The “Vote Leave” campaign has become an ugly spate of migrant-baiting. "Twelve million Turks say they’ll come to the UK", screamed the Daily Express on 22 May.

Around the same time Vote Leave launched a poster saying simply “Turkey (population 76 million) is joining the EU”. Not 12 million now, but 76 million!

Tory cabinet minister Michael Gove was more restrained: he predicted 5.2 million extra immigrants.

More page 5

Refugees stuck in Greece

See page 3

Anti-semitism and reactionary anti-capitalism

See pages 6-7

Stand up for socialism

See page 9

Join Labour!

No united front with Cameron on EU!

See page 10
Cop slams “thought police”

By Chris Reynolds

Simon Cole is not a left-winger. He is a lifelong cop, and the chief cop working on the Government’s much-criticised “Prevent” program.

“Prevent” is supposed to stop young people being drawn to ideologies like Al Qaeda’s, but its bureaucratic workings make it ineffective or even counterproductive.

Even Cole, though, says that the Government’s planned new “anti-extremism” law risks legislating “a kind of thought-police control of what people can and can not say”.

The planned new law would criminalise speech (rather than action) previously quite legal. Cole and others think it is unenforceable and could well do harm by unnecessarily alienating and antagonising people.

In any case, they don’t want to have to police such a slippery law.

Peter Fahy, Cole’s predecessor as chief cop working on “Prevent”, has already condemned the planned legislation.

The criticism from Cole, a lifelong cop, chief surely anxious for promotion, is even more significant.

Post-capitalism or ultra-capitalism

By Colin Foster

Sell tat online in the morning, write software in the afternoon, sell apps in the evening, and stop at the pub in the evening. This is the new generation of “gig economy” workers.

There are more “gig” workers in the UK than there are university-educated and older workers. And there are more among the 55-75 age bracket than in other age groups.

There are more “gig” workers in the UK than there are university-educated and older workers. And there are more among the 55-75 age bracket than in other age groups.

The “gig economy” minority is largely only the next stage in from the 17% of 16-24 year olds (in Britain) who over a three-year period have at least six months with out jobs, without education, and without training.

Actually, many recent developments make job regularity more, not less, important. Without that regularity, it’s hard to get a mortgage or even a rental, a car loan, a mobile phone contract, or to afford training.

The socialist future of work is not the “gig economy”, but everyone doing their share of the necessary drudgery — in good conditions and in short hours made possible by technology — and getting an adequate income, and everyone having, on that secure basis, much more free time for creative and social development.

Reject junior doctors’ deal

By Pete Campbell, BMA Junior Doctors Committee, p.c.

The BMA junior doctors’ council will meet on Friday 3 June to decide its response to the “deal” that the BMA has made with the government.

I will be going for the council to reject the contract and to campaign for a “no” vote in the contract referendum.

The proposed new “negotiated” contract for Junior Doctors has caused a great amount of debate and discussion. It has caused a certain amount of division.

It highlights a clear demand from some to continue the fight. There are still important issues with the contract, particularly for part-time trainees, those who mainly work high intensity evening shifts (often Accident and Emergency), and around cost neutrality and the wider state of the NHS.

There is plenty of opposition amongst junior doctors to the contract, and there are some who want to accept. But there is not a clear “yes” and “no” camp, more like a “hard yes”, “soft yes”, “soft no” through to a “hard no”.

The “soft no” is the “almost there but not quite option”. Clear progress has been made in the last round of negotiations. But the negotiators did not extract all they wanted from negotiations. The equalities issues were not fully addressed and the contract will be implemented before a lot of the positive elements are delivered.

From the system of exception reporting to the accelerated training system — these do not exist yet, and to introduce this contract without even knowing if they will work is unfair and unwise.

I am arguing “no” because I think the proposed contract has big problems and in one is the supposed “cost-neutrality”. The contract means junior doctors will be paid “for all work done”, and that will cost more than the current budget.

In a year’s time when the pay bill has grown due to the NHS paying doctors for the work they do, how will the government respond?

In order to keep the pay bill cost neutral will it cut doctor numbers? Will it ask hospitals to cut services? Will it try to close whole wards or hospitals?

Post-capitalism or ultra-capitalism

By Colin Foster

Sell tat online in the morning, write software in the afternoon, sell apps in the evening, and stop at the pub in the evening. This is the new generation of “gig economy” workers.

There are more “gig” workers in the UK than there are university-educated and older workers. And there are more among the 55-75 age bracket than in other age groups.

There are more “gig” workers in the UK than there are university-educated and older workers. And there are more among the 55-75 age bracket than in other age groups.

The “gig economy” minority is largely only the next stage in from the 17% of 16-24 year olds (in Britain) who over a three-year period have at least six months with out jobs, without education, and without training.

Actually, many recent developments make job regularity more, not less, important. Without that regularity, it’s hard to get a mortgage or even a rental, a car loan, a mobile phone contract, or to afford training.

The socialist future of work is not the “gig economy”, but everyone doing their share of the necessary drudgery — in good conditions and in short hours made possible by technology — and getting an adequate income, and everyone having, on that secure basis, much more free time for creative and social development.

Stop the steel pension rip-off!

By Ralph Peters (former steel worker)

The sell-off, or potential closure, of Tata Steel will affect not only the 14,000 UK steel workers but also at least 110,000 former steel workers. All former workers will have their pensions reduced.

From the 70s onwards occupational and private schemes were promoted as a means to take pension out of the hands of the state and away from any argument for democratic political control.

There are the added ideological benefit for capitalists — the health of the pension fund, the chase for high profits and all that goes with it, could be presented as being in the future pensioners’ interests.

A sop was given to trade unions with occupational pension schemes. Trade union representativeness was allowed on the board of the trustees of the funds. However open this arrangement is, it was only taken of that — either to ensure ethical investments or to hold businesses to account. Indeed some companies, most infamously the Mirror Group with its former CEO Robert Maxwell, plundered the pension funds for their own business ends. Mirror Group workers lost up to 50% of their pension entitlement in the 1990s.

In 2005 Blair’s government brought in the Pension Protection Fund (PPF) following increasing concern about the solvency of many pension schemes. Insolvent pension funds could be passed over to the PPF: pensions would continue to be made available but workers suffered losses of 10 to 20% of their entitlements.

On this occasion the government is suggesting that greater power be given to the Trustees to reduce the steel pensions than is currently allowable by existing Tory law. They want them to be able to make unspecified changes to the pension scheme without needing to consult the members.

The pension fund trustees say that the results will be better than under the PPF. But clear proposals about possible changes are not being made explicit — other than a change of inflation measurement — a switch to the Customer Price Index (CPI) from the Retail Price Index (RPI). The desired saving of £200 billion before 2030 seems unlikely to be made by such a measure.

The government has started a tentative consultation exercise in which they claim they will make sure that the pension scheme has not “been the best interest of the scheme members”. But what guarantee is there that the sell-off, if it goes ahead, will not lead to closure or another self-off?

There is a very real threat that other pension schemes will be similarly “legally enabled” and then compelled to follow the British Steel scheme example and negotiate down pension entitlements under market and closure threats.

The labour movement needs to articulate an alternative pension policy. Although the principle of a PPF is better than government steel pension schemes, it is a poor safety net with unjustified losses for the workers.

We need a rejuvenated state pension scheme, pulling in the private pension funds, ending the vulnerability and manipulation of pensions from the market, ending the huge inequalities in the income of pensioners.
Inside a Greek detention centre

Thousands of refugees are now trapped in Greece. Recently the Greek government broke up the makeshift camp of Idomeni on the Macedonian border, forcibly moving people to warehouses in Thessaloniki. Many families have been split up, people are missing. Solidarity spoke to Dashti Jamal, Secretary of the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees, who recently visited a camp on the island of Samos in search of missing Kurdish refugees.

I have been looking for information about 70 missing Kurdish refugees. In May I went to the camp in Samos (an island close to Turkey). I had to get police permission to go inside the camp and talk to people. I had pictures of 15 of the missing Kurds to show to people. The Samos camp is in the mountains, it’s a detention centre of fact, and holds around 1500 people. The majority of people are Syrians but there are around 500 Iraqi Kurds. I saw many upsetting things. There were children there who had been injured by an ISBS operation, but people cannot get to the hospital if they are injured or wounded. And Médecins Sans Frontières only come into the camp on two days a week.

Many people are desperate. They have no hope. They feel that the deal with Turkey (for Greece to deport recent refugees to camps there) is a matter of then being “sold on”. And they have no information about what will happen to them in Turkey. They do not trust the Turkish government. I saw a father with his family crying out that he would rather they were dead.

People have to sign a piece of paper every time they receive food. Conditions are inhuman. The food is basic — bread, pasta — and the same every day. People are not allowed visitors. Many people have been split up from their families and they do not know what has happened to them.

Refugees who do not make the crossings from Turkey are buried after 40 days (or earlier if the condition of the bodies necessitates it) if they are not identified. So my task is very urgent.

- IFR are asking for donations to help them in the work of tracking down Kurdish refugees. Account name: International Federation of Iraqi Refugees (IFIR). Account number: 2149591. Sort code 40-04-07. For more information contact: 07856032991

I went to a police station and to the hospital (for Greece to deport recent refugees to camps there) is a matter of then being “sold on”. And they have no information about what will happen to them in Turkey. They do not trust the Turkish government. I saw a father with his family crying out that he would rather they were dead.

Refugees who do not make the crossings from Turkey are buried after 40 days (or earlier if the condition of the bodies necessitates it) if they are not identified. So my task is very urgent.

- IFR are asking for donations to help them in the work of tracking down Kurdish refugees. Account name: International Federation of Iraqi Refugees (IFIR). Account number: 2149591. Sort code 40-04-07. For more information contact: 07856032991

Two cheers for neo-liberalism?

By Martin Thomas

Jonathan Ostry, an IMF economist with a long record of arguing that extreme income inequality harms capitalist growth, has published a new article on the theme with two IMF colleagues: Prakash Loungani and Davide Furceri.

Capitalist crises generally come through sudden shutdowns of investment and luxury spending by the rich which then snowball through the economy. The poor are less apt to go in for some busts of holding on to our cash. The greater the proportion of spending controlled by the rich, the more unstable.

That is the basic idea behind Ostry’s argument (bit.ly/ostry-eq). Extremely unequal capitalist economies may have rapid growth surges, he points out, but they are more likely to end in big crashes. In the new article, Ostry criticises extreme cuts policies on the grounds that they increase inequality, and expands his reasoning to criticise over-easy flows of capital. He points to 30 financial crises since 1980 generated by inequality and explains how capital inflows are key to understanding those crises.

He says “much to cheer in the neo-liberal agenda”. We don’t. Moderate neo-liberalism has, after all, been tried. That is what Blair and Brown did.

The left should argue our own case for outright socialism, rather than deferring to the advocates of moderate capitalism.

Daesh attacks near Aleppo

As protests against poor service, unemployment and the rights of women and children continue, the regime has stepped up its crackdown on its opponents.

On 22 May Erdogan replaced his interior minister after a strike that lasted more than six weeks. Around 40,000 Verizon staff are expected to return to work on Wednesday 1 June after the company reached a settlement with their unions, the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which sees the company retreat from its plans to cut staff positions and increase outsourcing. Workers will now vote on the proposed settlement before it comes into effect.

Turkey: reaction grows

By Dan Katz

Last November the Turkish Islamists Justice and Development (AK) party won a victory at the polls. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s thin-skinned Islamist president, and an increasingly intolerant persecutor of his many critics, had refused to accept losing the AK majority in the June general election. He ramped up the war on the Kurds in the Turkish south east and then ran on a platform of defending the security that he himself had undermined.

Recently, in May, Can Dundar and Erdem Gül of the daily newspaper Cumhuriyet got five year prison sentences for writing about the Turkey’s security service’s support for Islamist militias in Syria. Jailed

Many journalists have been jailed for “insulting” Erdogan.

State prosecutors have opened 1800 cases against people accused of insulting Erdogan. The crime of insulting the President can carry a four year jail term. 900 journalists have lost their jobs in the first four months of 2016.

On 20 May the parliament lifted the immunity of its members, allowing the prosecution of 50 of the 59 Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) MPs on trumped-up terror charges. The HDP opposition is liberal and pro-Kurdish.

On 22 May Erdogan replaced his own Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, with the loyalist Binali Yıldırım, ensuring an even firmer grip on power.

This week Erdogan has called on Muslims to reject contraception; he has recently been to have at least three children.

Already, in 2010, Erdogan had publicly rejected the equality of men and women. He has condemned male violence by saying men are the custodians of women and have to protect them.

Since the Turkish state renewed its attacks against the Kurds in July 2015 it claims to have killed 5000 PKK militants in Turkey and northern Iraq. Hundreds of civilians have died and scores of curfewed areas have been imposed as the army has fought and repressed Kurds in towns and villages across south east Turkey — using tanks against its own citizens, and patrolling with armoured personnel carriers inside its own towns.

The Turkish signature of an open letter to Erdogan, which denounced the war on the Kurds as a crime, have all been placed under investigation. In January 14 Turkish academics were arrested for signing the letter.

The area Kurds call Northern Kurdistan is effectively occupied by Turkish units of the Turkish state.

The violence against the Kurds is largely ignored by Obama and the EU leaders, who are more concerned with Turkish support to stop Syrian refugees getting to Europe than they are with the democratic rights of Turks and Kurds.

Wins for Verizon workers

By Ollie Moore

Workers at US telecommunication giants Verizon have forced significant concessions from their bosses, after a strike that lasted more than six weeks.

Verizon staff are expected to return to work on Wednesday 1 June after the company reached a settlement with their unions, the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which sees the company retreat from its plans to cut staff positions and increase outsourcing. Workers will now vote on the proposed settlement before it comes into effect.

The deal, which would last for four years, gives a pay increase of more than 10%, as well as small increases in bonuses and profit sharing. The deal will also include an agreement to boost the power of working people, who will be able to vote on a power of working people.

This is the first time staff on the wireless side of the business, historically far less well unionised, have been included in a collective bargaining agreement. It should give a boost to efforts to organise Verizon wireless workers.

Verizon bosses claimed that some of the agreements would still allow them to make efficiency savings, but even cut jobs. Under the terms of the settlement, they retain the right to offer workers voluntary severance packages.

Nevertheless, CWA President Chris Shelton described the outcome as a “huge win” that “affirmed the power of working people”.

Erdogan

Last November the Turkish Islamists Justice and Development (AK) party won a victory at the polls.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s thin-skinned Islamist president, and an increasingly intolerant persecutor of his many critics, had refused to accept losing the AK majority in the June general election. He ramped up the war on the Kurds in the Turkish south east and then ran on a platform of defending the security that he himself had undermined.

Recently, in May, Can Dundar and Erdem Gül of the daily newspaper Cumhuriyet got five year prison sentences for writing about the Turkey’s security service’s support for Islamist militias in Syria.
Challenge trans exclusion through debate

By Elizabeth Butterworth

The Morning Star has come under fire for publishing two articles written by “trans-critical”/trans-exclusionary feminists.

The first, by Rebecca Riley-Cooper, addresses the issue of women as a class, and the consequences of self-identification in defining gender.

She argues that, “...The logical conclusion of shifting our definitions of gender from objective characteristics to inherently subjective and personal ones is that the categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ effectively become meaningless. This is not a satisfactory outcome, especially for those who strongly feel that they identify as one particular gender”.

Traditionally, the radical feminist argument goes that, women are oppressed by men, partly (and originally) due to our biology and sex characteristics, but also (latterly, and largely) by the social construct of gender. Riley-Cooper seems to be arguing against the social construct of gender, which is a basic tenet of feminist theory.

Radical feminists such as Martha Nussbaum argue that trans-inclusion in mainstream feminism may undermine the struggles of those who are considered biologically female. That is a point I disagree with, but it’s not a logical line of argument. But Riley-Cooper’s half-backed “questioning” of the consequences of trans-inclusion is poor. As it is, there seems to be the expectation placed upon us and the discrimination against us — which trans women experience just as much as cisgender women. In her second article, by Jennifer Duncan, pursues a more rational, though wrong, line of argument. She straightforwardly makes the case for gender roles being separate from biological sex: something trans-inclusive feminists would very largely agree with.

After this, though, she flips back around to a profoundly essentialist argument and states that [women] are generally smaller, have less upper-body strength, and can become pregnant makes us physically vulnerable, instead of a socially constructed gender. I think we need to be tackling these questions head-on.

There is a “Zionism” one hopes would “wither away”, “in struggle”. But if the far left can’t even maintain an “absolute anti-Zionism” that insists they immediately jettison this complex aspect of their historically-developed identity, and tells them, “you might think you’re a Zionist, but you’re not really. Zionism is colonialism, Zionism is racism!”

Unless you accept that you are not, in fact, a Zionist, you must be a colonialist. You must accept that you are more likely to end up retreating behind the corrons of ethno-cultural identity that growing beyond them.

Yes, context, both geographical and historical, matters a great deal. In Israel itself I suspect I’d have less of a problem with ethno-cultural identities in myself as a “Zionist”. I also have no problem identifying as a “pre-War World anti-Zionist”.

But in the contemporary context in Britain, something called or understood as “Zionism” both a) forms an integral aspect of the historically-developed identity of most Jews, and b) is perhaps the key term used by antisemites, on both the right and the left, to attack not just the Israeli state or government but all Jews. I prefer “non-Zionist”.

Meanings of Zionism

LETTER

The difference [the AWL] has with me may simply be a continental difference, so to speak. Among Jews I know, in the US, if you call yourself a Zionist, then that means that you’re inclined to agree with many such Jews in Britain, and I imagine in America too. (from AWL website)

Ina Berkovic replies: To be perfectly honest, my personal wish is that the term “Zionism” be consigned to history. It has ceased to have much material impact in 1948, when its historical project was continued existence as a Jewish state? Support for its continued existence as a Jewish state? Support for its colonial project in the Palestinian territories? Some combination of all of these things? Something else entirely?

Much of what is spoken about today as “Zionism” (by people who are actually trying to make the word mean something, rather than crypto-antisemites simply using it as a code-word for “Jews”) would be more accurately termed Israeli-Jewish chauvinism or ultra-nationalism. Those terms are clunkier, perhaps, but they also avoid the flattening out of a complex historical category, and the provocative and fruitless affront to the complex, historically-developed identity of (probably) most Jews alive.

Imagine a Jew who is for two states, who opposes the occupation, who wants to end settlement building, who supports civil rights and equality for Israeli Arabs, etc., but for reasons of historical affinity sees themselves as a “Zionist” (as in, they support the existence of the Israeli state and would “defend” that existence against those who oppose it). There are many such Jews in Britain, and I imagine in America too.

There is a “Zionism” one hopes would “wither away”, “in struggle”. But if the far left can’t even maintain an “absolute anti-Zionism” that insists they immediately jettison this complex aspect of their historically-developed identity, and tells them, “you might think you’re a Zionist, but you’re not really. Zionism is colonialism, Zionism is racism!” Unless you accept that you are not, in fact, a Zionist, you must be a colonialist. You must accept that you are more likely to end up retreating behind the corrons of ethno-cultural identity that growing beyond them.

Yes, context, both geographical and historical, matters a great deal. In Israel itself I suspect I’d have less of a problem with ethno-cultural identities in myself as a “Zionist”. I also have no problem identifying as a “pre-War World anti-Zionist”.

But in the contemporary context in Britain, something called or understood as “Zionism” both a) forms an integral aspect of the historically-developed identity of most Jews, and b) is perhaps the key term used by antisemites, on both the right and the left, to attack not just the Israeli state or government but all Jews. I prefer “non-Zionist”.

Disability

By Janine Booth, co-chair, TUC Disabled Workers’ Committee, p.c.

Nearly 200 delegates from dozens of trade unions gathered in London on 19 and 20 May to discuss issues affecting disabled workers and plan a fightback against discrimination and cuts.

TUC Disabled Workers’ Conference debated and agreed over twenty policy resolutions, on subjects including the disability pay gap, disability hate crime, and disabled people in the arts. A resolution highlighting the barriers that society puts in the way of disabled performers as well as providing a platform for disabled people in the arts was passed unanimously, leaving the “debating” aspect of the conference feeling rather flat.

The Labour Party is currently running a Disability Equality Roadshow around the country. The conference gave it a two-hour platform to enable delegates to tell Shadow Min-

Fight back against austerity cuts!

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell addressed the conference on the second day, promising that he and Labour’s new left leadership were building a social movement that would be with us every step of the way. This made a very welcome change from years of Labour Party spokespeople throwing a few crumbs and taking our support for granted because they were not quite as bad as the Tories.

Aside from the direct action fringe-meeting-turned–protest reported alongside, there were no fringe meetings and a small selection of stalls. A social event showcased disabled performers as well as providing a chance for less formal discussions.

While conference discussions covered various issues, perhaps three themes stood out, which together point the way forward:• the social model of disability, tackling the barriers that society puts in the way of people with disabilities;
• the TUC Manifesto for Disability Equal-

Email your letters to solidarity@workersliberty.org

Morning Star publishing these articles and praising the newspaper for “giving a platform for a sex-class based analysis of women’s position”. On the other side, there have been accusations of transphobia at the paper and to stop donating to them and buying the paper.

The Morning Star does have the right to publish these articles. The articles were not hate-filled bile, though they are poorly argued and illogical. They also may make trans people feel excluded. I hope the Morning Star publishes responses from the trans-inclusive feminist movement.

The fact that hundreds of people have signed the letter shows that these arguments need to be tackled head-on. If any “trans-critical”/trans-exclusionary feminists reading this would like to engage with me in a public debate, I would be more than willing to do so.

We still have a long way to go in understanding gender, sex and class, and how we can overcome the oppression of women. The ideas need to be hashed out in a more thorough and thinking that should be robustly challenged through debate.
Brexit would mean free rein for capital

88% of six hundred economists surveyed for the Observer newspaper (29 May) reckon that Brexit would reduce economic growth in Britain.

Economists often get things wrong, and the gist of the economists’ opinion is that Brexit would disrupt the regular flows of the global capitalist economy. Thus pushing down trade and investment into Britain.

Most enlightening is what the pro-Brexit minority of economists say. The “Economists for Brexit” group led by veteran Thatcherite Patrick Minford has produced a report. As ardent free-market idealogues, they argue that a capitalist Britain outside the EU will do well because it will have fewer constraints on the rapacity of the free market.

They object to the EU because “the EU has pressed for social legislation (such as the 2003 Working Time Directive and the 2004 Gender Equality Directive) that adds to companies’ costs”.

Their list would probably also include the Agency Workers’ Directive, TUPE, and redundancy-payment laws. They also object because “European governments have been more emphatic than the global average about the dangers of global warming” and so the EU has pushed Britain to “adopt the renewables agenda with greater zeal... Coal-fired power stations have been closed down, offshore wind farms built and so on.”

The Brexit campaigners disagree among themselves on what trade deals Britain should do on quitting the EU. The economists go for a radical option: “What other trade agreements do we need? My advice would be none”. Not the Norwegian model, not the Swiss model, not the Canadian model, not even the Albanian model favoured by Michael Gove.

The pro-Brexit economists argue that Britain should scrap all barriers to imports, and seek nothing more than World Trade Organisation rules for its exports. In their calculations the benefit of cheaper imports outweighs the consequent job losses.

On immigration, the economists differ from the Ukip-minded majority of Brexit campaigners in that they want more non-EU immigration and less immigration from the EU.

There, spelled out clearly, is the second core Brexit argument after the basic Ukip “hate-migrants” case. It is an argument for Britain as an offshore, low-regulation, low-social-overheads, environmentally-reckless site for global capital.

Whether their scheme would “work” in its own terms is doubtful. That it represents the way Brexit points, socially and economically, is not.

The way to fight the neoliberal policies of the EU leadership is by starting from the limited integrations across borders created by the EU, and working for cross-border solidarity around demands for social levelling-up, democracy, and more open borders.

• bit.ly/ec-brexit
Anti-semitism and reactionary anti-capitalism

Moishe Postone, a Marxist writer based at the University of Chicago and author of Time, Labour, and Social Domination, and Critique du fétilisation, Le capitalisme, l’antisémitisme et la gauche, was in London in May, and spoke to Martin Thomas from Solidarity about anti-semitism on the left and reactionary anti-capitalism.

I don’t feel as if I know the ins and outs of the situation in the Labour Party, so part of what I say may not be completely accurate. First of all, there is an extremely unfortunate polarization in which we regard the relationship of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

It is a polarisation which makes political discussion very difficult. In the Arab world you have the Israeli Right, as, let’s say, exemplified by Netanyahu, who treat any criticism of Israel as being anti-Semitic. As far as I’m concerned, this is completely illegitimate. Not all forms of anti-Zionism are anti-Semitic. There are too many people on the left, and I think it’s increasing, who argue that any form of anti-Zionism is anti-Semitic: that anti-Zionism is anti-Zionism, and anti-Semitism is something else.

In the world of the metropolitan left, it is really quite remarkable that the left has almost nothing to say about Syria, had nothing to say about Saddam, has nothing to say about the fact that we are witnessing a complete crisis of the Arabic-speaking world. That crisis cannot simply be blamed on imperialism. There needs to be at least an attempt at serious analysis of why every single post-colonial Arab country is characterised by the secret police, and a secret police that would do the State proud. Some of them were trained by the Stasi and the KGB, in fact.

The left seems to be unable to say anything about these issues, and this is extremely hypothetical on my part, I think the more helpless the left feels conceptually on dealing with the world, the more it zeroes in on Israel-Palestine, because that seems to be clear: the last colonial struggle.

NEW LEFT

There are some leftists who will not be happy for me to say this, but retrospectively one could say that the rise of the New Left globally implied a tacit recognition that the primate industrialist was not the revolutionary subject.

I think that there was a move away from working-class politics. The new leftists had not only separated themselves from Communist Parties and social-democratic parties; even though they sympathised with the plight of workers, they were tacitly casting about for a new revolutionary subject. The colonised peoples fighting for freedom became the new revolutionary subject.

I think that along with that there was a curious fusion, in part because of Vietnam, of the anti-colonial struggle and anti-Americanism. One of the differences between the massive anti-imperialist struggles against the American war in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s, and the massive demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq, is that for many — not all, but many — of those who fought against the Americans, in the 1960s, there was the idea of supporting a progressive revolution.

The Americans, as the world’s imperial, but also conservative, force, were hindering a positive historical development. So the demonstrations weren’t only against the Americans. They were also for the Vietnamese revolution — however one retrospectively evaluates that thinking as justified or not, and whether or not one thinks there should have been further criticism of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

None of that existed in the massive demonstrations against the American invasion in Iraq. There were very few people who could on any level have regarded the Ba’ath regime under Saddam Hussein as representing anything progressive, and nobody talked that way. Anti-Americanism became coded as anti-semitic.

In a funny way, it is a remnant of the Cold War, spread among people who were actually not Cold Warriors. Israel has become fused with America in the minds of many of these anti-imperialist leftists. An enormous amount of power is attributed to Israel which it actually doesn’t have.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, who are colleagues of mine at the University of Chicago, claim that the American invasion of Iraq was against American interests, but pushed by the Israelis. Of course, they never state what Israeli interests were. Really, as both those writers had connections to Washington, their book was a brief that the State Department should listen to them more than to the neo-cons that they did listen to.

Israel, in a sense, the manipulator, and Washington is sometimes just a stupid doll which is manipulated by these incredibly clever Jews. And at that point the picture of Zionism is anti-semitic.

ZIONISM

There were leftwing critiques of Zionism from the very beginning, frequently by communist Jews. Zionism was criticised by the communists as a form of bourgeois nationalism. That’s something completely different from the criticism today.

Trotsky, early in his life — I think he changed his views later on — referred to the Bundists as “sea-sick Zionists”. That critique had nothing to do with Palestine or the Palestinian people. It simply has to do with nationalism.

The change may have happened in the 1930s, but one marker of it was the trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952, where the Stalinists tried the entire Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party.

It was 14 people. Eleven were Jewish. These were old Communists. Many had fought in Spain. They were accused of being Zionists. If you read what “Zionists” meant, it was exactly what the fascists called “Jews” — a shadowy conspiracy, imitable to the health of the Volk, and working to undermine the government which was for the people. The Stalinists couldn’t use the word “Jewish” — this was only seven years after the war — so they used the word “Zionist”.

That was one of the origins of a deeply anti-Semitic form of anti-Zionism. It exploded after 1967. The USSR was furious that Israel had defeated its two major client states, and it began to support the Palestinian movement.

The anti-Semitic cartoons and statements coming out of the Soviet Union were pretty appalling. That’s where you get the idea that Zionism is Nazism — generated by the Soviet Union. And unfortunately, that Arab nationalists picked up on it is not surprising.

The Western left started to pick up on that too. I think that was deeply unfortunate.

I think anti-Semitism is almost a litmus test for whether a movement is progressive or not. There are a lot of anti-capitalist movements that are not progressive. And I think that anti-Semitism is a marker. I think there is a great deal to criticise in Israeli policies, the Israeli occupation, certainly the present Israeli government. But political discussion cannot take place if the choice is between Netanyahu on the one hand, and a certain kind of anti-Semitic anti-Zionism on the other.

Anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism is a world view. It is not prejudice against individual Jews. It can go with being perfectly civil, although I’ve been reading about the way some Jewish students are pilloried in terms of “you look Zionist”. Who could “look Zionist”? It means, “you look Jewish”.

I was struck by the UN Arab Human Development report of 2002, which was written by Arab scholars. It talked about the misère of the Arab-speaking world and its massive decline since the late 1970s. The decline was nearly as precipitous as that of sub-Saharan Africa.

At the same time other areas of what used to be called “the Third World”, have risen. It seems to me that it is not only the decline of the Arab-speaking world, but the rise of other parts, which makes an anti-Semitic form of anti-Zionism more plausible.

The power of the Jews! It is the Jews who are pulling everything down. This is only a little variant on the idea that the problem is all imperialism.

Well, imperialism is very important, was important, was distorting. But after all the British were in India much longer than anyone was in Syria. Or in Iraq. But I know more serious analyses of India from the left than I do of the Ba’ath. I find that politically unfortunate, and when it becomes anti-Semitic, I find it a marker of a move towards a reactionary populism.

CAMPUSES

On many campuses, the hostility has spread to all Jews. It has made many young Jews very confused and they identify more with Israel than they did.

It is creating a reaction. Many of them are naïve politically, and because Israel’s very existence is being called into question, they also frequently are uncritical in terms of what is going on in Israel-Palestine.

When Israel under comes such attack — because it doesn’t feel like a political attack but an existential attack — there is very little discussion. There are campaigns such as BDS [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel], which is basically dishonest. [Nor- man] Finkelstein picked up on this quite a while ago. Some people are confused, and BDS tries to promote the confusion. People think it is against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza period, but it is not. Because if it were, then it would not be a boycott of all...
Scapegoating Jews for the slave trade?

By Dan Katz

There was a lot of Jewish support for the US Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. Martin Luther King spoke out against anti-Semitism: “How could there be anti-Semitism among Negroes when our Jewish friends have demonstrated their commitment to the principle of tolerance and brotherhood…

“It would be impossible to record the contribution that the Jewish people have made toward the Negro’s struggle for freedom — it has been so great.” (1965)

That Black-Jewish unity broke down, partly because of the emergence of radical Black Nationalist organisations which identified with the Palestinians, especially after the Six Day War of 1967, and which were heavily influenced by a Stalinist Marxism which was comprehensively “anti-cosmopolitan”, “absolute anti-Zionist”, and anti-Semitic.

By the 1990s, so US historian Henry Louis Gates argues, a new layer of Black intellectuals had emerged who were prepared to write and speak extensively against Jews. The old anti-Semitism was “from below”. The new strand was promoted by Black leaders, from above.

In a 1992 article in the New York Times — Black Demagogues and Pseudo-scholars (bit.ly/gateshl), for which he received death threats — Gates wrote: “[Older] anti-Semitism … common among African American urban communities in the 1930s and 40s, followed ... a familiar pattern of clientelistic hostility toward the neighbourhood vendor or landlord.”

Because of shifting class positions, “In American cities [in the 90s], hostility of this sort is now commonly directed toward Korean [and other minority] shop owners.” That hostility — against ethnically different small shop owners — amongst some poor Black Americans was seen very clearly in the LA riots of April 1992, a few months before Gates’ article appeared.

Christian anti-semitism had weight too, partly because of the great importance Christian churches had for very many Black Americans. But there has been something new in recent decades. Gates cites a 1978 book by Michael Bradley, The Iceman Inheritance, which suggested that white people are unpleasant and aggressive because — unlike the rest of humanity — they are descended from Neanderthals. The Jews, Bradley argued, were the worst of the Neanderthals, apparently explaining the “particularly odious nature” of Jewish culture.

Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, holding up their book The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews

Ahmed Shafik, a commentator on American history, writes: “The nation for synagogues in the Caribbean. In some period European Jews fleeing persecution could see parts of the Americas as a safe haven (although Jews were banned from Portuguese and Spanish colonies, and from the French West Indies in 1685); in addition some Jews were forced into European colonies (for example by the Portuguese King John II, who compelled many Jews to convert before shipping them to settle in Sao Tome).

Jews were expelled from France (1435), Netherlands (1446, 1582), Italy (1492), Portugal (1496), Spain (1492) — and scores of other towns and states across the centuries.

Two Nations, Two States

A pamphlet by Workers’ Liberty, Israel out of the Occupied Territories! For a Palestinian state with the same rights as Israel! For Arab-Jewish workers’ unity on a basis of consistent democracy! For a socialist Israel and a socialist Palestine in a socialist federation of the Middle East!


Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, holding up their book The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews
Changing Labour, changing politics

The main theme of this year’s event, Changing Labour, Changing Politics, will be ideas about rebuilding the labour movement and renewing socialist ideas in the wake of the election of a new leader in the Labour Party.

The struggle for LGBT rights in the labour movement. How did we win some recognition for LGBT rights in the labour movement, and what still needs to be done? With Peter Tatchell, former Labour Parliamentary candidate in Bermondsey; and Maria Exall, TUC LGBT committee.

100 years since the 1916 Easter Rising. 100 years after radical republicans tried to take power in Dublin, Liam McNulty and James Heartfield discuss the event and its legacy.

1926: The revolution that might have been. Professor Keith Laybourn takes us through the history of the 1926 General Strike, the lessons we can learn from it, and why it was defeated.

50 years since the foundation of the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty. Sean Matgambar, founding member, discusses how he and others launched our tendency in 1966.

Can religion play a progressive role in politics? With Maryam Namazie, Worker-Communist Party of Iran; Kate Harris, Workers’ Liberty; and Lev Taylor, organiser of BirthWrong Tours and Anarchist Torah Study for the Jewdas collective.

The fight for democracy across Europe. Whatever the outcome of the referendum on 23 June, we need to build workers’ solidarity across Europe. Activists from across Europe will discuss how we build that solidarity.

How inequality is killing us with Professor Danny Dorling, author of Inequality and the 1%; and Intimacy: Why social inequality still persists; and Ellie Clarke, Workers’ Liberty.

The politics of crime dramas with Clive Bradley, writer of the BBC’s Trapped.

How does capitalism continue: housework, caring, and bringing up children with Cathy Nugent, editor of Solidarity.

The story behind the junior doctors strike, with Dr Vanni Gourountzannis, BMA Junior Doctors’ Committee; and Dr Youseff El-Gingihy, author of How to dismantle the NHS in 10 easy steps.

How did we win some recognition for LGBT rights in the labour movement, and what still needs to be done? With Peter Tatchell, former Labour Parliamentary candidate in Bermondsey; and Maria Exall, TUC LGBT committee.

100 years since the 1916 Easter Rising. 100 years after radical republicans tried to take power in Dublin, Liam McNulty and James Heartfield discuss the event and its legacy.

1926: The revolution that might have been. Professor Keith Laybourn takes us through the history of the 1926 General Strike, the lessons we can learn from it, and why it was defeated.

50 years since the foundation of the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty. Sean Matgambar, founding member, discusses how he and others launched our tendency in 1966.

Can religion play a progressive role in politics? With Maryam Namazie, Worker-Communist Party of Iran; Kate Harris, Workers’ Liberty; and Lev Taylor, organiser of BirthWrong Tours and Anarchist Torah Study for the Jewdas collective.

The fight for democracy across Europe. Whatever the outcome of the referendum on 23 June, we need to build workers’ solidarity across Europe. Activists from across Europe will discuss how we build that solidarity.

How inequality is killing us with Professor Danny Dorling, author of Inequality and the 1%; and Intimacy: Why social inequality still persists; and Ellie Clarke, Workers’ Liberty.

The politics of crime dramas with Clive Bradley, writer of the BBC’s Trapped.

How does capitalism continue: housework, caring, and bringing up children with Cathy Nugent, editor of Solidarity.

The story behind the junior doctors strike, with Dr Vanni Gourountzannis, BMA Junior Doctors’ Committee; and Dr Youseff El-Gingihy, author of How to dismantle the NHS in 10 easy steps.

Saturday night social: Our memories of the Grunwick strike

The Grunwick strike, 40 years on — with a film showing and presentation from the Grunwick 40 campaign, plus memories from the picketers.

Walking with Minnie

Thursday 7 July

A radical walking tour around London’s East End, following in the footsteps of Minnie Lansbury, socialist suffragette, teacher trade unionist, and leader of the Poplar Rates Rebellion.

Separate £5 tickets available.

What is the future of the Labour Party?

The left debates John McTernan

Friday 8 July

Tony Blair’s former special adviser debates Jill Mountford of the Momentum Steering Committee on the future of Labour. Chaired by Jon Lansman of Momentum.

Separate £5 tickets available.

Buy tickets online and find more information at www.workersliberty.org/ideas
An inspiring dialogue

By Jill Mountford

There is now a renewed interest in socialist ideas, an appetite to better understand how the world works and why it works in the interests of such a small minority.

There’s a craving among a much bigger layer of people for ideas about what we do about the preposterous injustices of capitalism.

These appetites and cravings need to be fed with ideas and arguments about what socialism is and importantly, what it is (i.e. the 57 varieties of the Stalinism of the twentieth century).

Sean Matgamna’s book, Can socialism make sense? An unfriendly dialogue, is, as he writes in the introduction, “a contribution to the urgent work of rebuilding a mass working class socialist consciousness and perspective, and a movement that embodiess and fights for them”.

This book is just what is needed at just the right time. This is not a book to be put in a pile by your bed, or on the bookshelf next to other good books you dip into now and again to bolster yourself up. This is a book to be read in a couple of sittings and to be discussed with anyone you can get into a conversation with about socialism. It’s a book you should always have a spare copy of to sell. And it’s a book that should be part of your basic tool kit in the fight to create a world where meeting human need is the start and end point.

The big ideas in Can socialism make sense? are presented the first part in a really useful format — as a dialogue between a Marxist and a critic. It goes through fundamental arguments about socialism and leaves you inspired to go and find someone to persuade. The second part of the book is key texts from Marxists and useful debates with leading Marxists and useful debates with leading socialists from around the world.

Can socialism make sense? asks the reader to rise to the occasion, and grasp the new opportunities facing us. Our class has to develop a sense of entitlement and take, as a class, what is rightfully ours. We can only do this through self-education and educating each other. We have to do this in a way that relates to people where they’re at, and the real world around us.

We do it through discussion and argument. The opposite is locking, glorifying, and repeating mantras. We have to learn to think for ourselves, in the interests of our class. We have to set out to make a long-lasting, useful impact on the current situation.

To do this we have to be confident, bold and unflinching, armed with a set of ideas that can turn the world on its head ideas that will help us reshape the world to meet human need.

Can socialism make sense? is a useful contribution to this task.

Stickers for workers’ unity!

Workers’ Liberty has produced a set of two special edition stickers for use during the EU referendum. As the campaign continues, the scaremongering about migrants will only get worse. Use our stickers to get some much-needed migrant-solidarity, internationalist, socialist ideas out there.

20 stickers £3.50
50 stickers £7
100 stickers £13
200 stickers £25

Order online from: bit.ly/EUstickers

Other Workers’ Europe materials are available from: bit.ly/EUmaterials

Can socialism make sense? is a useful contribution to this task.

by Cathy Nugent

Cath Fletcher’s book about Alessandro de’ Medici, the bastard son of a Duke and a servant, or possibly slave, of a black African background, is a work of historical detection.

The text weighs up the often contradictory, dishonest and sparse accounts of Alessandro’s life. Sometimes the only information about moments in his life comes from house inventories, lists of fine clothes, or letters of thanks for elaborate gifts. But such are the records that must be used to track Alessandro’s installation as the Duke of Florence in 1532, only to be assassinated less than four years later by a distant Medici cousin.

Alessandro was buried in his father’s sarcophagus with no prominent sign to show where he lay. After his death he was described as a brute, a rapist and a tyrant, and for what purpose, could a “black servant, or possibly slave, of a black African” have such a high rank in society?

The Medici family were important merchants and bankers in Florence by the early fourteenth century. Florence’s republican system of government by which Alessandro was to reform into an aristocratic government — was highly unstable. A Signoria of eight chief ministers was elected by councils elected by guilds (around a quarter of the population). The Signoria were elected for two months only. Factionalism, family feuding and nepotism were endemic. For a century the Medici’s struggle for ascendancy within this system and because of that effort they were twice expelled from the city. Then in 1523 a Medici son became a Pope. Clement VII decided to get Florence back for good and, more by accident than by design, used his nephew Alessandro to further that ambition. In 1530, with help from the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Clement got an army to blockade Florence and starve the republic into submission.

Alessandro’s job was to secure Florence for the Medics against the prospect of armies raised by exiled republican leaders. To build new fortifications inside the city and wider Tuscan region. To seek out rebels, to employ spies, to disarm potential enemies and punish others and to a certain extent win support through a populist appeal to the lower classes. Although eventually he did not avoid the plotting of his republican-sympathising cousin, he did his job well enough to ensure a 37-year rule by his successor, a distant cousin, Cosimo de’ Medici.

This book is not primarily an analysis about class and state formations in 16th century Italy and Europe. It is more of a reconstruction and description of the events, relationships, property, art and philosophy. Nonetheless this book will have you reaching for your Machiavelli and your Gramsci to better understand the shockingly violent lives of a warring and ferociously ambitious ruling class.

An inspiring dialogue

by Jill Mountford

There is now a renewed interest in socialist ideas, an appetite to better understand how the world works and why it works in the interests of such a small minority.

There’s a craving among a much bigger layer of people for ideas about what we do about the preposterous injustices of capitalism.

These appetites and cravings need to be fed with ideas and arguments about what socialism is and importantly, what it is (i.e. the 57 varieties of the Stalinism of the twentieth century).

Sean Matgamna’s book, Can socialism make sense? An unfriendly dialogue, is, as he writes in the introduction, “a contribution to the urgent work of rebuilding a mass working class socialist consciousness and perspective, and a movement that embodies and fights for them”.

This book is just what is needed at just the right time. This is not a book to be put in a pile by your bed, or on the bookshelf next to other good books you dip into now and again to bolster yourself up. This is a book to be read in a couple of sittings and to be discussed with anyone you can get into a conversation with about socialism. It’s a book you should always have a spare copy of to sell. And it’s a book that should be part of your basic tool kit in the fight to create a world where meeting human need is the start and end point.

The big ideas in Can socialism make sense? are presented the first part in a really useful format — as a dialogue between a Marxist and a critic. It goes through fundamental arguments about socialism and leaves you inspired to go and find someone to persuade. The second part of the book is key texts from Marxists and useful debates with leading Marxists and useful debates with leading socialists from around the world.

Can socialism make sense? asks the reader to rise to the occasion, and grasp the new opportunities facing us. Our class has to develop a sense of entitlement and take, as a class, what is rightfully ours. We can only do this through self-education and educating each other. We have to do this in a way that relates to people where they’re at, and the real world around us.

We do it through discussion and argument. The opposite is locking, glorifying, and repeating mantras. We have to learn to think for ourselves, in the interests of our class. We have to set out to make a long-lasting, useful impact on the current situation.

To do this we have to be confident, bold and unflinching, armed with a set of ideas that can turn the world on its head ideas that will help us reshape the world to meet human need.

Can socialism make sense? is a useful contribution to this task.

Can socialism make sense? is a useful contribution to this task.

by Jill Mountford

There is now a renewed interest in socialist ideas, an appetite to better understand how the world works and why it works in the interests of such a small minority.

There’s a craving among a much bigger layer of people for ideas about what we do about the preposterous injustices of capitalism.

These appetites and cravings need to be fed with ideas and arguments about what socialism is and importantly, what it is (i.e. the 57 varieties of the Stalinism of the twentieth century).

Sean Matgamna’s book, Can socialism make sense? An unfriendly dialogue, is, as he writes in the introduction, “a contribution to the urgent work of rebuilding a mass working class socialist consciousness and perspective, and a movement that embodies and fights for them”.

This book is just what is needed at just the right time. This is not a book to be put in a pile by your bed, or on the bookshelf next to other good books you dip into now and again to bolster yourself up. This is a book to be read in a couple of sittings and to be discussed with anyone you can get into a conversation with about socialism. It’s a book you should always have a spare copy of to sell. And it’s a book that should be part of your basic tool kit in the fight to create a world where meeting human need is the start and end point.

The big ideas in Can socialism make sense? are presented the first part in a really useful format — as a dialogue between a Marxist and a critic. It goes through fundamental arguments about socialism and leaves you inspired to go and find someone to persuade. The second part of the book is key texts from Marxists and useful debates with leading right wing theoreticians. It’s readable and inspiring. It focuses and invigorates the mind. It educates and agitates the reader and leaves you with no other conclusion than you have to organise. You’ve got to go and fight for these ideas.

And we have to fight for them in a confident, self-assured way. It’s not really a question of can socialism make sense? It’s an assertion that the liberation of humanity depends on fighting for and winning the ideas for socialism. We’re pitched against a class that has a sense of self-entitlement in its very DNA. Even when rocked by their self-inflicted crisis of 2008, the confidence and audacity leads them to conclude that working class people the world over can be sacrificed in order that these few can hold their power and profits.

Can socialism make sense? asks the reader to rise to the occasion, and grasp the new opportunities facing us. Our class has to develop a sense of entitlement and take, as a class, what is rightfully ours. We can only do this through self-education and educating each other. We have to do this in a way that relates to people where they’re at, and the real world around us.

We do it through discussion and argument. The opposite is locking, glorifying, and repeating mantras. We have to learn to think for ourselves, in the interests of our class. We have to set out to make a long-lasting, useful impact on the current situation.

To do this we have to be confident, bold and unflinching, armed with a set of ideas that can turn the world on its head ideas that will help us reshape the world to meet human need.

Can socialism make sense? is a useful contribution to this task.
Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

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

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

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

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with “social partnership” with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political 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 domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers’ unity against racism. • Open borders. Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers. • Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation. • Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small. • Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

---

**Events**

**Monday 6 June**

Haringey Momentum debates the EU referendum

7pm, West Indian Cultural Centre, London, N8 0DJ
bit.ly/1UIxKxv

**Monday 6 June**

Barret Momentum debates the EU referendum

7pm, Greek Cypriot Centre, London, N12 9RU

**Saturday 4 June**

Bursary or Bust National Demonstration

1pm, St Thomas’ Hospital, London SE1 7EH

**Sunday 5 June**

Momentum Youth and Students conference

10.30am-6.30pm, Steve Biko Building, University of Manchester, M13 9PR
bit.ly/momYandS

---

**Labour**

**By Michael Johnson**

This weekend, two important events are taking place in Manchester. Young members of the labour movement: an extraordinary national conference of Labour Students, and the first democratic conference of Momentum Youth and Students.

The Labour Students extraordinary conference on Saturday 4 June is ostensibly organised to introduce a new voting system of One Member One Vote (OMOV). However, the proposed constitution, presented as “take it or leave it” with no opportunity for parts and amendments, represents a pre-emptive attack by the Blairite incumbents to shore up their position in the event of a pro-Corbyn surge breaching the campsarts. OMOV is only the cover.

According to a Scottish Labour Young Socialists (SLYS) critique (bit.ly/25xvMVP), party staff have only booked the venue for an hour and a half. In this case, a constituition will be discussed which introduces new aims and values to Labour Students, including an obligation to “secure support for Labour Student candidates standing in Students’ Union and National Union of Students Elections”. This is a big step forward, according to SLYS, “Candidate selection for NUS elections remains unreformed and undemocratic.”

These new aims and values are to be enforced by an Executive Committee with beefed-up powers to suspend members and clubs who don’t comply with its interpretation of the rules. A clear target could be leftists who wish to support candidates in NUS elections who are left-wing Labour members but not “official”. Labour Students’ candidates. Or socialists who are deemed insufficiently “democratic socialist.” It is a recipe for the arbitrary and authoritarian exercise of power.

The new constitution should be rejected, both on its own merits and in objection to the lack of democratic procedures at this conference. Any new constitution should be subject to full discussion, and members given the ability to amend it or vote on it in person.

Momentum Youth and Students (MYS) is holding its first democratic event on Sunday 5 June. The conference, which for the first time will ratify a set of structures for the new organisation, democratically elect a committee and decide on MYS’s key campaigning priorities, is a big step forward.

Previously, MYS existed only as a social media vehicle, and was used to put together a slate for the Young Labour national conference elections. It had no grassroots democratic life nor any accountable structures.

Some of this was perhaps inevitable given the level of improvisation in establishing new structures for the vibrant Momentum movement. In any case, the conference now provides a great opportunity to move on and consolidate MYS as a functioning democratic organisation, allowing young Momentum members across the country to link up, campaign together and transform both Labour’s youth structures and the party more generally.

One amendment has been submitted to the conference to remove those parts of the constitution establishing a committee and setting out its size and composition. Instead, it proposes that the conference elect only two people, who will be empowered to liaise with the Momentum National Committee.

This amendment would in effect scrap the committee, preventing the organisation effectively taking decisions between conferences. It would hugely reduce MYS members’ ability to get involved in the organisation and should be opposed by anyone hoping that the conference will establish a more democratic youth movement for Momentum.

Workers’ Liberty will be arguing at Momentum Youth and Student conference for a democratic MYS, and we will be advocating the class-struggle socialist politics we believe necessary to transform the labour movement to fight effectively for a workers’ government and a socialist alternative to capitalism.

---

**No united front with Cameron on EU!**

**By Rhodri Evans**

After the grim result of Labour’s tagging-along with the Tories in the Scottish referendum campaign, the Labour Party decided — without much open controversy — to campaign independently for a vote for Britain to remain in the EU.

Yet on 30 May, the newly-elected Labour mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, flouted that policy to join with David Cameron — who only weeks ago was smearing Khan as “terrorist-linked” — to launch a “pledge card” for the cross-party “Britain Stronger in Europe” campaign.

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are doing good work, touring the country, making a distinctly labour-movement argument for remaining in the EU as a better starting-point to fight for social equality across national borders.

The leading Labour people who, like Khan, instead chime in with status-quo, “Brexit-bad-for-bosses” platforms are undermining Labour.

And undermining the job of mobilising working-class people and youth to vote remain: if they see “remain” motivated only by arguments that the status quo is ok, then some will be tempted by “vote leave” demagogy.

Officially, Labour has its own “Labour in” campaign, led by Alan Johnson. But its budget is tiny (by Westminster standards), a fraction of a single MP’s office budget.

Its latest intervention is a scraping-the-barrel claim by Johnson that “Britain’s hopes of staging big sporting events like the Olympics or World Cup could be put at risk by Brexit.”
Students help uni workers win

No to the DWP “employer” deal

By John Moloney

From 6 to 22 June, workers in the Employment and Pensions (DWP) will vote on the so-called “employee deal”.

A far better name would be the “employer deal”. The dominant Left Unity faction in PCS claims that the deal busts the Treasury’s pay cap. Yet DWP got everything it wanted.

The famous safeguards are DWP just saying it will obey the law; the money on offer overall is not much more than 1% of the pay budget per year; AAs and AOs (the lowest grade in the department) are just getting 1%; staff getting a 3 in their annual staff report are getting nothing; and if you opt out, which many women (as the main carers) will have to, then you get 0.25% (hurrah for equality).

In return, DWP can make staff work a certain number of Saturdays (the union is literally selling the weekend) and late Monday to Friday. This will greatly decrease its overtime bill.

The deal also changes the mobility clause. We all know that the department intends to close many offices in the next years. The “new” mobility clause allows them to more easily force staff to move even if this causes great hardship for carers (the double whammy to women) and reduces their confidence.

The deal also tries to block the union from recruiting scabs as a declaration of war. A far better name would be the “employer deal”.

Staff will receive “buy out” payments which are to boost their confidence, but in general the union is very reserved about striking actions including the possibility of disrupting summer graduation ceremonies. We got lots of students out in support, leafleting around campus every week, but also making the effort to constantly talk to workers around campus to build links and boost their confidence.

I think people have an impression of students as self-interested consumers, and so the support the workers got was quite unexpected. It gave them a boost to see students as on their side and not in line with university management.

We weren’t sure how workers would feel about us taking militant direct action, particularly because union officials often frown on that, but they welcomed it, particularly because we have more leeway to do those things than they do. We burst into the Vice Chancellor’s office and disrupted management meetings where they were talking about spending on new vanity projects.

We held joint rallies with the workers and some joint meetings. The workers voted overwhelmingly in a consultative ballot [96% to strike] in general the union was very reserved about the possibility of strikes. Obviously it’s tough for low paid workers to go on strike but I think people were angry and determined enough with a bit more leadership. Some tune union officials saying “We’re member-led, it’s up to you” functions as a way to avoid giving leadership and thus undermining the possibility of a confident fight.

We’re going to hold together the group of students who want to mobilise around labour disputes, and strengthen our links with workers. Similar attacks will continue as the universities restructure on neo-liberal lines, and workers also need to look for opportunities to push forward.

We drew in, for instance, a lot of people focused on the Living Wage. We were able to have discussions linking the immediate issues to bigger things, about the way the university is run but also the economic system we live under.

It was impossible not to draw some socialist conclusions, because once you get beyond the social responsibility marketing nonsense, a dispute like this shows the reality of the way the university works as a capitalist entity and the nature of its management.

UCU Higher Education members struck for two days on 25 and 26 May in a dispute over pay.

Strikers demanded “Fair Pay in HE”: a better pay rise than the 1.1% on offer, an end to the gender pay gap (women in the sector are paid, on average, £7,000 less than men), and action against casualisation.

This is a difficult time of year to organise action in universities. Most teaching has finished, and it’s therefore hard to judge how many staff were formally on strike and how many opted to stay at home without declaring their participation. It also means disruption will be limited, although the work-to-contract will delay exam marking to some degree. A more serious threat is the exam process, in the medium term, is UCU’s call on external examiners (academics who monitor the quality of examining for another institution) to resign their posts.

Reaction to the strike has been mixed, with many members querying the focus on pay as opposed to the more pressing issues of workload (in the case of permanent staff) and casualisation (which precarious staff fear has been tackled on as an afterthought). A lot of work will be needed by local branches to convince members that the pay fight is one worth having, both in the next few weeks before campuses empty for the summer, and in the run-up to the start of the autumn term.

UCU has asked branches to identify a third strike day and to time it to maximise local pressure (for example, to hold it on an Open Day). Combining these strikes with action to engage members – potests, rallies, stunts – is essential to keep up momentum over the summer.

Train bosses hire scabs

By Olivia Moore

Abellio, the company which operates ScotRail train services, is attempting to rush staff from elsewhere in their UK operations through a four-week training course to use them to undermine potential strikes.

Rail union RMT is currently balloting its members on ScotRail for strikes against attacks on the safety-critical role of the guard, in a dispute that mirrors fights against “Driver Only Operation” also taking place on Southern Rail, Northern and Gatwick Express.

The RMT described the attempt to recruit scabs as a “declaration of war” which proved that the company had “no intention of reaching a negotiated settlement in the dispute”.

Elsewhere, RMT has demanded Southern publish the sickness records and bonus and benefit schemes of its senior bosses, after franchise owner Govia Thameslink Railway continued its campaign of intimidation against staff by publishing sickness records in the press.

RMT said the company had come up with a “laughable” plan of releasing the personal medical records of its frontline staff as part of their justification for the shambolic running of the Southern routes”.

Cabin crew vote to strike over safety

Cabin crew with airline Thomas Cook have voted in favour of strikes over health and safety.

74% of workers voted for strikes which were ballot by their union Unite over dangerous changes to rest breaks. The changes would see cabin crew only getting one 20 minute break in an 11 hour 29 minute duty period rather than 20 minutes every six hours, raising concerns of the health and well-being of cabin crew and the safety of passengers.

Cabin crew have been voicing increasing alarm across the industry over intensification of work at the expense of safety.
FRANCE: STRIKE MOVEMENT GROWS

By Olivier Delbeke*

Over the last week, the balance of forces has shifted in favour of the working class.

This was a surprise for its enemies, who responded with howls of anger, and a powerful and growing cause for confidence and unity within the ranks of the social layers in the battle — but also for those who haven’t yet joined in, but who are watching, listening and learning. But you wouldn’t hear this by watching or reading the national media, who, for just this reason, have taken up a shrill tone of outrage, which is becoming fouler and more ridiculous by the day.

There were more demonstrators on 26 May than on 19 May, and more demonstrators on 19 May than on 17 May. Above all, there is now a real layer of “repeat demonstrators” (eight days of action since the start of March), from different generations, who number hundreds of thousands of persons, who are determined to continue the movement. There is, above all, this strike, which, slowly, is spreading.

The slow spread of the strike (dockworkers in Le Havre, petrochemical workers in all of France’s eight oil refineries, road-freight drivers) is a result of the tactic of the union leadership, in the first instance CGT and FO, which was not to organise a central confrontation to checkmate Hollande on the “Labour Law”, which aims to do what Sarkozy would never have dared during his term in of fice.

Strikes in refineries; in transport; at the Peugeot PSA Mulhouse works on Thursday 26 May; at Amazon, where workers, precariously and super-exploited, are blocking their distribution centres all over France, for both their own demands and for the withdrawal of the El Khomri law (“Labour Law”). In small and medium workplaces, in particular in the region around Le Havre, in Finistere in the Northwest, strikes, like those at Amazon, are based on their own demands, which, quickly, will provide the basis for greater unity, because, seeing as they are mostly about pay and hours, they necessarily oppose everything that the El Khomri law would mean.

If the government tries to force the situation, in particular, by militarising the refineries, then a clear call for a general strike will be needed, and rallies in front of the prefectures. The movement is not only a workers’ strike movement, but also a democratic movement which is confronting and threatening the regime of the 5th Republic, its executive and its “state of emergency”.

VIOLENCE

Incidents of police violence and attacks on trade unionists have seen many victims in recent days, including some serious injuries, and they are clearly increasing, although not reported by the national media, much more than the incidents which have received much more publicity, such as the burning of a police car in Paris on 18 May.

The next official stage planned by the leaders of the CGT, FO, FSU and Solidaires unions is the national demonstration on 14 June, due to coincide with the discussion of the Senate’s motion in the Assembly. How will the strike develop between now and then?

Everything will depend on initiatives taken by local teams of activists, on the way that workers of whatever sector enter the action next, bringing their own demands and joining them with those of the movement for the withdrawal of the Law. Close attention should also be paid to the developments in the SNCF [French rail system] around the mobilisation against the deregulation of working hours, the reform of the collective labour agreement, and the opening of the way for full competition on the rails.

Without a doubt, in order to take part in the 14 June demonstration, people will need to go on strike. On the other hand, if the demonstration is big and politically successful, it will make it possible to bring people out on strike the following day, to carry a decisive blow against the government. But all of that depends on the way that things are organised, concretely, at the grassroots, with methodical preparations, general assemblies, necessary transport to Paris, collections of money from workers, or organised by the unions.

French workers are playing for high stakes in terms of their conditions of life and work. The most conscious part of the movement knows this full well, and will organise to beat a Hollande-Valls government which is running out of steam.

It will pose the question of the defeat of the government, and therefore its fall, be it through parliamentary vote, or by the knock-out blow of a general strike, or both.

*Olivier Delbeke is an editor of the French socialist newsletter Arguments pour la lutte sociale.

---

Subscribe to Solidarity

Trial sub (6 issues) £7 □
Six months (22 issues) £22 waged □, E11 unwaged □
One year (44 issues) £44 waged □, 22 unwaged □
European rate: 6 months £30 □ One year £55 □

Name .................................................................
Address ................................................................

I enclose £ ..............

Cheques (£) to “AWL” or make £ and Euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub

Or subscribe with a standing order
Pay £5 a month to subscribe to Solidarity or pay us more to make an ongoing contribution to our work
To: ............................................ (your bank) ................................................................. (address)
Account name ......................................................................................................... (your name)
Account number ................................ Sort code ......................................................

Please make payments as follows to the debit of my account:
Payee: Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB (60-03-01)

Amount: £ ..............
To be paid on the _____ day of ______ (month) 20___ (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing.

This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date .................................. Signature .................................................................