internal debate and difference which can be healthy and even invigorating, but can also easily be portrayed as disunity and lack of direction. It was Gerald Kaufman (now lauded for his willingness to call out Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians) who famously described the Labour manifesto as "the longest suicide note in history" during the 1983 election campaign.

What is unprecedented is that the assault on Corbyn has been co-ordinated and led by the entire New Labour establishment and started within hours of his overwhelming election victory.

Not quite caught up

By Martin Thomas

This Labour Party conference hasn't quite caught up with the Corbyn earthquake.

That the conference does not yet reflect the dramatic change in the Labour Party is no surprise. The delegates were elected, and the observers booked their places, before the Corbyn earthquake.

Still, at the very start of conference, an attempt to overturn the exclusion from debate of several proposals for democratic rule-changes by Conference Arrangements Committee was defeated only 44-56.

The narrowness of the margin is without recent precedent. Since CAC does not publish the text of motions or rule changes which it declares out of order, since they have to be challenged right at the start of conference when many new delegates have no idea what's what, and since the unions habitually vote with the platform on procedural matters, it is very difficult to win a challenge.

To a campaigner outside the conference entrance, selling papers, leafleting, lobbying, and so on, this 2015 Labour conference looks surprisingly undifferent from others since 2010.

2007 was perhaps the low point. Standing outside the

A victory, we should remember, which he won comfortably among full party members as well as registered supporters, and during which he secured the largest number of CLP nominations.

Blair, Straw, Blunkett, Charles Clarke and Mandelson, to name only a few, have been happy to feed the anti-Labour press hostile Corbyn stories on a daily basis and to appear on TV and radio to declare his (and that means Labour's) unelectability. Most of the "unelectable" stories so far have been based not on polls but on evidence-free assertions by embittered Blairites. Talk of coups to remove elected leaders is common enough, but it usually emerges after some years in office and in response to disastrous election results. In Corbyn's case the plotting began before he was even elected and was openly fed to the right-wing press.

Jeremy Corbyn's secret weapon in this battle is, however, also unprecedented. So far he has refused to play the game. In part his counter-measures are symbolic (dressing casually, refusing demands for interviews and comment, innovating with PMQs), but there is something much more substantial and interesting going on too.

IDEAS

The simple tactic of arguing for policies and ideas which are outside the Westminster consensus seems to have caught journalists unawares.

The standard media interrogation of any Labour politician brave enough to tack to the left in the last 25 years has gone something like this:

Interviewer: you appear to be calling for x, but x is a really left-wing old-fashioned idea which even leading people in your own party think is unrealistic and is unpopular with voters. Are you serious?

Labour politician: well, I think people have taken my comments out of context. I simply said that we need to think about moving towards a modern version of x.

One of the most refreshing aspects of the last two weeks has been watching a Labour leader say, in effect, "yes I am calling for x and lots of people actually do support it. Let me explain why it makes perfect sense. And I intend to use the wider movement outside Parliament to try and persuade my Labour colleagues and voters that it is the right thing to do."

Over two decades of retreat has trained interviewers to expect defensiveness from any politician of the left. When the

conference, I could see almost no young person going in who wasn't sharp-suited, bland-faced, with all the insignia of a careerist.

Since 2010 it's become different. Socialist papers sell pretty well at the conference entrance, left-wing leaflets are welcomed. Surprisingly, there are no more paper sellers in 2015 than in other recent years: at some important times, *Solidarity* was the only left-wing newspaper on sale there.

This year, the Constituency Labour Party have been able to choose four subject-areas for debate. After Blair changed all the rules drastically in 1997, and until 2003, only four subject-areas chosen by the unions — in practice, by the biggest unions — were debated.

In 2003 the unions secured a change, against Blairite resistance, so that: "At least the four priorities selected by CLPs will be time-tabled for debate, as will at least the first four priorities selected by Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations". But the conference managers then interpreted this so that if CLPs selected some areas already chosen by the unions, those selections were "wasted": most years the CLPs got only one or two areas of their own.

This year, the CLPs got their full four: refugees, housing, NHS, and mental health. The union-prioritised areas were Europe, rail, austerity, and the Trade Union Bill.



The Sun's front page headline on Tuesday 29 September. The MP quoted is Blairite John Woodcock.

response is assertive and principled they don't know where to go. The big new factor here is a loss of fear of the press — a fear which has for so long paralysed the left. This new courage arises in part from the fact that Corbyn, when he is wrong as well as when he is right, is a politician of principle and belief rather than an opportunist chancer.

DECLINE

It is informed also, though, by the knowledge that the printed press is in decline as the most popular source of news and shaper of opinion, especially amongst the young.

In an interview with the Huffington Post Corbyn summed up his attitude to the media as follows:

"MPs are a bit cut off. But if I may say so, some of the editorial rooms in some of our broadsheet newspapers are even more cut off. They simply do not understand what's going on out there. They just don't get it. The majority of people don't buy a newspaper, they read bits online and self-inform online, and so we have to reach out in a different way. And our campaign has been very much social media orientated. My personal Twitter account now has 104,000 followers, our Facebook has 124,000 likes. So those kind of numbers are enormous and of course the re-tweeting and re-sending makes it massive."

The New Labour project brought with it a strategy of neutralising the right-wing press by seeking to win the worst of them over. This entailed the courting of Murdoch, and the public denunciation of all things socialist. The new leadership seems to understand a basic truth — no left party that is any use will win the support of the current British press however cravenly its leader bows before the Queen or loudly he sings the national anthem.

Like the rest of the Corbyn phenomenon this way of dealing with a hostile media can only succeed long term if it is underpinned by a mass movement. The press will adapt and will not be wrong-footed forever. The left press will be more important than ever in the coming months and years, as will the proposal to take the policy debate out to the kind of mass meetings seen during his election campaign.

Blairism demanded and created a quiescent Labour Party. The new situation requires an active, assertive labour movement which draws millions into activity.

Labour supports the right to solidarity

By Sacha Ismail

On Monday 28 September delegates at Labour Party conference voted unanimously for a motion committing the party to fight the Tories' Trade Union Bill and the next Labour government to "legislate for strong rights to unionise, win recognition and collective bargaining, strike, picket and take solidarity action."

Those words came from a motion promoted by the Right to Strike campaign, submitted by a number of Constituency Labour Parties and in complete form by two, Broxtowe and Chesterfield.

This is the first time for decades that the Labour Party has supported the crucial right to solidarity action — to strike in solidarity with other workers in struggle. During the 1997 general election, Tony Blair boasted about his plans to keep Margaret Thatcher's anti-trade union laws — which ban solidarity action, political action, flying pickets and much else that makes trade unionism effective. During thirteen years of Labour government, the trade unions never pressed for the abolition of these laws.

REPEAL

Trade union motions on workers' rights submitted to this year's conference said nothing about repealing the old (pre-2015 Trade Union Bill) anti-union laws, with the exception of two proposals from Unite.

Firstly, allowing workplace instead of postal ballots for strike action and, secondly, making the law "compliant with ILO [International Labour Organisation, a UN agency] core conventions and European human rights obligations", presumably expressed in that way to mean different things to different people.

Allowing workplace ballots would be a potentially very significant change, even though really workers should be able to decide to strike by any method they (not judges) consider democratic.

Very positively, however, the left unions, led by Unite, did accept the Right to Strike text about positive legal rights — including the right to take solidarity action.

Speaking for the composited motion, Broxtowe delegate Pete Radcliff said:

"Sympathy action, solidarity action, political action should be the democratic right of our trade unionists. Instead they



Activists from Right to Strike protested outside Sajid Javid's office on 9 September

are all currently illegal. It is our duty to support workers who have difficulties defending themselves because of their responsibilities.

"One of the proudest actions I ever took as a trade unionist was to have taken strike action — in the steel industry before Thatcher as near as damn destroyed it — in support of nurses and hospital workers in 1981. The right to take such action was taken away from us during Thatcher's onslaught on our rights.

"We should celebrate the desire of workers to demonstrate solidarity in our movement. We should not allow it to be remain illegal."

Unfortunately, as the composite did not include the call for a Labour government to "repeal all the anti-union laws passed by the 1979-97 Tory governments" from the Chesterfield and Broxtowe motions, and so the equally important right to strike over political issues has not been explicitly supported by Labour Party conference. However we should still campaign to be given back that right.

Pete Radcliff also said of the right to strike over political issues:

"Our trade union movement should have had — and should have again — the right to question and take action against the political actions of their bosses.

"Whether it be the privatisation of our services or the provision of arms and support to the prisons of the fascist, flogging and beheading Saudi Arabia — our trade unions should have the right to take action."

STREETS

At a fringe meeting Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell spoke about the Labour Party being behind and supporting striking workers (see page 5). This is a marked and important shift from Labour party leaders of the past period. In his conference speech Pete Radcliff said:

"Democracy is not just votes in parliament — democratic rights, trade union rights should be the right of every worker.

"Our trade unions, as they move forward against this insidious Trade Union Bill, need to know that this Party is behind them — and that we will restore the rights taken away from them in the days of Thatcher as well. Let's be clear in our support for them today."

Passing motions has limited value; words on paper are no substitute for building a strong campaign to fight for trade union rights. Nonetheless, this is real progress — and progress that would not have happened without hard work by left activists to push the position of the mass movement forward.

Constituency Labour parties now need to get on the streets with trade union activists, build local mobilisation committees and organise protests, stunts, street stalls and workplace leafletting — build a movement against the bill and for the right to strike.

Protest for the right to strike

2 November, Parliament Square, 5pm

As part of the TUC lobby of Parliament on 2 November, likely to coincide with the third reading of the Trade Union Bill, Right to Strike is calling for trade unionists to protest outside Parliament. Please join us with your union banners and placards.

Not in London? Organise a protest in your area!

Make 2 November a nationwide day of action for the right to strike. Get together with trade unionists in your area to organise a protest, stunt, lobby, street stall or other activity.

Get involved with Right to Strike — righttostrike.co.uk

Can Corbyn's Labour tackle climate change?

By Todd Hamer

If Labour adopted Jeremy Corbyn's discussion document *Protecting our Planet* as its environmental policy it would be the first serious attempt by a mainstream political party to face up to the challenge of climate change.

Protecting the Planet is a huge improvement on Tory and New Labour policies, which pay lip service to environmentalism whilst subsidising big energy capitalists and polluters. It is also out-greens the Green Party, who combine reactionary Neo-Malthusian analysis with vague promises to tinker with the energy market.

The document states that the labour movement and environmental movement are natural allies, fighting for society to be run in the interests of people and planet. It identifies that the environmental crisis cannot be separated from the social crisis of gross inequality. It has a breadth of vision that is often lacking in environmental politics. For example, it is concerned that children are now growing up without contact with nature, that 29,000 people die as a result of air pollution each year and that we are ill-equipped to deal with the effects of climate change such as flooding.

Significantly, Corbyn rejects explanations of climate change based on overconsumption. He understands that a progressive future depends on our ability to produce an abundance. Abundance requires a clean energy source that is not going to fundamentally disrupt the world's ecology. The switch to renewable energy needs to happen with great urgency.

The headline policy from the document is that Corbyn wants to "socialise the energy industry". But by socialise he means following the German model where there are almost two million small energy generators, mostly households, farmers and communities. The big corporations only have a small market share. He plans to set up a statutory framework and a green investment bank that will empower "local authorities, communities, energy cooperatives and smart technology companies" to produce their own energy and sell the excess back to the grid. He wants to take the big six energy companies and the infrastructure into public ownership. The state will become the "guarantor of last resort... ensuring that Britain's 'lights never go out'".

RENATIONALISE ENERGY?

The precise way in which this works out is unclear. One interpretation is that the government would simply renationalise energy production and distribution, with or without compensation (City analysts estimate this could cost up to £185 billion). It would then implement the green investment bank and other measures to promote small renewable generation.

The problem with this scenario is that it would meet with considerable opposition. When Ed Miliband proposed to a modest cap on energy rate rises, there was uproar. Already there is whispers of coup if Corbyn wins the election. Any attempt to nationalise the large capitalist corporations would be opposed by the full force of the national and international bourgeoisie, who have a long history of bloodshed in defence of their private property. That is not to say that it could not or should not be done. But it would only be possible with a massive mobilisation of the working-class majority in defence of a radical anti-capitalist government.

If such a mobilisation took place and the energy sector was taken into public ownership and under democratic control, then it is unlikely that this movement would then stop and decide to create a framework so that every farmer, landowner and local authority could set themselves up as their own little energy capitalist. It is more likely that this future movement would take land and means of production into common ownership and democratically plan how to transform our productive forces to meet human and environmental needs.

An alternative interpretation of Corbyn's proposals is that he first intends to subsidise and incentivise small renewable production in the hope this will undermine the profits of the Big Six and eventually force them out of the British energy market. At this point the government would step in to nationalise the power stations on the grounds that it cannot let the "lights go out". The problem with this scenario is that it gives all power and agency to the capitalists, financiers and middle-class entrepreneurs and none to the workers who are actually producing the country's energy.



Whichever reading we choose, the documents limitations are due to a lack of a socialist, class struggle perspective on climate change. As any labour movement activist or any environmental activist will tell you, the single biggest obstacle to social and ecological justice is private ownership of the means of production.

Under capitalism, the world's natural resources and productive forces (machines, factories etc.) are the private property of a small number of extremely rich human beings. These people employ the rest of us, we who have no independent means of subsistence, for a number of hours each week and set us to work on their property. We relinquish our time, follow the bosses orders and so transform the world. The wage we receive is a fraction of the wealth that we produce and our bosses pocket the difference.

Capitalism is an extraordinarily dynamic economic system. Under capitalism we have produced some wonderful innovations and an abundance of wealth. We can now resist and overcome many of the natural forces that preyed on our ancestors: cold, hunger, disease etc. But to produce anything useful out of the natural world requires both technical knowledge and energy.

The exponential rise in technological capacity and wealth under capitalism has been fuelled by the burning of carbon based fossils, which has resulted in global warming and extreme weather. Fossil fuels were, and remain, an extremely abundant, compact and cheap source of energy. However, the amount of solar energy that Earth receives in a day is hundreds of times our annual consumption. A transition to a zero-carbon economy is necessary and possible. But so long as fossil fuels continue to be cheap and abundant, the people who own and control energy production have no interest in developing renewable alternatives. In fact, competition between individual capitalists and between capitalist nation states forces capitalists down this destructive path.

But while the capitalists have the power, they themselves do no work. Nothing moves in our world unless it is set in motion by workers. Even heavily automated machines require superintendence and maintenance. The solution to the climate crisis is not to create a more diverse market place of little capitalists but for workers in their workplaces to refuse to follow the bosses orders. The working-class movement can tear up the bosses' title deeds, take the world's resources into common ownership and plan a transition to a carbon-free economy based on collective ownership and democratic control.

The transition to a zero-carbon economy will undoubtedly involve many workers in the energy and fossil fuel sectors losing their jobs. Corbyn has already said that he will guarantee the jobs of those working in the defence and nuclear weapons industries. He should make a similar commitment to workers in the environmentally destructive industries. However, this should be done with the full democratic input of the workers involved.

Often factories and machinery can be used for a socially useful purpose and the workers in those workplaces are experts in these matters. In the 1970s workers at Lucas Aerospace drafted detailed plans for how their factory, which made components for fighter jets, could be used for socially useful production. During their years of struggle for workers-control they made hundreds of dialysis machines for the NHS and plans and prototypes for scores of other socially useful, environmentally friendly technology. Their example should be an inspiration for us today as we imagine the transition from a carbon-dependent to a carbon-free economy.

The unremitting increase in carbon emissions is threaten-

ing the future sustainability of our civilisation. Human beings may survive global warming, but it will mean the return to a much more brutal way of life, where we are once again haunted by scarcity. Our generation can and must act to find and develop alternative forms of energy production. But the greatest obstacle we face is that the world's resources are privately owned and controlled for the enrichment of a few. A renewed working-class movement that is willing to defy these people is the hope for humanity.

Jeremy Corbyn's trouncing of his neo-liberal opponents in the Labour leadership election was made possible by a mobilisation of working-class people sick of being managed, manipulated and pushed around by capitalist bosses, media barons and a heartless, bureaucratic state. It is a sign that a sizeable section of our class is no longer happy with the way they are ruled over at work; no longer trusting of the mainstream media and no longer willing to cede power to unaccountable ruling class. This movement should act swiftly and decisively to solve the environmental crisis lest capitalist rule returns us to a state of barbarism. Corbyn, McDonnell and the leaders of the labour movement should agitate for and support any action to this end.

The document envisages a phasing out of fossil fuel and nuclear power alongside a diversified energy market of small renewable generators. The state will take over big energy firms and their plants and run them on a much reduced scale. At a later stage Corbyn suggested that it may become economically viable to open up the South Wales coalfields and utilise clean coal energy. We think this is muddled.

ALTERNATIVES

There is nothing wrong with Corbyn's suggestion that coal may still be mined and burnt in the future. Fossil fuels are an extremely useful and valuable resource. However most scientists agree that with current technology if we burn all the current reserves of fossil fuels then we will greatly exceed the target of two degrees global warming. For the foreseeable future the policy must be "Leave it in the ground".

At the same time, a renewed effort should go to developing carbon capture and storage technologies. Just this week, Drax announced that it was halting a £1 billion project into carbon capture technology after changes to the subsidy regime meant it no longer appeared profitable. Such decisions affect all of us and should not be made on the basis of whether it is going to enrich a few private individuals.

The document argues that nuclear proliferation, accident and waste rule out nuclear energy. However, third generation nuclear generators based on the abundant metal thorium appear to address all these issues. The reactors cannot be used to make nuclear weapons. They cannot go into "melt-down". In fact, the reactors can safely run with virtually no human input. Moreover, these generators could theoretically be used to burn up a substantial part of our nuclear waste legacy, including old nuclear bombs. The first thorium power station will be opened in India next year. More research and development will be needed, but as a stopgap measure nuclear technology seems the best low-carbon option for producing a baseload energy supply.

Even without this new development, the risks and problems associated with uranium reactors are overstated. Many countries in the world utilise nuclear power without building weapons of mass destruction. Deaths and health problems associated with fossil fuel production, far exceed those of the nuclear industry. Waste is a problem, but as long as the waste is well managed there are solutions at least for the timescale in which greenhouse effects otherwise threaten catastrophe.

Regardless of the fine details, there is an urgent need for the government to fund scientists and engineers to develop low-carbon technologies. For many years, university science and engineering departments have been funded and controlled by big corporations and academic freedoms have been curtailed as R&D has been tailored towards the search for profit. Resources should be made available so that our best minds can turn their attention towards solving the climate crisis.

A workers' government in Britain, backed by a powerful and combative workers movement, could achieve great technological leaps forward in low-carbon technology and play a role internationally in halting the exponential growth of carbon emissions.

Realism or illusion?

While the Labour right openly try to sabotage and smear Jeremy Corbyn, more subtle Labour centrists tell him that he must move only as fast as the middle ground.

The Labour left surge of the early 1980s saw a similar debate. That makes this exchange from that time relevant today.

Vladimir Derer was the secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, a central force in that early-1980s surge and still important today. Sean Matgamna of Workers' Liberty replied to him in *Socialist Organiser*, then the paper of a broad range of activists on the Labour left.

Vladimir Derer criticises Sean Matgamna

Comrade Matgamna claims that our “central weakness is that the working class movement does not yet have a coherent policy to deal with the enormous crisis of British society.

“It has a hodge-podge of measures which propose more or less drastic tinkering with the economy and the political system — not its replacement by a radically new system.”

What we need, according to comrade Matgamna, is “the submission of the economy to democratic planning on the basis of social ownership...” and the takeover by the working class of 200 monopolies.

To do this “we need to organise ourselves to take on the existing rulers” and here “the great hole in the leftward-looking renewal of the Labour Party is on the question of the state. It is an illusion that the transformation of the labour movement can be done in segmented stages.”

Matgamna says: “We must not confuse Parliament with state power”. [But] the state is not a monolith. The bourgeois democratic state. i.e. a state in which the ruling class relies on those who operate the representative democratic institutions to ensure that the latter are used in its interest, is in fact full of contradictions. Under certain circumstances its representative institutions can be used against the interests of the ruling class and the reassertion of the bourgeois supremacy within the state is by no means automatic.

The use of the army and even of the police against a government enjoying legitimacy by bourgeois standards is not a simple operation. But, of course, no serious socialist would deny that such dangers do exist.

However, should the reiteration of old truths — particularly when they are presented in a somewhat dated setting — be our first priority? For the whole underlying trend of argument [of] comrade Matgamna... is directed against reformist illusions.

These certainly do exist among the broad masses (who do not read *Socialist Organiser*) and among many Labour Party members (who are just a little less likely to do so). But these illusions do not exist amongst the many socialists who do read SO and whom comrade Matgamna hopes to rally round its platform.

The main problem on the left at this stage is not reformist illusions but sectarian illusions and practices.

It was not reformist illusions which prevented — during the last forty or so years — the left from producing a credible alternative to Labour's right wing leadership. It was the left's preference for a fantasy world inhabited not by real people but lifeless formulae. And it was the left's steadfast refusal to engage in such political struggles as are possible in the environment we actually live.

It is true that comrade Matgamna wishes to see “the broadest possible alliances for the immediate struggles...” But these battles, important though they are, are already going on. What is not going on, and what needs to be started, is the struggle to give the left political credibility.

Participation in existing struggles is not enough to do so. Nor will tireless repetition of the somewhat abstract recommendation to the working class to break with reformism and to adopt a radical socialist programme achieve it.

This approach has been tried for decades and failed to produce results. A socialist group to become politically influential, must show its capacity to gain support among the broad masses of the people as well as among the more class conscious elements of the working class. But people can be organised only around such demands as they are already prepared to support. The programme of the left at any given stage must therefore correspond to the existing level of con-

sciousness of the people to whom we are appealing.

If the great majority believe that improvements in their condition can be achieved through the pursuit of social reforms, it is no good lecturing them about the need for a revolution. Whether social reforms can actually be achieved without radical change in the political structure can only be shown in practice and in any case most people will learn only from their own experience.

Only if those who oppose major social reforms resort to extra-parliamentary resistance will it be possible to convince people that extra-parliamentary means are required to reinforce the powers of reforming governments trying to carry out their programme.

FORCE

Clearly the possibility that the ruling class may resort to force in order to safeguard its privileges must always be taken into account.

As must the need to prepare appropriate counter-measures. Nevertheless this is not the situation we are facing at this stage. The problem is not what extra-parliamentary action is appropriate to organise support for a reforming government but is to get such a government.

And there is, of course, no guarantee, to put it mildly, that the next Labour government will be a reforming one. Given the present level of consciousness among Labour Party members, Labour supporters and Labour voters, there is not a hope that they would be prepared to support the kind of programme of radical social change that comrade Matgamna advocates. Does this mean that there is no hope for socialism in our time? No.

The problem with the last Labour government was not that it lacked a programme which was sufficiently radical — which of course it did. The trouble was that it failed to carry out even the programme of the mild social reforms on which it was elected.

This failure was not due to the fact that “nothing can be achieved within the system”. It was not “the system” which stopped virtuous men and women from carrying out their excellent intentions.

Barbara Castle put her finger on the real problem: it was not the Civil Service, let alone the police and the army... It was her Cabinet colleagues.

The first task of the left must therefore be to ensure that the next Labour government is composed of men and women ready to honour Labour's election pledges and to ensure that these pledges are as radical as the present level of consciousness of Labour Party members allows.

Labour Party members would respond positively to such aims and would rally around an organisation campaigning on such a platform.

If the left agreed to campaign on a programme of reforms it would be the first step towards winning political credibility and support.

Sean Matgamna replies

No serious socialist would counterpose socialism to the fight for reforms. Now, on the contrary, the fight for reforms and against the vicious Tory counter-reforms is especially important...

But it would be a self-neutering exercise if the left were to confine itself to reforms and see this as counterposed for the immediate future to the fight for a new society, for socialism.

What kind of reform programme would Vladimir Derer put forward now? Would it be limited to what was considered — by an a-priori calculation — to be “possible” without having to shake or overthrow capitalism? Or would it be drawn up according to the minimum that the working class can settle for if it is to begin to solve the problems loaded onto it by the crisis of capitalism — mass unemployment for example?

Vladimir Derer should think out what even a modest reform like the 35 hour week (which would only go part of the way to answering the workers' needs) implies in today's conditions. Such a reform is inconceivable without mass industrial/political mobilisations of the working class. Even should a Labour government decree it, it would not be implemented unless the labour movement mobilised itself and



Does Greece have lessons for the Corbyn surge? We will be discussing that at our next London forum on 15 October, 7pm at the Lucas Arms — bit.ly/greeceforum

fought to impose it. Otherwise it would suffer the fate of the 40 hour week decreed by a reforming government in France in 1936: a dead letter within a short time.

The capitalists would resist, defy the law, evade it, use the courts to obstruct it, or organise lockouts if necessary. They could probably be defeated only through sweeping nationalisations and replacement of the present managers by people elected by the workers.

We will only win any serious reforms now on the basis of struggles which shake the capitalist system, perhaps to its foundation. That does not mean, as one might conclude from what Vladimir Derer says, that it is all hopeless.

For Vladimir Derer's picture of the situation is too pessimistic and his conception of how the presently reformist workers will be won to fight for socialism is inadequate.

REFORM

Suppose it is true that only reforms are likely to be accepted as goals by the mass of workers now. How do we get from this to a struggle for a different society?

Reform demands should not be formulated as a minimum programme drafted to be compatible with capitalism and therefore not attached to the goal of socialism, nor even necessarily pointing to it.

Reform demands should be formulated according to the needs of the working class, without regard to whether or not they were compatible with capitalism (that is, with the maintenance of the principles and boundaries within which the capitalists owned industry and controlled the political system).

The name such “reform” demands are known by in the history of the socialist movement is “transitional demands”.

The working class would mobilise and be mobilised on its felt needs to gain such demands. Engaged in the struggle for them, it would learn with great strides about the system and about itself. It would choose between achieving its own needs at the expense of capitalism — or abandoning its own needs and confining itself to a “minimum” reform programme none of which challenged the capitalist system.

In fact, in a situation of capitalist crisis, the minimal approach yields practically no reforms at all. To return to the example above, the 35-hour week is a rather modest demand — in Britain now only an onslaught on capitalism could achieve it throughout industry.

The working class needs stable organisations, but as a fighting class it can rouse itself in tremendous industrial mass strike mobilisations, and for political ends too.

In the struggle it can learn in days or weeks more than in

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

decades of slow organisation and propaganda.

Is this idea of a mass transformation of consciousness an irrational appeal to belief in and reliance on miracles? Not at all. The spontaneous strike of ten million in France in 1968 came a few weeks after the failure of an attempt by the trade union bureaucrats to call a token strike. The defeat of the riot police by the students on their barricades galvanised the workers and gave them a model of victory to which they responded eagerly and with an explosive energy.

The idea is emphatically not that socialists manipulate. We say who and what we are and what our goal is — and we say more than transitional demands. The key idea is that the workers can and do mobilise with limited immediate objectives, but that the struggle unfolds and has a sharp anti-capitalist logic when the fight for satisfaction of even limited immediate needs brings the workers into clear conflict with capitalism.

A linked chain of demands can be constructed — beginning, say, from the 35 hour week or the sliding scale of hours and wages, and going on to the struggle for workplace and other workers' committees, to the struggle for workers' control to challenge the employers' untrammelled rule in a factory, to the creation of a workers' militia from (for example) flying pickets — all the way to the overthrow of the political power of the bourgeoisie.

Vladimir Derer asserts that "people can be organised only around such demands as they are already prepared to support. The programme of the left, at any given stage, must therefore correspond to the existing level of consciousness of the people to whom we are appealing".

Obviously people can be organised only around such demands as they are prepared to support. (But already prepared to support? Where have those ideas "already" come from? Can we not help to shape the ideas people support?)

The conclusion does not follow that the left's programme must correspond to the existing level of consciousness. If it did, either you would have no such thing as a stable left, de-

finied by some difference from the existing level, or you would have a privately-defined manipulative left. (And where do their ideas come from? How would new people arrive at them?!)...

It is necessary for the left to explain (and develop) a socialist overview, goal, and criticism of society, and win people to that: and to educate the people with whom it is active on specific issues to see those issues in that framework.

Vladimir Derer says that a socialist system could not arise overnight, that there would be a transitional period. The point however is that today's "hodgepodge of measures" (Alternative Economic Strategy etc.) would not come anywhere near effectively transforming society.

There would indeed have to be a transitional period between capitalism and socialist society — but... there is a dividing-line and a break — at the point where the working class deprives the capitalist class of the possibility of exploitation, by making industry its own democratically-owned and controlled social property, and by breaking the power of the army and police to make a bloody counter-revolution against the workers.

STATE

The state is not a monolith, comrade Derer adds. But does it not have a core of "armed bodies of men" backed up by the state bureaucracy? Are not both linked directly by a thousand strings of education, wealth, family, and therefore loyalty, to the ruling class, and committed to the defence of the existing system?

Yes, the labour movement has used Parliament, and must use it now. But Parliament has also dominated and even tamed large sections of the labour movement. Surely that is what much of the fight to make the MPs accountable is about: to reverse the historical experience and subordinate Parliament to the priorities and concerns of the working class...

But what would happen then? Certainly the direct grip and real control of such a Parliament over the "armed bodies of men" and over the bureaucrats would diminish. If such a parliamentary majority reflected the working-class, and fought the ruling-class interest, then it would be shown that

Parliament does not control the state.

If the conflict between Parliament and the state became intense, then parliamentary control would cease to be real; and to the degree that the Labour MPs really fought for the working-class interest, then the conflict would become intense. Either the working class would disarm the ruling-class state, or it would face disaster.

At issue here is not a choice for "bloody revolution", but the protection of the labour movement from bloodier counter-revolution.

This too leads to the conclusion that the left must organise itself on a real socialist programme, and fight to add a radical political content to the Labour Party as it renews its structures and procedures. For if we start a serious campaign for reforms in the present situation, it is certain it will escalate way beyond what we start with, "such struggle as is possible in the present situation". We need a labour movement politically prepared for that.

To conclude: if it is not now possible, in the present terrible state of our society, to put forward a real socialist programme and an immediate socialist answer, and hope to win the working class for it, then in which conditions will it ever be possible and reasonable to do so?

If it is not right to pose to the militants of the Labour party and trade unions, who are now attempting a thorough transformation of their movement, that they should adopt such politics as their answer to the crisis of British society, then who can socialist politics ever be proposed to, and in which circumstances? If we do not now put forward a programme of reform and transitional demands that answer the immediate situation of the working class and mobilise the working class to fight for them, what is the way out for the working class now?

And if the radical socialists around *Socialist Organiser*, the SCLV, the CLPD, etc. do not elect to do it themselves then who will do it?

To me, the answer seems clear: if not now, never; if not the existing mass-movement militants and ourselves, no-one; if not a fighting reform and transitional programme, then no way.

The "Marxists" who call Jeremy Corbyn "ultra-left"

The Left By Colin Foster



Jeremy Corbyn has joined many demonstrations and protests over the years, and all to his credit.

When there have been conflicts within the left, on the whole Corbyn has tended to shy away.

Yet on 11 February 1991, Jeremy Corbyn joined another left Labour MP, the late Bernie Grant, and others, in a protest sit-in against the manipulation by another left faction of the movement against the Gulf War.

The driving force in the manipulation was a group called Socialist Action. Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. The USA responded by assembling planes and troops to blast him out of Kuwait, slaughter the retreating Iraqi troops, and drive into Iraq.

We and those now around Socialist Resistance organised the first protests and set up an anti-war campaign. Socialist Action, using influence in the corridors of CND, formed a rival committee, drew in the SWP and the Communist Party of Britain, and excluded us and several others.

Now Tory smear-sheets are describing Socialist Action as the secret group behind Corbyn! (Andrew Gilligan, *Sunday Telegraph*, 26 September)

Just reading what Socialist Action says now about Corbyn will set you right (bit.ly/s-act).

They accuse Corbyn of ultra-left tendencies! In a display of mock-dialectics, they complain that "parliamentary reformists commit not only rightist errors but also ultra-left ones".

They cite Syriza as an example (and a baffling one: what have Syriza done "ultra-left"?), but the only British "parliamentary reformist" under discussion is Corbyn.

The bit about "rightist errors" seems to be there only to give a show of balance. Their shepherding of Corbyn and the Labour left is all away from "ultra-left errors".

Corbyn must be seen as a champion of people like "university professors and lawyers", who are "just as much

workers as those who work in steel mills"! The left should indeed try to win over university professors and lawyers. We can't do it by claims that they are as proletarian as furnace-men.

Corbyn must accept Osborne's budget-balancing charter, they say! Sadly, John McDonnell has gone along with this line. There's nothing specially left-wing about deficits, and Osborne's formulation has enough let-out clauses to mean not much; but as Simon Wren-Lewis, one of McDonnell's new panel of economic advisers, has pointed out: "First, [Osborne's new formulation of the 'fiscal charter'] is for the total deficit rather than the current balance, so it puts a squeeze on investment just at a time that investment should be high... Second, even with the get-out clause... the new rule is likely to make the deficit much less of a shock absorber, and so lead to unnecessary volatility in taxes or spending".

Corbyn must not go for British withdrawal from NATO! This is a typical Socialist Action twist. In 1991, their private slogan was "victory to Saddam Hussein". But in manipulating the anti-war committee, their line was to exclude people who called plainly for the US and its allies to stop their war, and to insist we all make our demand: ceasefire and UN negotiations.

CHINA

Privately Socialist Action demonise NATO as the source of all the world's ills. Their article dismisses complaints against Putin's (or Brezhnev's, or even Stalin's) Russia, or against political Islam, as "lies". Publicly they oppose Labour going for NATO withdrawal.

The one policy not too "ultra-left" for Socialist Action is increasing state economic investment. Their model for this is China.

I think that their off-hand references to ending austerity mean that Socialist Action is also for trade union rights, restoring the NHS, and so on; but they definitely regard the absence of trade union rights in China, and the fact you have to pay for health care, and usually to bribe on top of that, as minor blemishes compared to its wonderful state economic

Since last August, when the build-up to war began, the committees trying to organise resistance to war have been floundering in a chaos of squabbling and needless, unprincipled, faction-fighting. The worst yet came at this week's meeting of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, on 11 February. On the agenda, and given wide advance publicity by the hostile press, was an attempt by the Committee's office-holders to drive out certain members of the Committee and to close the door more firmly

on others, including *Socialist Organiser*, who have never been allowed to affiliate.

Such was the bureaucratic carrying-on that those opposed to it could only protest by a "sit-in" in the meeting room before they were ejected. Among those joining the sit-in were two of the foremost anti-war MPs, Bernie Grant and Jeremy Corbyn!

Corbyn is not only a foremost campaigner against the war, he has the deserved credibility of one who has for years been at the forefront of campaigning against Saddam

Socialist Organiser 475, 14 February 1991: Corbyn joins a sit-in against manipulation by Socialist Action of the movement against the Gulf War.

investment.

They say that increased state investment would boost the whole economy and thus create the growth to "fund social programmes", presumably without having to cut into profits. They do not say what they would recommend if a left Labour government, making that extra state investment, was met by a private "investment strike" or flight of capital.

The zany style of the unsigned article suggests it was written by John Ross, long the leader of the group, who is now a university professor in China (bit.ly/ross-j).

Before going to China, Ross was director of economic policy for Ken Livingstone as mayor of London. That is Socialist Action's way.

You never see them selling literature, or distributing leaflets, or even identifying themselves as Socialist Action, in public. For three decades now, their members have gained their influence by worming their way into jobs as advisers and assistants for MPs and mayors and in large offices like CND's.

Jeremy Corbyn is right to want to take the time and make the space to change Labour policy by patient and democratic debate, rather than by decree. It must be open debate, not behind-the-scenes manipulation.

• More: bit.ly/s-ac2

Strikes against the “easycouncil”

By Gemma Short

Workers in Barnet will strike on 7 October in an ongoing fight against privatisation.

Social workers, coach escorts, drivers, occupational therapists, schools catering staff, education welfare officers, library workers, children centre workers, street cleaning and refuse workers will strike on 7 October as their services face outsourcing.

These workers are some of the only ones left directly employed by Barnet council after mass privatisation, as the “easycouncil” aims to reduce its directly employed staff to less than 300.

Barnet council has already privatised social care for adults with disabilities, housing options, parking services, revenues and benefits, IT services, HR and payroll, pensions, health and safety, finance, estates, property services, procurement service, environmental health, planning, building control, Hendon cemetery and crematorium, highways services, trading standards and li-



censing, legal services, registrars and nationality services, CCTV, the music trust, public health and mortuary services.

Barnet council has branded this final phase as becoming the “Commissioning Council” — they aim to become the first council to function only by commissioning privatised services.

Workers will be on picket lines at Barnet House from 7am, Mill Hill Depot from 6am, and East Finchley Library from 9am.

A rally will be held outside Barnet House at 12 and all are encouraged to attend and show support.

Recognise our union!

Bectu members at the Royal Albert Hall have been left shocked by a management decision to ignore a majority staff vote in recognition of their union.

Staff members voted 117-109, with a turn out of 72%, for Bectu to be recognised as their union. Management have rejected the vote, claiming that: “The union does not have the support of the majority of the employees within the

Hall.”

Bectu general secretary Gerry Morrissey said: “We never considered that the legitimate and democratic vote of Royal Albert Hall staff would be rejected by management.

“It should be clear that Bectu will do everything in its power, both industrially and politically, to ensure that the voice of staff, reflected in vote for Bectu recognition, is heard.”

Over 100 days on strike

Workers at the National Gallery are now on their 106th day of strikes in their dispute over outsourcing.

On their 100th strike day they held a rally outside the gallery and released 100 balloons. The last week has also seen workers have solidarity visits from NHS campaigners and Barnet Unison,

as well as messages of support continuing to flood in from across the country.

On Friday 2 October Right to Strike activists will join the National Gallery picket line from 5pm, and from 6.30pm the picket line will host a “poetry on the picket line” event, all welcome.

Staff and students fight redundancies

By Charlotte Zalens

UCU, Unite and Unison are fighting the announcement of hundreds of potential compulsory redundancies at the University of Manchester.

Over 250 workers at the university have been told that they are at risk of compulsory redundancy. The university is also trying to push through changes to its redeployment system which would see workers who have been waiting for redeployment for more than three months being made compulsory redundant.

Despite several large cross-union meetings, and the unions organising against the plans, the university is refusing to recognise the situation as an official dispute. The university has announced that the consultation process has ended whilst unions argue

no meaningful consultation has taken place, and not sufficient equality impact assessments completed.

Manchester UCU said in a statement “we would welcome the involvement of ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) to help resolve this dispute. However, given the Senior Leadership Team’s intransigence thus far, we also need to prepare the ground for possible industrial action, which is becoming increasingly difficult under this Tory government’s anti-trade union legislation.”

UCU, Unite, Unison and student activists have organised a series of lunchtime protests up to and during the university’s “welcome week” and will hold another lunchtime protest on Thursday 1 October.

UCU is currently con-



ducting a survey of its members to test the ap-

petite for industrial action against the redundancies.

Parking workers strike for better pay

Parking wardens employed by contractor NSL in the London borough of Camden struck for seven days from Wednesday 23 September.

Workers struck earlier in September in their dispute over pay and conditions. Unison submitted a pay claim to take basic pay from £8.92 (currently below the London Living Wage) to £10.50 an hour. After extensive negotiations NSL refused to agree to a



compromise from Unison for £9.50 an hour. Unison members voted by 89% in favour of strikes to increase the pay offer.

Unison branch secretary

George Binette said: “These workers face daily abuse, often overtly racist, and even when physically attacked on the job there is no guarantee that they will automatically get occupational sick pay.” They rightly feel they deserve to earn more than the £9.27 NSL has offered, only 12p above the London Living Wage.

Pay rates vary dramatically on London’s outsourced parking contracts

with some CEOs in the capital making below £8.00 an hour, while unionised NSL employees in Kensington & Chelsea get a minimum of £9.31 an hour, in Ealing they receive a basic rate of at least £9.73 and in Waltham Forest the hourly rate tops £11.00.

Workers mounted pickets throughout the strike, and held a protest outside Camden Town Hall on Thursday 24 September.

Over 1000 steel jobs to go

1,700 jobs are at risk in Redcar, Teesside, as steelmaker SSI has announced it plans to close its plant.

Unions GMB, Unite and Community, have said they will do everything possible to save the jobs.

Unite national officer Harish Patel said: “This is devastating news for Redcar

and the thousands of people who depend on the steelworks for their livelihoods. Steel is the lifeblood of the local economy and runs through the community’s veins.”

Unions have launched a petition to save the jobs which can be signed at bit.ly/SteelJobs.

Residents against raids

On 24 September 40 protestors did a dawn protest at 7.30am outside link house in Newcastle the new regional base for Home office enforcement teams — i.e. immigration dawn raids.

Dawn raids mean breaking into families homes and forcibly taking them into

vans for deportation. These secret raids prevent families challenging it legally or getting support and leave families living in fear.

We protested and will continue to say no one is illegal.

• residentsagainstraids@mail.com

Tube controllers strike

By Ollie Moore

Service controllers on the Waterloo and City Line on London Underground struck from Monday 28 to Wednesday 30 September.

The workers are demanding re-grading, as they are paid £5,000 less than workers in similar jobs across the Tube.

The dispute has been ongoing for a number of years. A previous offer to settle it was rejected by the workers as it involved job cuts in other areas.

The strike made the front page of the *Evening Standard*, which was horrified that such a small number of workers could take such impacting action.

Despite the *Standard’s* claims, the RMT’s strike ballot for the dispute would have passed even the thresholds demanded by the Tories’ proposed Trade Union Bill.

The line only serves Waterloo (the London terminal station for suburban services to Hampshire and Surrey) and Bank (the capital’s financial centre), and the journey time if the line is not operating is at least doubled.

Union activists speculate that the social composition of the line’s passenger base may have been a factor in the *Standard’s* particular outrage.

• Find updates on *Tube-worker* blog: workersliberty.org/twblog



Solidarity

No 378
30 September
2015

30p/80p

UK should take more refugees

By Gerry Bates

On Wednesday 21 September a majority of EU Interior ministers agreed a plan to relocate 120,000 refugees across Europe over the next two years, allocating people to countries by a quota system.

Germany, with the largest population, will take the lion's share.

Slovakia, among others, voted against the plan, and says it will defy it, although it will only be asked to take 2,000 people. And Finland, a richer country, which will be asked to take around 3,000, abstained in the vote. The plan has stirred up political reaction, especially in Hungary, where the right-wing government has built

a fence to keep refugees out.

The UK has opted to stay out of the quota system; the Tories have said they will take up to 20,000 people over five years — a token number for a country the wealth and size of the UK.

The UN refugee agency say, plausibly, that the number set for relocation of refugees is unrealistic. There are many thousands more fleeing Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. On the other hand, it appears likely that Germany will take in many more people than those allocated under the scheme.

Nonetheless, flawed and inadequate though this plan is, it is a show of collective solidarity. At least, it is one that we should use in the labour movement to con-



demn the government's failure to take part, or to take any action to help refugees or avoid the deaths of so many in the Mediterranean this year.

We can use these de-

velopments to campaign for the right of any Syrian refugee, and others currently in Europe, who want to come to the UK, for safety, or to make a better life, to be allowed to do so.

Learn about the history of Trotskyism

Uniquely, this new book traces the decisive political divisions within the broadly-defined Trotskyist movement by presenting key texts from both sides of the political debates as they happened.

The book's overall thesis, argued in a substantial introduction, is that by the late 1940s there were two Trotskyisms.

They had separated, fundamentally, through their different responses to events neither "side" expected: the transition of the Stalinist USSR from unstable beleaguered semi-outlaw state to a continent-besiding world power, stably self-reproducing at least for some decades to come.

The other issues were many, but, so the book argues, mostly linked to that fundamental division. They included different conceptions of what a revolutionary socialist party should be and do, and what Marxism is and how it is developed.

That "orthodox Trotskyism" has been in disarray since the collapse of European Stalinism in 1989-91. Today's revolutionary socialist politics, struggling to regain ground after the long triumph of neoliberalism, needs to nourish itself by studying these long-shelved debates at the hinge of the 20th century politics.

Germany: helping the refugees

Alice is a socialist living in Mannheim, Germany. She told *Solidarity* about reactions in Germany to the refugee crisis.

According to the statistics, those who volunteer to help refugees are either between 20 and 30 years old or are older people.

Maybe those "in the middle", with a full-time job and young children, find it harder to make time.

I talked with an active trade union woman at work the other day, and she said that she doesn't volunteer but donates money to an organisation in Mannheim. Some volunteers are unemployed and need money if only for bus fares.

The volunteering is mostly through existing organisations but new groups have formed as well. There are at least four new groups in Mannheim: Mannheim sagt ja! (Mannheim says yes); Flüchtlinge willkommen (refugees welcome); Save Me Mannheim; Nice to meet you.

Mannheim and Heidelberg have refugees coming

to live here, but also serve as first stopping points: the large now-empty former US military facilities here, now state-owned, are used to house refugees temporarily.

BORDERS

When Germany temporarily closed its borders, really, I think, the organisations and the volunteers and administrations breathed a sigh of relief.

Not because they thought we had "had enough" refugees, but because they'd have a chance to catch up and make sure that refugees are treated well (medical treatment, psychological support, language-teaching, housing etc.)

Municipal administrations sometimes feel overwhelmed because they have been largely left to themselves to deal with it all so far, though the federal government is due to release funds.

Bavaria's right-wing minister of the interior talks of dividing refugees into "good" and "bad"



ones. The "bad" ones are from Albania or Kosova, for example.

SOLUTION

On the whole even right wing politicians have been very careful in their expressions.

They tend to argue for a Europe-wide solution. That's all right, but it doesn't much help the people on the road right now. We know how long decisions on a European level can take.

An effort is being made by the media to present "good practice" of businesses taking on refugees for training programs and showing how willing some are to learn. I am sure that

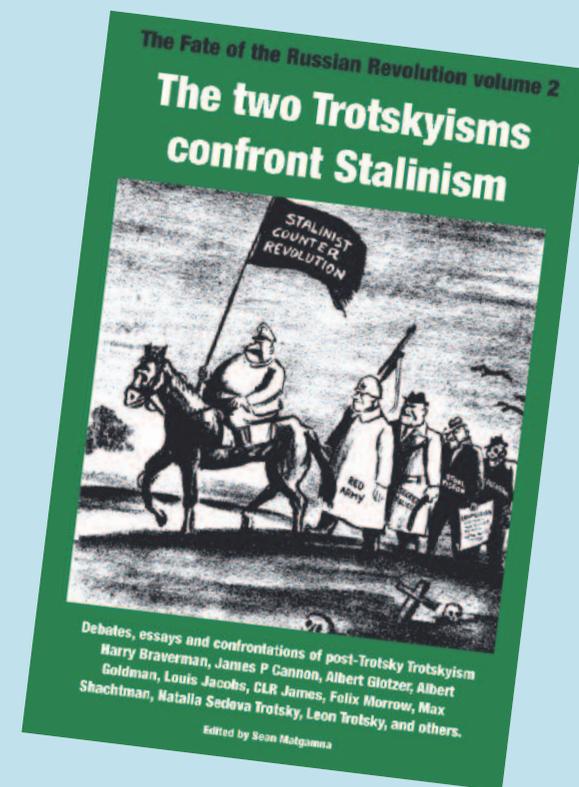
there is a positive psychological result due to these arguments in the back of people's minds. Can a Syrian doctor be a doctor here? If you are not convinced of basic human rights, all this is very fragile

and emotions and thoughts can change very quickly.

Of course, even now you hear comments like "it's a bit too much" and I get the feeling that some people don't even want to think about the implications and challenges ahead.

In a recent opinion poll, 74% of the population said that they were more or less satisfied with the government's refugee policy. Over half said that they personally would be willing to help refugees.

People with more education are more pro-refugee than people with less, and leftist voters more than right-wing voters.



**Buy a copy online!
Join a local reading group**

**£19.99 including p&p (for a limited time only).
Special offer: £25 for Fate of the Russian Revolution volumes 1 and 2.
Reading groups happening across the country, check thetwotrotskyisms.org for details.**

bit.ly/TwoTrotskyisms