



& Workers' Liberty

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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SOCIALIST POLICIES CAN BEAT THE TORIES

Inside:

France: mobilisation restarts



Marcella Davine reports from France as the mobilisation against the Labour Law restarts.

See page 2

Antisemitism, anti-Zionism and the left



After Owen Smith accuses us of antisemitism, activists talk about our real record.

See pages 6-7

Racism before and after Brexit



Camila Bassi looks at racism and hate crime in Britain today.

See page 9

Join Labour!

Ann Field examines Labour's fortunes in Scotland.

See page 10

Winning with socialist policies will take a battle to convince people — including current Tory voters — that ideas which they now dismiss as “nice, but impractical” can be made reality. It is the same battle to convince those who like Corbyn but think him “unelectable”.

The new mass membership of the Labour Party can win that battle... if it organises itself, if it wins a democratic regime inside the Labour Party, if it turns outwards to educate and convince the electorate rather than devising policy by second-guessing polls and “focus groups”.

More page 5



Syria: risk of aid stopping

By Simon Nelson

The ceasefire in Syria had already appeared to be on the verge of collapse following a US-led attack on Syrian troops, who, so Russia has said, were fighting Daesh.

Then came an air attack on UN aid convoys near Aleppo. Russia and Syria have both denied responsibility, but are suspected of being involved.

The US has said the ceasefire is not dead.

The US said its attack on Deir al-Zour was aimed at Daesh, and it was unaware Syrian government troops were present. The Russians declared it was a “display of heavy handedness” by the US.

Russia has called on the US to coordinate airstrikes alongside it, so as to avoid such mistakes.

The ceasefire was supposed to last for a week after which Russia and the US led-coalition would begin coordinated action against Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and Daesh.

Russia complains the US are unable to control the opposition. That is partially true: the ceasefire demands that the rebels disengage from jihadist groups in order to receive support and most are unwilling. In any case little aid has been let into besieged areas. The attack on the convoy is therefore very serious indeed.

Continued Russian bombing of the aid route from Turkey has been a way of stalling aid and for Russians to continue to show their support for Assad.

The rebels have still not formally accepted the deal. On the other hand they have not denounced it outright, as they knew the people living in their areas need the aid.

A meeting of the largest rebel groups, which will include Ahrar al Sham known to be working alongside Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, was meant to be working on a coordinated position on the ceasefire.

Turkey has confirmed it plans to create a 5,000 square km safe zone inside Syria with large scale infrastructure projects. Turkey wants to counter growing Kurdish influence on the Syria/Turkey border.

All of this is now hanging in the balance.

Still mobilised against “Labour Law”

LETTER FROM PARIS

By Marianne Davin

Hello! I have recently moved to Paris, and every month I will be writing a “Letter from Paris” to keep *Solidarity* readers up to date about France and its far left.

Hopefully this will be an interesting year in which the far left can have serious conversations about our political ideas in light of the passing of the Labour Law with essentially no vote, the upcoming presidential election, and the continuing “state of emergency”.

In February 2016 a large scale mobilisation against the proposed Loi Travail (Labour Law) began where students and workers mobilised in the streets, workplaces, and universities to begin agitation against this law.

As previous *Solidarity* articles have stated, this law would reverse decades of workers’ rights to favour employers over workers. Since the last national demonstration against the law on 14 June, the Hollande government has forced the law through government by using article 49.3, of the constitution. This changes a vote on laws into a vote of confidence for the government.

For Assembly members to stop the law from passing they must have 10% of them signing a motion to censure the government. This didn’t occur because the document was missing two signatures. All has a debilitating effect on mobilisations, since it seems almost impossible to stop proposed law at this point.

As in most cases where a 49.3 was used against public opposition (and also due to summer break), the desire to mobilise seems to have decreased. As a final hurrah, seven unions (CGT, FO, FSU, Solidaire, UNEF, UNL, and FIDL) called for the fourteenth day of mobilisations, and unfortunately the last, on the 15 September.

With student militants from the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) I participated in a general assembly at Nanterre University in the west of Paris right before the mobilisation.

The general assembly was called for by self-organised students, in what is called a mobilisation committee, to prepare for the demonstration and to talk about the future of the fight against the Labour Law. The meetings are not run by political parties or unions; people to choose their own methods of fighting and getting past the union bureaucracy if necessary to achieve success.

70-90 students participated in the discussion, which centred around issues of repression and how to combat the police state, perspectives on how to keep the fight going within the coming months, and how to develop political ideas within the student body in order to collectively elaborate demands.



Youth on the streets, 15 September, Paris.

The first main theme at the general assembly was how to ensure the fight against the Labour Law was not divided. The union bureaucracy has been doing just this — taking up fights within specific workplaces or specific industries, and using the court system to bit-by-bit tear the law apart. Students were clear that the law needed to be fought collectively at universities and throughout the workforce.

The second main theme was that the Labour Law mainly concerns the private sector, but the public sector is having similar laws forced onto them. Therefore, it was essential to collaborate with workers in the education and rail sectors.

The demonstration, about 40,000 strong, was one of the least repressive ones I have experienced because the self-organised students decided to not be at the front of the demonstration.

Usually students like to be at the front (actually technically not the

front, but right behind the “casseurs” or people who are generally more violent and think revolution will occur by beginning riots; they are the people who the police most violently repress and combat during the demonstrations). Being at the front is seen as the most advantageous spot in a demo because people who are unorganised come to the front to participate and trying to recruit these people to the self-organised committees is seen as essential.

But this time around the mobilisation committees decided that they wanted to be close to union-organised demo security.

There was a strong police force with everyone being searched before coming into the demo. Many people were stuck in kettles at train stations so they couldn’t get to the demo. Police told people to not bring scarves or they would be taken away, that all manner of protection against tear gas would be

considered illegal, and that identity checks would be heavily used.

Although this is the last demonstration that has been called for by unions, students and workers must not give up. They must work together to develop demands, and to ensure they are not divided by the bosses, the government or the union bureaucracy.

It will be necessary to continue pushing unions to develop the movement and remain combative against the government’s actions.

The fact that the general assembly and the demonstration were very well attended (even with very bad weather and the beginning of school) shows that the desire to fight is not gone. The fight will be more difficult now because a government will need to pass a new law to repeal the old one, but it is not impossible.

Workers and students uniting together is the only way to ensure this happens.

Books by Workers’ Liberty



Can socialism make sense?

A new book from Workers’ Liberty which makes the case for socialism. In a time when socialism is the most searched word on the Merriam-Webster dictionary website, more and more people call

themselves socialists, and a self-confessed socialist is leader of the Labour Party, this book explores what socialism means, whether it can rise again, how, and why.

It answers questions such as: What about Stalin? Are revolutions democratic? How can we have a planned economy? and is socialism still relevant?

£12 (£14.80 including postage)

www.workersliberty.org/socialism

Why socialist feminism?

Workers’ Liberty makes class struggle and radical social change central to our feminism. We are socialist feminists. This pamphlet explores what “socialist feminism” might mean in the context of the latest “wave”, and global conditions.

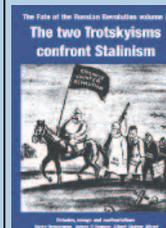
£6.20 (inc postage) from www.workersliberty.org/why-soc-fem

The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism

For the revolutionary socialists, the Trotskyists, it has been a very long march through the 20th century and beyond, and over sometimes

uncharted, unexpected, terrain. Central to it has been the fight against Stalinism, to understand it, to wipe the labour movement clean of it. This book surveys and documents for the first time the formative debates in the 1940s between the two main strands into which Trotskyism divided.

£23 (inc postage) from bit.ly/twotrotskyisms



Lots of "old" cuts still to come

By Colin Foster

Theresa May's Tory government has said that it will decide no new welfare cuts.

What makes this a half-truth, or even an outright untruth, is that big cuts, maybe even bigger cuts than the government can realistically manage, have already been programmed by previous Tory decisions.

"We will meet the previous commitments we've made", as Tory minister Damian Green put it.

For example, over three million people currently claim a total of £14 billion disability benefits in the UK. The program of replacing Disability Living Allowance by Personal Independence Payment is still rolling out. By 2018, DLA will be gone, and only PIP will remain.

DLA used assessments from patient's doctors; the PIP system instead uses contractors. The



Department of Work and Pensions rejects 52% of all new claims. In the first quarter of this year 57% of over 7000 appeals were won by the claimant; but those with the claimants with enough confidence, energy, and health to appeal.

The already-programmed cuts in central government redistribution to local authorities will mean that the gap between funds available

and the money that would be needed to keep the same level of services as in 2014-5 will rise from £6 billion in 2016-7 to £10.3 billion in 2018-9. More cuts in social care for the elderly, more library and children's centres closures.

Capital grants for housing associations are still due to be cut.

Universal Credit is still due to be phased in over the next few years. 2.6 million families stand to be an average of £1,600 a year worse off under the new system of Universal Credit than under existing tax credits, and 1.9 million £1,400 better off. The loss will be softened by income-protection for existing claimants, but will hit home over time.

School funding cuts are still on track.

Court challenge against Hunt

By a junior doctor

Justice for Health, the group of junior doctors who have crowd-funded a record £300,000 (from 10,000 people) finally got their day in court today.

It was part of a two-day judicial review into the legality of the Secretary of State's decision to impose a contract upon junior doctors. The official verdict is not expected until 28 September, and there is a further day of hearings to come as we go to press. The process will have been uncomfortable for the Secretary of State and his supporters.

The argument put forward by the Justice for Health lawyers is that Jeremy Hunt does not have the power to impose a contract on NHS employers or by association on junior doctors. The Department of Health lawyers argue that the Department of Health is not imposing a contract, simply recommending

one.

It is an interesting line of defence, as the Secretary of State is documented in *Hansard* as stating his intent to impose a contract. If this judicial review falls, the ball is clearly in Labour's court to hold the Secretary of State to account for misleading Parliament.

The court case neatly encapsulates everything junior doctors have been fighting against. A government willing to change their statements at will, to support the imposition of an unevincenced manifesto commitment, using their influence over Health Education England and the General Medical Council to force through imposition and threaten junior doctors out of industrial action.

Regardless of the outcome of this trial there will be questions for the Department of Health to answer, and the fight for a safe and fair contract for junior doctors will continue.

Labour needs new policy of solidarity with migrants

By Dora Polenta

Jeremy Corbyn has said he will defend freedom of movement in the negotiations around Brexit.

He has declared: "I have visited the camps in Calais and Dunkirk, which are in an appalling state. Those people are in a very perilous situation. They are all humans, to whom we must reach out the hand of friendship and support". He has called for Britain to admit more refugees.

By contrast, the legacy of the 1997-2010 New Labour Government, of which Owen Smith aspires to be the successor, was seven Acts of Parliament restricting civil liberties on the pretext of fighting terrorism; six on immigration and asylum; tightened eligibility for out-of-work benefits and reduced real-term levels.

We need a left ready for a total break with the system, clearly and cleanly aiming for a different society. A left who will not regress to nation-centred slogans of more borders and border controls, but will instead raise the flag of a common struggle with workers in the rest of Europe.

Politics is polarising between the hard-right authoritarianism of the Tory party and the democratic socialist alternative projected by the growing grassroots movement around the Labour party and Jeremy Corbyn.

The left must unequivocally oppose the 2016 Immigration Act, which increase surveillance and repression against migrants and those they come into contact with. It must say: shut down all immigration detention centres; an open door policy on immigration; open borders. Solidarity above all and

first of all! Solidarity without "pre-conditions"!

By contrast, Labour right-winger Jon Cruddas's review of the 2015 election concluded that: "The Labour Party is becoming a toxic brand. It is perceived by voters as a party that supports open door approach to immigration, lacks credibility on the economy and is a soft touch on welfare spending".

The political and economic crisis within the EU is not sleepwalking us to the rise of the left and socialism. In times of discredit for mainstream bourgeois options, and increasing inequality, the risk of a rapid rise of the extreme right is extremely serious. The only thing that can prevent it is an ideological battle by the left.

"All true men", as the Cuban revolutionary José Martí said, "must feel a sting when another man is slapped in the face." a



For as long as the war in Syria lasts and chaos prevails, refugees will have no choice. They will try by every means possible to get to a place that is safer. Not matter how many fences and borders are erected, they will not stop the movement of desperate people.

So, on the one hand, the forces of reaction, of xenophobia, of right-wing nationalism, and of neo-Nazism are developed, as shown most recently by the gains of the right-wing AfD, with 20% in local elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and 14% in Berlin.

On the other hand, there have been advances by the left in a number of countries, including the revolutionary left in elections in Ireland. We have also had anti-fascist demonstrations in many European countries and the huge wave of solidarity for refugees in Greece. According to a recent poll, over five million Greeks are assisting refugees, and 66% believe that Greece's borders must remain open even if the rest of Europe shuts down its borders.

This crisis in Europe is not the crisis of the EU as an institution (and the answer is not just the "exit" from the EU). It is the crisis

of the capitalist system as a whole and internationally, which is reflected in the EU and its institutions.

The masses of refugees and immigrants are the ambassadors of a vibrant world of indomitable willpower, of strong solidarity, of passion for a life worth living. They are the lighthouses of beautiful colours and carriers of history and a multitude of cultures. The mother who carries a child in her arms and pushes the stroller of her handicapped father along a cold highway in Mikrothives in Greece is a thousand times more able to govern justly and humanly than the degenerate bureaucrats of Brussels and London.

The refugee issue is not a matter of national security, it is a matter of humanity. The cementing of the alliance of the workers and popular strata with the refugees and immigrants is our own homeland, our own destination.

Our struggle is for class unity against the efforts of division, fragmentation, and incitement by the bourgeois governments. Claims for welfare measures for refugees are linked to demands for publicly-provided housing, food, health, and education for the "locals".

A Pan European solidarity movement, internationalist and anti-imperialist, will be built only if each anti-racist movement in each country wins battles against the policy of forcible exclusion of refugees at their "national borders".

The fronts against Euro-racism and imperialism are not only "outside" but especially in our own country. It is our government, "our own" fences, "our" state-orchestrated racism, "our" fascism and far-rightism, "our" business interests. The battle is first and foremost at "home".

Migrant worker killed on Italian picket

By Hugh Edwards

"Flatten him like a smoothing iron" screamed the racist guard-dogs of SEAM, subcontractors to the multinational distributors GLS in the northern Italian city of Piacenza.

The scab at the wheel of the 15 ton truck didn't hesitate as he headed towards the picket line of defenceless workers of the cooperative.

On Tuesday 13 September members of the base union USB, were a month into their strike to reinstate 13 of their unjustly sacked work-mates.

Abd Elsalem Ahmed Eldant, a 53 year old Egyptian, 14 years with the company took the full force of the blow, dying immedi-

ately, leaving his wife and five children.

The death of Eldant, a former teacher in Egypt but forced to flee because of his politics, is the murderous climax of a campaign by Italy's distribution service companies to crush workers and their union, USB.

USB has become a beacon of hope for Italy's most defenceless workers. The heroic sacrifices of thousands of migrant workers from Asia, Africa and Europe has clawed back trade union rights and terms of conditions and wages for men and women

All this in the context of the massive and widespread demoralisation among Italian workers following repeated and shameful retreats by the bureaucratic leaders

of the major confederation unions.

Their struggles have been the living proof that collective resistance and solidarity can still be fought for and won, and can be the means of challenging the class enemy.

On Saturday 17 September thousand marched in Piacenza to commemorate this brave man's life

Further demonstrations have been planned, and from the rank and file of the CGIL/ FIOM federation has come the demand for a day of action in defence of the right to strike and picket.

Now is a critical moment for the country's serious militants and class fighters to raise the banner of united mass working class action against capitalism and class repression in Italy.

Build Stop the Purge campaign after 24 September

By Simon Nelson

As Labour Party conference approaches, the numbers of members being suspended and expelled is increasing.

This purge has become extremely destructive. The most recent high-profile suspensions were that of two Bristol Labour councillors — Hibaq Jama and Mike Langley. The suspensions leave Labour with one councillor below what is needed for an overall majority.

A number of conference delegates, including those who have submitted a contemporary motion supporting the “Stop the Purge” campaign, have found themselves suspended and expelled.

Harrow West delegate Rosie Woods has joined the long list of those expelled for an association with Workers’ Liberty.

The Labour Party says that 4,000 people



Suspended: Hibaq Jama and Mike Langley

have been excluded. As suspensions are likely to continue until the conference the true figure could be much more. The process is completely untransparent.

Despite some small victories — including the reinstatement of BFAWU General Secre-

tary and Stop the Purge Chair, Ronnie Draper and Harrow Councillor Pamela Fitzpatrick — many other members remain in the continued limbo of suspension, and those expelled are denied an appeal. Ronnie and Pamela have called for all other suspended members to be given the natural justice they deserve.

The contemporary motion — “For a Democratic, Pluralist Labour Party” — calling for change in Labour Party functioning that will allow it to become a space for open discussions of socialist politics and a hub of working-class organising and campaigning has been “ruled out” by the Conference Committee.

We will be action to get this motion heard — including a lobby of conference — alongside ongoing campaigning for suspended activists to be reinstated. We all need to demand a comprehensive review if not

amnesty for all those suspended and expelled.

If Jeremy Corbyn, as is expected, wins the leadership election this will become even more necessary. With a majority on the National Executive backing Corbyn, the right will be facing a much expanded membership, the prospect of the boundary review, and a decrease in their control of the machine.

We call on the leadership of Corbyn and McDonnell to take control of the situation immediately. The leadership has not yet spoken out, called clearly for an immediate end to the suspensions and expulsions. It will require continued pressure to ensure they back the campaign.

Activists should be prepared for an initial increase in summary suspensions and expulsions, and be prepared to continue to build the Stop the Purge campaign beyond 24 September.

Organise to take the opportunities

WHY I JOINED THE AWL

By Claudia Raven

I’ve been a socialist as long as I can remember.

In a world where capitalism was catastrophically failing most people, leaving them cold, hungry and dying of preventable diseases, even in developed countries, it didn’t make sense to support a system of market and profit.

Fundamental change in the organisation of society, and a shift in power, is necessary to achieve decent conditions of living for all without destroying our planet.

I’ve been active in the trade union movement since I started training as a doctor, but the Labour Party seemed like the least bad of the awful, rather than anything we could use to fight for socialism. The various socialist sects seemed more interested in fighting each other and recruiting for themselves than doing anything useful, and alienated me.

One of my strongest union comrades sold me a copy of *Solidarity* when we met up, but I knew little of the AWL.

When Corbyn was elected, I joined the Labour Party and immediately became exposed to the various groupings within the left. Many did not seem happy at the arrival of thousands of enthused people, much less the arrival of those who wanted to push not just for Corbyn but for a democratised and socialist Labour Party. People seemed to hate Workers’ Liberty, but when I asked why, the positions AWL advocated seemed reasonable. I realised many of the best trade unionists and activists I knew (or knew of) were members.

The organised network of the AWL was obviously not just promoting good political ideas but also enabling members to be good industrial strategists. I started meeting members regularly to discuss the issues in my local Labour Party, Momentum and my union. In times with so much opportunity and risk, organisation is key to ensuring that democratic and revolutionary socialists shape the progress of the movement.

I’ve joined the AWL to be part of that work, and other revolutionary socialists should do the same.

‘Dispatches’ smears Momentum and AWL

By Cathy Nugent

Channel Four’s Dispatches programme, ‘The Battle for the Labour Party’ (Monday 19 September) was an ineffective attempt to scandal-monger. It did however show the kind of hostility Corbyn and the left will continue to face in the months ahead.

The programme attempted to expose Momentum as an “entryist” organisation in Labour and Workers’ Liberty as an “entryist” group within Momentum. It was an attempt to throw as much mud as they could at Corbyn and the left in Labour, to disorganise and destabilise, now and on the other side of the Labour leadership contest.

Against Momentum the program made the following shocking revelations: the group are deeply involved in the campaign to get Corbyn elected; people who supported Corbyn in the past are being rung up to ask for their continued support; Momentum has a database. What chickenshit!

People in Momentum and much wider layers of members in Labour are trying to build a different kind of party — it’s true — one where new people are welcomed and feel free to debate ideas a campaign for a better world. Good for them!

The people behind Owen Smith’s candidature don’t like the fact that Corbyn is almost certain to win. The film-makers, Films of Record, are working for those people — probably more because of their own natural sympathies than conspiracy. Neil Grant, MD for Films of Record, is a leading right-wing member of Brent Labour Party.

But the film did show the hysterical anti-Corbyn mindset that we are up against. We should be on our guard.

On the eve of Labour conference Tom Watson is being conciliatory again — brokering a deal with the Corbyn camp so that some of the shadow cabinet be elected. Corbyn and Momentum should not put any trust in these proposals or Tom Watson.

Neil Kinnock’s contribution to the programme showed the true intentions of the Labour right, saying clearly that as Momentum was dominated by the “sectarian ultra left” (referring to the AWL), he regarded it as his political foe. Nice idea that Momentum is politically dominated by the AWL, but a ludicrous one.

Kinnock is not a man who should be allowed to lecture anyone about democratic so-

cialism; he is the man who systematically made it possible for Tony Blair to turn Labour into a one-faction party, a place where you agreed with the leadership, you were there to get yourself a career or service those with careers, or you shut up and/or left.

The film showed a footage of a secretly-filmed public debate organised by Workers’ Liberty in July — between Jill Mountford (Momentum Steering Committee) and John McTernan (former advisor to Tony Blair, now *Daily Telegraph* journalist). The reporter was filmed preparing the equipment, in a dramatic “cloak-and-dagger” section.

But that debate was open to all! It had been press-released to the media including Channel Four News. We filmed the entire discussion for YouTube. We wanted people to hear what was said in the meeting. The secret filming was a performance — designed to conjure up the impression that the AWL are “dangerous”.

Following this piece of theatre the programme:

- Linked Jill Mountford (Steering Committee of Momentum), Mark Sandell (chair elect of Brighton District Labour Party) and Sacha Ismail (Lewisham Momentum member) with the AWL in order to give the impression of a huge AWL-led conspiracy.

- Said that Mark Sandell speaking at Lewisham Momentum was part of this conspiracy.

- Allowed a biased speaker to negatively describe the AGM of Brighton District Labour Party (after which the party was suspended) mentioning complaints of abuse, without allowing anyone to contest that opinion on camera.

- Pointed out that the AWL is “Trotskyite” (but didn’t explain what that meant).

- Implied that the AWL is leading a campaign to get rid of right-wing MPs, describing a motion passed by a meeting of Lewisham Momentum (also secretly filmed), which among other things, called for a campaign for mandatory reselection.

- Interviewed Tim Hale (author of a book about Ed Miliband) to describe mandatory reselection as evil because it made MPs scared.

Neither Momentum nor the AWL was asked to make a comment to camera about the general charges being made. For our part, we are wondering how a film company working for a public service broadcaster is al-

lowed to do that.

If we had been given a chance to speak we would have said, the following:

- We are Trotskyists. We are revolutionary socialists. We have said this clearly for all of our fifty years of existence. And we have been advocating a vote for Labour and campaign for Labour governments for almost all of that existence.

- We always argue for our ideas through open discussion and debate. People either reject what we say or are convinced by it, and that’s fine. Our members and supporters make no apologies for trying to influence policy. That is what democratic politics is about.

- Labour Party members who back Corbyn are not fools. No one should be surprised that Labour members, not just AWL members, want to censure, no-confidence or deselect the MPs who tried to trash an attempt to make Labour a socialist political alternative. They will want to do that irrespective of whether or not re-selection (a process which is already allowed) is made easier.

- The charge of “entryism” for both Momentum and Workers’ Liberty is being used to bully and harangue Corbyn supporters — those that have not yet been suspended and expelled by Labour’s machine, for unspecified offences on “social media”. There is a political operation going on here. This is the undemocratic and truly scandalous reality of “The Battle for Labour”.

- MPs who campaigned to get rid of a democratically-elected leader almost as soon as he got the keys to the Leader’s Office should feel some trepidation. If they do not, then many of them — not all, but many of them — will once again be campaigning this time next year, or even sooner, to get rid of Corbyn and to further intimidate and demoralise the decent, articulate, independently-minded, political people who are backing him.

We need to campaign against this witch-hunt. And we need to be very clear — all socialists that are committed to Labour, including those in its many platforms, groupings and official structures should be allowed in the party.

We should not allow the people who have backed Owen Smith — people in the highly secretive “Saving Labour” campaign for instance — to use the means at their disposal, including these film-makers, to intimidate the left.

Socialist policies can beat the Tories

According to the YouGov polling company, Jeremy Corbyn has a negative rating of minus 29%. It is hardly surprising, given the media-boostered torrent of bad-mouthing of him by people who are supposed to be Labour politicians.

When people are asked what's bad about Corbyn, the negative most mentioned is "unelectable".

There are, of course, people who dislike Corbyn because they are right-wing and he is left-wing. But lots of those who "dislike" him, do so because the media and Labour politicians have told them that he is "unelectable" (i.e. other people dislike him).

They may like his attitudes "Stands up for ordinary people", "principled", "honest", and "in touch with ordinary people" — all get more mentions than the negative "unelectable". But they are persuaded by the barrage around them that they must prefer a blander figure to oust the Tories.

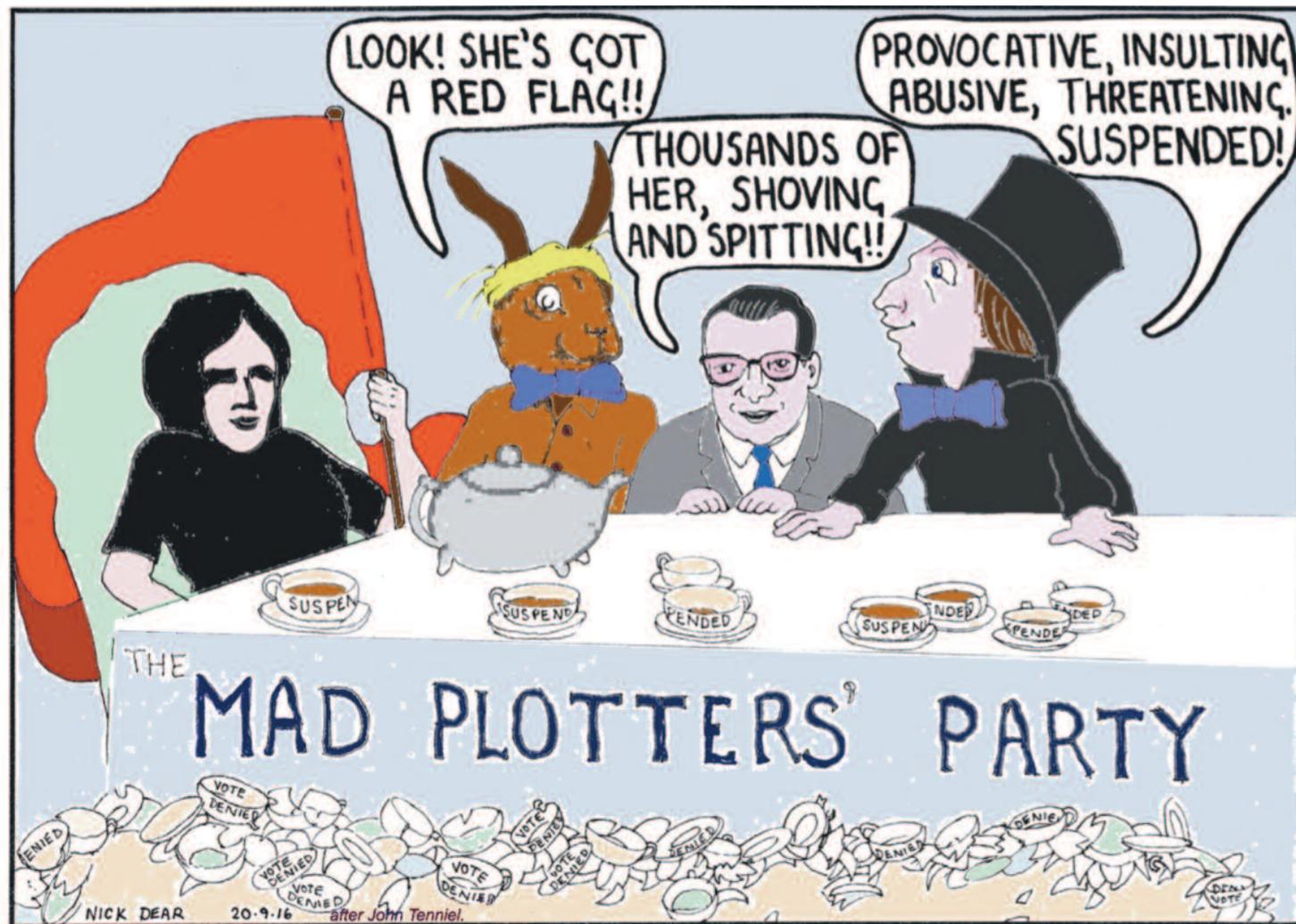
Compare another public figure: Tony Blair. He has a much worse negative rating than Corbyn: minus 62%. People say he is "a liar", "self-serving", "money-grabbing", "dishonest", and a "war criminal".

There are still people around who call themselves Thatcherites or Stalinists or Maoists. Even the most right-wing Labour people today shy away from the name Blairite.

Yet the anti-Corbyn crew among the Labour MPs and in the wonkosphere are Blairites. Or at best Blairites with the difference that is really no difference, i.e. Brownites, adherents of Gordon Brown in the barely-political infighting that dominated the top ranks of New Labour.

Owen Smith, who now claims to be a sort of left-winger, came into politics not as a rank and file labour movement activist but as a "special adviser" to Blairite minister Paul Murphy. Smith then worked as a PR person for the drug multinational Pfizer before becoming an MP.

Tom Watson, who presents himself as an honest broker, has a quirk in his past: Stalinism. Like many ex or not-quite-ex-Stalinists, he deserved the description given to him by the *Guardian* back in



2005, when he was a parliamentary whip for Blair: "Tom — bumptious in demeanour but actually one of the most biddable protocol units around — is the latest card to join the deck of excruciatingly loyal Blairites".

Watson, by design or mistake, pushed Blair to quit in favour of Brown earlier than Blair wanted, and so fell out of favour for a while. He never made a political break with Blairism.

Blairism, however dressed up, re-named, redecorated, cannot beat the Tories. If by quirk a recycled-Blairite Labour Party should defeat the Tories in a general election — and the recycled Blairites would first have to quell, demoralise, and disperse the body of activists who would campaign for Labour in the election — even that would be a hollow victory.

Thatcher, in 2002, cited "Tony Blair and New Labour" as her "greatest

achievement". Not only had she smashed many of the labour movement's reform achievements over decades, she had pushed "New" Labour into continuing on the same lines.

GLOSSED-UP

Blair continued privatising and marketising. He kept the Tories' anti-union laws. He scrapped student grants and brought in tuition fees. He sent troops to Iraq.

Glossed-up Blairism, even if improbably it won an election, would continue Tory policies with little change. Socialist policies can win elections and change the world.

If you're scared of the prospect of Donald Trump winning the US presidency, remember that the polls showed that Bernie Sanders as Democratic candidate would beat Trump more easily than Clinton would. The same disgust at "more of the same, with trimmings" which distances US voters from Clinton would also distance voters from glossed-up New Labour.

Before Sanders' challenge, no-one thought that millions would back an openly socialist candidate. They did.

Winning with socialist policies will take a battle to convince people — including current Tory voters — that ideas which they now dismiss as "nice, but impractical" can be made reality. It is the same battle to convince those who like

Next issue:
Will be on Wednesday 5 October. We are taking a break during the week of Labour Party conference.

Corbyn but think him "unelectable".

The new mass membership of the Labour Party can win that battle... if it organises itself, if it wins a democratic regime inside the Labour Party, if it turns outwards to educate and convince the electorate rather than devising policy by second-guessing polls and "focus groups".

Comprehensive, clear socialist policies will work better for that purpose than the blanded-down "clever" compromises which many people are urging Corbyn towards. They cannot come just by decree from the Labour leadership, but only by democratic discussion and debate from the rank and file.

Restoring the NHS as a publicly-operated public service, reversing the cuts, and lifting the burden of PFI is already Labour Party policy.

Bringing the banks and high finance under democratic public ownership, and repealing anti-union laws, are already TUC policy.

And, most to the point, such socialist policies offer the way out from the grinding, never-ending economic depression, the relentless cuts, and the escalating inequality which capitalism now offers us.

Brand recognition

Workers' Liberty and the AWL (Alliance for Workers' Liberty) have had some media coverage recently (e.g. on Channel Four's Dispatches).

Most of this attention has been hostile and therefore unwelcome. Nonetheless, many people will have heard about "Workers' Liberty" for the first time. They may not however be aware that we produce and sell this newspaper, *Solidarity*, most weeks of

the year.

To make it clear that *Solidarity* is produced by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty we've added our name to the masthead.

In *Solidarity* you can read about what we think about the political storm within Labour, get a sense of our Marxist politics, find out who Trotsky was and much more.

Turn to the back page for subscription details.

The left, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism

During a recent televised debate Owen Smith linked the Alliance for Workers' Liberty to left antisemitism. This claim has gained some currency, despite Workers' Liberty's thirty-year record of fighting left (and other forms of) antisemitism. For instance, when Nottingham Labour activist Pete Radcliff was recently expelled, because Labour's bureaucracy wanted to make something of Pete's association with Workers' Liberty, the local paper covered the expulsion by linking it to the claim of antisemitism. Below Nottingham leftist Ross Bradshaw defends Pete, and three other non-Workers' Liberty leftists refute Smith's slur.

Patently false accusations

Ross Bradshaw: While I was on holiday, my friend Pete Radcliff was expelled from the Labour Party, a story covered in the Nottingham Post under the headline, "Labour veteran kicked out of party in antisemitism row" in its print edition.

This follows a statement by Labour Party leadership contender Owen Smith linking the group Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL) with antisemitism, a group which Pete is known to favour.

I should make it clear that I am not and never have been a supporter of the AWL (not least for its rather awkward name!).

Pete and I have been arguing off and on about politics for decades, but one thing we consistently agree on is that antisemitism has no place in the labour movement, and that any peaceful settlement to the Israel/Palestinian conflict must involve a political settlement involving two states for two people.

Pete has consistently reached out to the Jewish peace movement in Israel and has organised speaking tours by Israeli dissidents. Of course he is critical of the occupation, so is the Labour Party, so is the previous leader Ed Miliband.

Pete has directly campaigned against anti-semitic groups of the right. We worked together in Notts Anti-Fascist Alliance. Indeed, as far as I can remember, I met him for the first time in 1978 at a lively demonstration which aimed to close down the National Front office just opposite what is now Nottingham Contemporary.

I've also been pleased to join him in demonstrations in support of the Kurdish people, and in support of the Saudi dissident Raif Badawi.

I mention these last points to refute any suggestion that Pete "singles out" the one Jewish state, an issue that many on the right use to try to attack those hostile to the occupation.

I do know a little about antisemitism. In 1989 I joined the initiative of the Nottingham Jewish Lesbian group to run a large anti-racist festival linking the Anne Frank Exhibition to Black History Month. (This was funded by the local Labour councils and opposed by the Conservatives, by the way.) In 2004 I was one of a handful of people organising the Anne Frank Exhibition at Southwell Minster (I was responsible for the arts programme) — an event that involved 15,000 people over a month and which focussed almost entirely on antisemitism.

I also organised the first Holocaust Memorial Day event in Nottinghamshire on behalf of the County Council. The bookshop I work in has received anti-semitic social media postings, which is at least better than the antisemitic phonecalls and hate mail a previous bookshop I worked in would receive, which



A Workers' Liberty banner on a Palestine solidarity protest in Sheffield in 2008

culminated in Nazis smashing up the shop in 1994.

The issue of antisemitism matters to me. It should be opposed whenever and wherever it arises. As should patently false accusations of antisemitism.

As I mentioned, I am not a supporter of the AWL, but I resent the headline which would lead people to think Pete Radcliff is an antisemite and I resent the comments that could lead people to think that the AWL (which, by the way, includes Jewish members like Daniel Randall, formerly of Nottingham, whose family I know well) is anti-Semitic.

Misdirection for factional gain

Yoni Higsmith, Jewish Voice: Claiming the AWL is antisemitic is deeply untrue, and dangerous for our Jewish community.

Antisemitism is a serious issue and shouldn't be used to attack groups on the left. Owen Smith is either acting on bad advice, and should be admonished for not checking his facts, or he is aware of his misdirection for factional gain.

Either way, he is no friend to Jews via this action.

Consistent anti-racism

Barry Finger, New Politics (US): The AWL is uncompromising in its defence of Palestinian democratic rights, including the right to self-determination.

But it does so without demonising the Israeli people and Jewish communities abroad for their alleged complicity in the crimes of

the Israeli ruling class, nor by engaging in campaigns to delegitimise the Israeli state. It alone, to the lasting disgrace of the far left in general, admirably rejects the all-too-prevalent, totalising expressions of BDS politics, which, in its most extreme form, seeks to advance the cause of justice for the Palestinians at the expense of the democratic rights of a national group comprised largely of victims and descendants of victims, survivors and refugees of the European Judeocide and of successive waves of Middle Eastern and North African scapegoating and ethnic cleansing.

It insists that the fight against anti-Muslim racism and antisemitism must be indivisible, seamless, and consistent.

Part of the solution

Eric Lee, LabourStart: The Labour Party — and the Left more broadly — does have a problem with antisemitism.

In addition to traditional right-wing antisemitism, there is a specific left-wing version which uses anti-Zionism as a cover for spreading traditional anti-Jewish tropes. The Alliance for Workers Liberty, which I have worked with for more than 17 years, is not part of that problem; it is part of the solution. The AWL has campaigned for a two-state solution, publicly defended Israel's right to exist, brought Israeli speakers over to the UK, condemned various left anti-Semites, and taken a beating from hard-left groups that consider them to be "Zionists". They have often provided platforms, both in print and at their conferences, for actual Zionists, myself included.

To consider the AWL to be a source of antisemitism in the labour movement is staggeringly ignorant.

Dale Street reviews *The Left's Jewish Problem — Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-semitism* by Dave Rich, Biteback Publishing.

Dave Rich's *The Left's Jewish Problem — Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-semitism* is not quite what its subtitle suggests it is. But that does not make the book, published a fortnight ago, any the less worth reading.

The focus of the book is not Corbyn. At its core is an attempt to provide an explanation of "how and why antisemitism appears on the left, and an appeal to the left to understand, identify and expel antisemitism from its politics."

The antisemitism in question is not the 'traditional' racist version. It is an antisemitism which is rooted in "ways of thinking about Jews, Zionism and Israel", albeit one which frequently incorporates anti-semitic stereotypes and tropes.

The paradoxical result is that its proponents "believe anti-semitic stereotypes about Jews, while not feeling any visceral hostility towards them and while thinking of themselves as anti-racists."

The historical starting point of Rich's explanation is the emergence of the 'New Left' in the 1950s and 1960s. The New Left, argues Rich, turned away from traditional class politics and focused instead on identity politics and anti-colonial struggles in the Third World.

In its most extreme form, this involved writing off the working class as the decisive agent of social change. Instead, "Third World struggles were the new focus of world revolution", and armed conflict was the highest form of those struggles.

ISRAEL

Especially in the aftermath of Israel's victory in the Six Day War, this way of looking at the world increasingly identified Israel as a bastion of imperialist oppression.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, were allocated a place in the front ranks of the anti-imperialist forces.

Two other factors reinforced this overly simplistic and ultimately anti-semitic conceptualisation of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Firstly, the Soviet Union relaunched a massive state-run "anti-Zionist" campaign based on thinly disguised — and sometimes not even that — antisemitism. Traditional anti-semitic themes — rich, powerful, cruel, manipulative Jews — were recast in the language of "anti-Zionism".

The Soviet campaign portrayed Israel itself as an outpost and bridgehead of US imperialism in the Middle East. It was ultra-aggressive, ultra-expansionist and committed to the military conquest of the surrounding Arab states.

Secondly, British Young Liberals, trying to replicate the success of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, recast Israel as an apartheid state in which the indigenous Arab population suffered the same levels of discrimination as Blacks in South Africa. Rich writes:

"The Young Liberals established an endur-

Antisemitism

ing template for left-wing anti-Zionism in Britain. ... It is common to blame Trotskyists and other Marxists for the spread of anti-Zionism on the left. In reality, this movement was kick-started by Young Liberals and Arab nationalist activists, funded by Arab governments."

Peter Hain, a future Labour MP but then a leading figure in the Young Liberals, played a particularly prominent role in the creation of this "anti-Zionist" template:

"The world cannot allow its shame over its historic persecution of Jews to rationalise the present persecution of the Palestinians. The case for the replacement of Israel by a democratic secular state of Palestine must be put uncompromisingly."

"They (Israeli Jews) can recognise now that the tide of history is against their brand of greedy oppression, or they can dig in and invite a bloodbath. ... [Israel keeps Palestinians] in far more oppressive conditions in fact than many black South Africans live."

ANTI-ZIONISM

By the mid-1970s the main elements of what now — and long since — passes for "anti-Zionism" on sections of the British left were already in place.

Zionism was not just another nationalism. It was a uniquely evil ideology, inherently racist, and necessarily genocidal. Israel was an "illegitimate" apartheid state, a colonial enterprise equated to the dispossession of the Palestinians, and incapable of reform.

Rich goes on to provide examples of how such themes were amplified and built upon in subsequent years.

If Israel was, as claimed, an apartheid state, then it was a "legitimate" target for a comprehensive programme of boycott, disinvestment and sanctions. This has now "climaxed" in the decision of some British union to boycott the Histadrut, the Israeli trade union federation.

If Zionism was, as claimed, a form of racism, then it was "legitimate" for Student Unions to refuse to fund Jewish Societies which failed to disavow Zionism. The mid-



Placards equating Zionism to Nazism often appear on demonstrations

1970s and the mid-1980s saw repeated attempts to ban Jewish societies on this basis.

If Zionism was, as claimed, inherently genocidal, then it was "legitimate" to equate it with Nazism — an equation which became increasingly common in sections of the left press and on placards on pro-Palestine demonstrations.

And if Israel and Zionism were guilty as claimed, then a common "anti-imperialism" made it "legitimate" to ally with forces hostile to the most basic values of the left. This found expression in the SWP-Muslim Association of Britain alliance in the Stop the War Coalition.

As the ultimate example of this "way of thinking about Jews, Zionism and Israel" Rich quotes from a letter published by the *Morning Star*, written by a veteran reader and Communist Party member:

"Israel, and all that Israel has done and is doing, is an affront to all those millions who fought and died fighting fascism before, during and after the war against fascism. ... A few years ago [an Italian partisan who survived Dachau] committed suicide. He left a note saying that the good Jews were all killed in the concentration camps."

As Rich points out, such "ways of thinking about Jews, Zionism and Israel" bring those sections of the left which espouse them into conflict with most Jews in Britain (and the world):

"Israel's existence is an important part of what it means to be Jewish today. The idea that Israel shouldn't exist or that Zionism was a racist, colonial endeavour rather than a legitimate expression of Jewish nationhood, cuts to the heart of British Jews' sense of identity of who they are."

Rich concludes: "There has been a breakdown in trust and understanding between British Jews, the Labour Party, and the broader left. There are parts of the left where

most Jews feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. ... It's not too late to bring this relationship back to health."

Despite the book's subtitle, Corbyn himself appears only spasmodically in the book.

Rich rightly criticises Corbyn for various statements on Israel which he has made over the years and for his patronage of campaigns which have served as incubators for left antisemitism.

Corbyn's inability to understand left antisemitism is also highlighted by Rich. Corbyn seems to hold the view that left antisemitism is an oxymoron — only the far right can be anti-semitic — and that accusations of antisemitism are raised in bad faith to undermine criticism of Israel.

AMBIGUOUS

More open to challenge is Rich's description of Corbyn as being "ambiguous" on Israel's right to exist.

It is certainly true that the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine which Corbyn supported in the early 1980s was rabidly hostile to Israel's existence. (The campaign was set up by Tony Greenstein.) But Corbyn's overall record has been one of backing a "two states solution".

But Rich is not overly concerned with Corbyn's own views on Israel and antisemitism. For Rich, Corbyn's election as Labour Party leader "symbolises" — and Rich uses the word on more than one occasion — something more profound.

Corbyn's "political home" was the New Left which spawned left antisemitism. His election as party leader means that "what was once on the fringes of the left" is now centre-stage. Corbyn's election was "the ultimate New Left triumph rather than a return to Old Labour."

This is true in the sense that some people around Corbyn, including ones in senior po-

sitions, espouse the left antisemitism which began to emerge in the years of the New Left and then spread like a cancer in subsequent years.

But it is also very wrong, in the sense that the primary factor which galvanised support for Corbyn's leadership bid was the fact that he was seen as, and presented himself as, the pre-Blairite Old-Labour anti-austerity leadership contender.

In an isolated moment of clutching at straws to back up an argument, Rich even cites preposterous claims by arch-Stalinist Andrew Murray and his fellow traveller Lindsey German that the Stop the War Coalition — now little more than a rump and a website — was the decisive factor in Corbyn's victory.

Such secondary criticisms apart, Rich's book is a valuable summary of the historical development of left antisemitism in Britain: not just a timely reminder of older arguments but also a source of new insights into its emergence.

And no-one should be put off reading Rich's book by the fulsome praise which Nick Cohen has heaped upon it, albeit at the expense of ignoring and misrepresenting what Rich has actually written:

"How a party that was once proud of its anti-fascist traditions became the natural home for creeps, cranks and conspiracists is the subject of Dave Rich's authoritative history of left antisemitism. ... Representatives of the darkest left factions control Labour and much of the trade union movement, and dominate the intelligentsia."

Cohen once wrote a serious critique of sections of the far left at a certain stage of their degeneration. But now he just bumbles along as a political court jester and professional Mr. Angry. Rich, by contrast, is trying to open up a political argument.



Digitise? First: organise!

By Martin Thomas

Hundreds of thousands of new people, many young people, have joined the Labour Party to repel the anti-Corbyn coup.

From being a scattering of individuals across society, grumbling to their workmates, talking with their friends, they have begun to become a political force.

The next step is for them to help each other, and already-established labour-movement activists to help them, to get organised.

Five hundred thousand people organised to march together on the streets have much more power than the same five hundred thousand scattered in their homes. The same five hundred thousand organising in regular local meetings, debating, voting, campaigning on the streets, taking their ideas into workplaces and organising unions there, shaping a lively democratic political party, become a greater power again. They can be a decisive power to mobilise millions.

There is much inertia to break through.

For decades, no-one contested that the decision-making centre of the Labour Party should be the party conference, as the coming-together of countless discussions and votes in local Labour Party and trade union branches.

Parliamentary leaders often finessed and manipulated conference proceedings, or used claims that they should decide how to implement conference policies in fact to negate those policies. But even Neil Kinnock, in his efforts to neutralise the enlivened early-1980s Labour Party and hand it over tamed to

Smith and then to Blair, felt he had to push the conference into voting his way, for example to abandon unilateral nuclear disarmament in 1989.

Blair changed that. In his early years he made a point of publicly, ostentatiously defying conference decisions. And he made it more difficult for the conference to make decisions.

Motions to conference were limited to a few, and they could only be “contemporary” motions, about events in the couple of months before conference.

The Conference Arrangements Committee’s standard letter to the many local Labour Parties whose motions it rules out starts by telling them that the main way for members to get a say on policy is by making a submission online through a website, www.yourbrtain.org.uk.

Then your thoughts *may* be considered by a “policy commission”, *may* go to the “National Policy Forum”, *may* be rubber-stamped through annual conference (which is barred from amending NPF documents), and *may* then be taken up by the real decision-making centre, the “leader’s office”. In practice, probably no-one ever even reads your submission.

After 2007, for a couple of years, Gordon Brown banned any policy motions at all from Labour Party conference. Since motions were restored, lots have been “ruled out” even before reaching the floor of conference: half of all those submitted in 2014, over a third in 2015. Those “ruled out” are not even printed out, or put on a website, so that their movers have no chance to challenge the “ruling-out” effectively.

In the Blair and Brown years, many local Labour Parties gave up debating policy motions, or even having local branch (as distinct from constituency-wide) meetings. The Blairites eagerly instructed them that meetings, debates, democratic procedures were “boring”.

A culture of debate and democratic decision-making is only in the first stages of being restored. Many left-wingers, even, still find the idea of a democratic decision-making conference, focused on debate rather than photo-opportunities for leaders, too radical.

For many younger left-wingers, efforts like “38 Degrees”, a movement with no meetings but instead an office which consults its activists only by individual electronic communication, may seem pretty much a model. “Crowd-sourcing” and “digital consultation” by teams of appointed professional political functionaries is the nearest they have known to democracy.

ORGANISATION

The most important thing to be done in the Labour Party is to restore organisation, structured debate, and democratic decision-making.

Digital communications can be used to vastly improve information, but they are not a substitute for structured debate.

We must first win arguments among the left. Sadly, neither Jeremy Corbyn nor John McDonnell, nor the biggest Corbyn-supporting Labour left movements, have approached this year’s Labour conference as a chance to let the members have their say.

If the leadership proposes democratic rule



Crowdsourcing no substitute for debate

changes, or new left-wing policies, to the conference, it will only be by last-minute decree-from-above, not by a process of taking debate on those rule changes and policies through the movement from the base upwards.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has made its valiant efforts to promote timely rule changes and “contemporary motions”. Momentum NHS has pushed a model motion on the NHS; Stop the Purge, one on democratic rights (which has now been “ruled out” by the party machine). *Solidarity* has done its best to support those efforts.

But the biggest Labour-left movements have paid no attention to those processes. The Corbyn leadership’s main announcement before conference has been the one, on 19 September, that it will seek “digital consultations” with members on policy — which already exist and are no substitute for real decision-making through democratic debate.

Organise! Join the organised left; organise the Labour Party’s newcomers; organise living Young Labour groups; organise structured and democratic decision-making!

The battle now shapes the future

By Colin Foster

Peter Frase’s book *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism* is due to be published on 1 November.

He will be explaining its ideas in a speaking tour in Britain from 24 September, and has already written about them on the website of *Jacobin*, the US socialist magazine he writes for.

He explains, at the end of that preview article, that his argument is dramatically oversimplified. The aim is to jolt us out of the always-common prejudice that society will go on much as it is now, with a nudge this way or that.

It won’t. As Frase starts off by saying “humanity has never before managed to craft an eternal social system, and capitalism is a notably more precarious and volatile order than most of those that preceded it. The question... is what will come next”.

Some of his variants of “life after capitalism” seem to me more like a much-changed capitalism than actually post-capitalist, but that takes little away from the argument.

Deliberately simplifying, Frase discusses three axes of development: automation, resources, democracy vs hierarchy.

He assumes for the sake of argument that the speculations of today’s enthusiasts for automation are well-founded. Automation, he says, will invade “service” industries too, and can shape things so that a small cadre of

designers (and, presumably, maintenance workers) provides about all the living labour necessary for most goods and services.

Those designers will be flanked by a supplementary group of marketers, lawyers, and police both public and private.

This scheme, I think, may oversimplify so much as to be misleading at least for several decades. For some time now, output per worker-hour in the richer economies has been increasing only very slowly compared to previous tempos, and that despite the fact that many “service” industries have been squeezed not by automation but more by old-fashioned speed-up.

Nevertheless, elements at least of Frase’s scenario are developing. Let’s go along with the argument.

The automation might come with new energy technologies, new economies in the use of raw materials, and improvements in recycling, which would allow all production to become abundant.

With a democratic, egalitarian social order, that economic development would make reality the old socialist slogan: From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.

The “millions of people [who] choose to go to graduate school, or become social workers, or start small organic farms, even when far more lucrative careers are open to them” would become the norm rather than the exception. There would be generalised leisure and generalised creativity.

It would not be a society of uniformity. There would still be “competition”, in the sense of individuals vying for reputation, respect, and status. But there would be no master hierarchy. A would be a respected mathematician, B a celebrated poet, C no famous social figure but highly-esteemed by a circle of friends.

Suppose, however, in that benign economic scenario, that we lose the battle for democracy. That a small wealthy class manages to monopolise the proceeds through intellectual-property law and technological rents.

The majority would be relegated to jobs as personal servants and the like, or to existence on the dole.

(Already, in the USA, the two job categories officially estimated to grow fastest, by far, between 2014 and 2024, are “personal care aides”, up 350,000, and “home health aides”, up 450,000. The dystopian prospect, with abundance and automation, is that the rich and the well-off recruit whole armies of such workers, while other such workers give pauper provision to the majority.)

Alternatively, the automation might come with resource scarcity. An egalitarian and democratic, that is, socialist, option is possible then, too. There would have to be some rationing of consumption, probably best done by market mechanisms on the basis of a fairly equal distribution of income, and much ingenuity and technology would have to go into efficient planning of the scarce re-

sources.

If we lose the battle for democracy, the resource scarcity would increase the urge for the wealthy class to keep their economic privileges, and the drive towards what Frase calls an “enclave society”, where the rich lived in gated complexes physically screened off from the majority.

The rich would have less motive to pay big armies of personal aides, or to pay out dole to millions. Then, as Frase puts it, “a final solution lurks: a genocidal war of the rich against the poor... The United States is already a country where a serious candidate for the Presidency revels in executing the innocent...”

In all the options, the deciding factor is the victory or defeat of the struggle for economic democracy and equality. Here Frase’s schemes dovetails with the arguments in Sean Matgamna’s book, recently published by Workers’ Liberty, *Can Socialism Make Sense?*

Go to Frase’s meetings; read his book when it comes out; follow up by reading and study *Can Socialism Make Sense?*

For dates and information about the tour see: www.facebook.com/jacobintour

Racial hatred before and after Brexit

In the first of two articles Camila Bassi looks at racism and hate crime in Britain today and discusses academic understandings of racism.

Britain's EU referendum cannot simply be regarded at its face value as a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union.

It was a noxious campaign on immigration, which was preceded by years of political and media discourse that has mainstreamed anti-immigration sentiment.

The Brexit vote legitimised racism: it took the shame out of racial hatred and unleashed waves of its verbal and physical expression. The *Economist* reports hate crime data from the National Police Chiefs' Council of 3,076 incidents of harassment or violence between 6-30 June, a rise of 915 on the same period the previous year. More recent figures, from 5-18 August, indicate 2,778 cases, an increase of 14% on the same period in 2015.

The stark reality behind these statistics can be seen through the following summary by *The Independent* of hate crime incidents since the EU referendum:

"Gangs prowling the streets demanding passers-by prove they can speak English.

"Swastikas in Armagh, Sheffield, Plymouth, Leicester, London and Glasgow.

"Assaults, arson attacks and dog excrement being thrown at doors or shoved through letter boxes.

"Toddlers being racially abused alongside their mothers, with children involved as either victims or perpetrators in 14 per cent of incidents.

"A man in Glasgow ripping off a girl's headscarf and telling her 'Trash like you better start obeying the white man.'

"Comparisons with 1930s Nazi Germany and a crowd striding through a London street chanting: 'First we'll get the Poles out, then the gays!'"

This provides a critical backdrop and climate to the horrific fatal assault on a Polish man, Arkadiusz Jozwik, in Harlow, Essex, on 27 August. Why and how have we arrived at this moment? To answer this, we need to adequately understand the history and nature of racism in Britain.

Sociologist Gurinder K. Bhambra, in a blog post written soon after the EU referendum result, states that what was "unleashed in the weeks prior to the vote was the most toxic discourse on citizenship and belonging, and the rights that pertain as a consequence". She questions the idea of Britain as an "independent" nation, given its history as part of wider political entities: notably, the colonial Empire and Commonwealth, and the European Union.

The idea of the British nation has long been dependent on "a racially stratified political formation" of its making and, decisively, it has been: "the loss of this privileged position — based on white elites and a working class offered the opportunity to see themselves as better than the darker subjects of empire [...] — that seems to drive much of the current discourse. Austerity has simply provided the fertile ground for its re-emergence and expression."

Thus, she argues, to understand "Britain" one needs to understand its colonial and imperial Empire and governance. The 1948 British Nationality Act was a turning point, for previously Britain's colonial subjects were defined as British subjects, but with the Act they became Commonwealth citizens. And as

the bodies of these Commonwealth citizens migrated into the space of the British nation-state, "mythologies of the changing nature (or, perhaps more accurately, face) of Britain" developed:

"Mythologies that continue to reverberate in the present and have taken on a renewed political vibrancy in light of the debates regarding our continued EU membership. [...] The transformation of darker citizens from citizens to aliens over the 1960s and 1970s was based on a visceral understanding of difference predicated on race that brought into being two classes of citizenship — full citizenship and second-class citizenship. [...] immigration into the country was increasingly managed by the passing of Acts to discriminate among citizens on the basis of race." (Bhambra, 2016)

From this twentieth century history, Bhambra concludes that the "common-sense position" on what it means "to be British or English is to be white", as based on the "mythology of a white Europe or a historically white Britain". The consequence of this (racist) common sense is a grave misrepresentation of Britain's "multiracial political formations". As such:

"we must rethink our analyses to take into account the imperial configuration of Britain and all those who were subjects within it and subject to it. If this is not done, then that demonstrates a commitment to a racialized national history that has no space for its darker subjects." (Bhambra, 2016)

UNEXPLAINED

But for me, this academic narrative leaves unexplained the present-day racism against Eastern Europeans, for example.

Without a doubt, racism before and since the EU referendum affects Britain's darker subjects, but what has evolved is not simply or only a racism that targets those of different skin colour. Other markers, both visible and invisible, are also at play as signifying negative racial difference and inciting hatred.

Helpful here is the work of the sociologist Robert Miles (1993), who makes the point that proposing (or indeed assuming) the ideology of racism has its historical origins in colonialism can lead to a conclusion that racism is an ideology created exclusively by "white" people to dominant "black" people. However, "in part, the origins of racism can be traced back to pre-capitalist social relations within and beyond Europe" and "its reproduction is as much determined by the rise of the nation state as by colonialism" (Miles, 1993).

From the highly cited and regarded work of Stuart Hall and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) collective, a dominant academic understanding of racism has problematically developed, as Miles observes, "often implicit in their writing is the assumption that the only contemporary form of racism in Britain is that which has people of Caribbean and South Asian origin as its object". Yet:

"Many physical characteristics (both real and imagined) have been and continue to be signified as a mark of nature and of 'race' [...]. Moreover, cultural characteristics have also been, and continue to be, signified to the same end. The reification of skin colour therefore mistakenly privileges one specific instance of signification and ignores the historical and contemporary evidence which shows that other populations (Jews, Irish people, etc.) have been signified as distinct and inferior 'races' without reference to skin



colour [...]. Moreover, it restricts analysis of the nature and determinants of racism to a debate about the effects of colonial exploitation." (Miles, 1993)

Miles' exploration of the history of racism provides astute explanatory power to the contemporary era surrounding Brexit.

Miles' explanation of the historical interrelationship between nationalism and racism vis-à-vis capitalist development is instructive:

"In the context of its formation, nationalism was [...] a revolutionary doctrine because it sought to overturn monarchy and aristocratic government by an appeal to the popular will of 'the people' who were the 'nation' [...] For much of the nineteenth century, nationalism was synonymous with a struggle for political sovereignty within defined spatial boundaries and for some form of representative government. [...]

"By way of contrast, there was no single political strategy that emerged from the general theory of biological, hierarchical differentiation expressed in the idea of 'race'. This was not only because there was little agreement about the boundaries between the supposed 'races', but also because scientific racism did not posit a single, coherent political object.

"The theorisation of 'race' and 'nation' took place at a time of 'internal' European political and economic reorganisation and 'external' colonial expansion, in the course of which the range of human cultural and physiological variation became more widely known to a larger number of people. The extension of capitalist relations of production increased the circulation of commodities and of people, and this increasing mobility, migration and social interaction provided part of the foundation upon which the ideologies of racism and nationalism were constructed. The increasing profusion of physiological and cultural variation, as recognised in western Europe, became the object of intellectual curiosity and, thereby, of the theoretical practice of scientists and philosophers. But it also became the focus of political attention and action as populations within and beyond Europe were nationalised and racialised by the state [...]" (Miles, 1993)

While distinct ideologies, nationalism and racism can overlap: the construct of the "nation" as based on cultural differentiae is compatible with the notion that the nation is founded on a biological "race". Miles continues to demonstrate that first the feudal aristocracy's, and later the bourgeoisie's, "civilisation" project became fused with racism — a civilisation project which was central to emergent and developing capitalist social relations within and outside Europe:

"In France, notions of politesse and civilité

were used by the feudal aristocracy to contrast the refinement of their behaviour with that of the 'inferior' people whom they ruled. [...] the bourgeoisie became its leading exponent once it had displaced the aristocracy as the ruling class. By the early nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie, conscious of its material achievements and more firmly in political control in at least certain parts of Europe, began to assert that its values and manners were more a matter of inheritance than a social construction. In these circumstances the notion of civilisation (Elias 1978: 50): 'serves at least those nations which have become colonial conquerors, and therefore a kind of upper class to large sections of the non-European world, as a justification of their rule, to the same degree that earlier the ancestors of the concept of civilisation, politesse and civilité, had served the courtly-aristocratic upper class as a justification of theirs.'" (Miles, 1993)

Depending on conjuncture and interests, the boundaries of blood have been mapped and remapped:

"Hence, during the nineteenth century, in certain circumstances the English working class, or fractions thereof, were signified by the dominant class as 'a different breed', an uncivilised 'race', but in other circumstances, as a constituent part of the English (or British) 'race', a 'breed' which contains 'in its blood' civilised and democratic values. [...] The result was a racialised nationalism or a nationalist racism, a mercurial ideological bloc that was manipulated by the ruling class (or rather by different fractions of it) to legitimate the exploitation of inferior 'races' in the colonies, to explain economic and political struggles with other European nation states, and to signify (for example) Irish and Jewish migrants as an undesirable 'racial' presence within Britain." (Miles, 1993)

Thus for over two centuries the signification of racial difference has been a central aspect of class relations and class struggle both inside and beyond Europe. To maintain domination:

"Europeans in different class positions have racialised each other, as well as inward migrants and those populations that they colonised beyond Europe. During the twentieth century, there have been further examples of the racialisation of the interior of European nation states (as in the case of the Jews), as well as a racialisation of larger-scale inward migrations, including colonial and non-colonial migrations, since 1945." (Miles, 1993)

We might productively consider the present period in Britain as an extension and evolution of this history, in which racism vilifies an internal European Other and an Other from outside Europe.

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

Saturday 24 September

Ritzy cinema strike
Join picket lines from 12noon in Windrush Square, Brixton, SW2 1EF
bit.ly/2cQCGzG

24-28 September

Labour Party conference and the World Transformed festival
Liverpool
www.theworldtransformed.org

Friday 30 September

Haringey Momentum supports junior doctors public meeting
Haringey, venue TBC
bit.ly/2crmV4U

Sunday 2 October

National demonstration at Tory Party conference
Assemble 11.30am, Victoria Square, Birmingham
bit.ly/2c0Ro8m

Sunday 9 October

80th Anniversary of the battle of Cable Street
12 noon, Altab Ali Park, London
bit.ly/2d1LQyc

Saturday 5 November

National Libraries, Galleries and Museums demonstration
12 noon, British Library, London
bit.ly/2cjMI00

Got an event you want listing?
solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Scottish Labour's fortunes

LABOUR

By Ann Field

In the 2015 general election Labour lost 40 of the 41 seats it held in Scotland. In this May's Holyrood elections it lost 14 of its 38 seats. Four months later, Labour remains in decline.

An opinion poll conducted in early September puts Labour at seven points lower than in May.

This decline has been a long-term process. The SNP first won a majority in Holyrood in 2007. But the current collapse in support for Labour dates from the 2014 referendum.

The SNP lied throughout the referendum campaign. It lied about a currency union. It lied about a second oil boom. It lied about the state of the Scottish economy. And it lied about the prospects of an independent Scotland joining the EU.

The SNP was defeated in 2014. But the prolonged campaign which preceded the referendum shifted Scottish politics away from social and economic issues and onto the terrain of flag-waving nationalist identity politics. And no-one waves a flag better than the SNP.

Labour helped the SNP's electoral fortunes by joining up with the Tories and Lib-Dems (themselves in alliance with the Tories at Westminster) in the "Better Together" campaign for a "No" vote. The SNP seized the opportunity to label Scottish Labour as "Red Tories".

What really angered the SNP was not Labour's alliance with the Tories. The 2007 SNP minority government had repeatedly relied on Tory votes. The 2011 SNP government was also happy to vote with the Tories against Labour.

What really angered the SNP was that they lost. Nationalism is unpleasant at the best of times. But nationalism defeated and its endless accusations of betrayal, treachery and sell-outs is positively vile. Without doubt, its current activist base have felt at home in the politics of the Weimar Republic.

In late 2014 Scottish Labour sealed its fate in the coming general election by electing Jim Murphy as leader. Murphy represented precisely the Blairite politics guaranteed to drive even more Labour voters into the arms of the SNP.

Ed Miliband provided another free gift for the SNP by the way in which he ruled out a Labour-SNP coalition government. Although he was right, the way in which he posed the issue allowed the SNP to portray him as willing to see the Tories re-elected.

The SNP's own election campaign was as dishonest as their referendum campaign.

They demanded that a future Labour government implement the very policies which, in 2014, they had promised would not be implemented in an independent Scot-

land. And they masqueraded as being anti-austerity while implementing it in Holyrood.

They also waved a lot of Saltires, promising that the SNP would "stand up for Scotland" and be a "stronger voice for Scotland" at Westminster. In the aftermath of the referendum campaign, that kind of vacuous nationalist rhetoric was enough to bring in the votes.

The legacy of the 2014 referendum also sealed Labour's fate in the 2016 Holyrood elections.

Labour's election manifesto was well to the left of that of the SNP. Jeremy Corbyn's election as party leader should have laid to rest the SNP mythology of "Red Tories". And the SNP's record in power over the preceding nine years had been one of manifest failure.

But Scottish politics was, and is, still in the grip of competing nationalisms and national identities. This played into the SNP's hands. It returned to power as a minority government, although its share of the constituency votes actually increased marginally.

This realignment of voting patterns on the basis of national identity also boosted the Tories. Seen as the more consistent and more reliable opponents of independence, they beat Labour for second place in the elections.

COUP

The launch of the anti-Corbyn coup by the Parliamentary Labour Party delivered a further blow to Scottish Labour, just as it did to Labour nationally.

Ian Murray MP backed the coup by resigning as Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. And Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale has called for a vote for Owen Smith. This is despite the fact that a clear majority of Scottish CLPs voted to nominate Corbyn.

Corbyn's opponents make great play of his failure to reverse the decline in the party's fortunes in Scotland (which they themselves helped bring about).

What they do not mention is that polling of the Scottish electorate has found more support for Corbyn as party leader (27%) than for Smith (25%), and that among SNP voters (who need to be won back to Labour) 42% prefer Corbyn as leader, as against 20% who prefer Smith.

The SNP itself continues its degeneration into a conservative, intolerant, populist, flag-waving, centralised cult. As one journalist recently put it: "There is no party in Britain quite as fake as the SNP."

It is the only party in Britain which bans its parliamentarians



from publicly criticising party policy and fellow parliamentarians. Its keyboard activists ally with the party's MPs to stifle journalists and cyberspace criticism of the SNP.

Spending on Scottish education has slumped under the SNP. Teacher numbers have been cut. Class sizes have increased. Literacy standards are falling. Class-based differences in levels of educational achievement are increasing.

Cuts in Further Education funding have cost 130,000 student places and 3,600 teaching posts. Scottish youth from the poorest backgrounds are now less likely to go to university than their counterparts in England.

The SNP has cut health spending in real terms, at a cost of 4,500 jobs in the Scottish NHS. Holyrood now spends a lower proportion of its budget on health than the Tories. But spending on private healthcare is increasing.

SNP cuts in the funding of local authorities are more than double the cut in the Westminster grant to Scotland (24%, as against 10%). While council services and 39,000 jobs have been axed, the SNP's council tax freeze has "saved" owners of the highest-value properties £300 millions.

This is not the record of a "progressive" party committed to fighting austerity and social inequality. It is the record of a party which plays with anti-Tory rhetoric in Westminster while implementing austerity in Scotland.

It is the record of a party whose sole goal in life is independence, which it now increasingly presents as an end in itself: "Independence transcends Brexit, oil and the economy."

Scottish Labour will not revive as an effective political force by trying to forge a suicidal "progressive alliance" with a non-progressive narrow-nationalist party committed to its destruction.

Instead, it needs to grasp the opportunity opened up by Corbyn's victory in 2015, by re-asserting the centrality of class politics and mobilising around a radical socialist alternative to SNP nationalism.

TAs fight 25% pay cut

By Gemma Short

Hundreds of Derby teaching assistants and their supporters protested outside Parliament on Wednesday 14 September.

The lobby of Parliament was part of a strike by teaching assistants in their fight to against the council changing their working week, resulting in a 25% loss of pay. Strikes in August finally brought the council to the negotiating table, but their offers since have been so miserly that workers have rejected them by large majorities. The council has also attempted to make divisive offers that would benefit only a section of the workforce.

Teaching assistants were further angered by a letter from Derby City Council's Chief Executive Paul Robinson encouraging them not to strike. In a letter of reply published by the local press, teaching assistant Lesley Clarke said: "I find your so-called generous offer is both despicable and insulting. It is divisive as it is only applicable to a small group of school support staff. Even with your offer of £2,000 and your exceptional step of offering to refund me all of my strike money I can assure you that I would be and still am very much out of pocket."



"I am very angered that in your letter you have tried to undermine Unison and its members in what is legitimate industrial action being taken by Derby City Council support staff whom have been so badly treated by your inept council."

"We all care about our children and their education and it is wrong of you to assume as you stated in your letter that we are a massive inconvenience, as we do have the support of a great many of our parents and carers. I found your letter to be not only patronising but an insult to my intelligence. I am able to make informed choices and make decisions about issues that

are relevant to me given the correct facts and information."

Teaching assistants have had a huge amount of support both nationally and locally, and were met by Jeremy Corbyn when he was in Derby for a leadership contest rally. The campaign has also raised thousands of pounds for their strike fund.

- More information and to send messages of solidarity: www.facebook.com/UnisonDerbyCityBranch
- Durham teaching assistants are also fighting cuts to pay and conditions: twitter.com/suptstaffdhm

Manchester to sack all firefighters

By Darren Bedford

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) has announced plans to sack all its frontline firefighters and re-engage them on worse contracts.

The mass sacking, which public authorities are allowed to do due to a quirk of industrial law, is being prepared so GMFRS bosses can introduce a new 12-hour shift pattern. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) says the plan would destroy fire fighters' work/life balance. This is the third time GMFRS have altered fire fighters' shift systems

since 2006. Over 1,000 workers will be affected by the plans, which also involve 250 jobs cuts.

Firefighters are increasingly worried about the impact of repeated cuts on public safety. GMFRS's own figures show a 140% increase in all rescues over the last 12 months, and a threefold increase in fire deaths.

Greater Manchester brigade secretary Gary Keary said: "We are staggered that GMFRS would jeopardise relations with its workforce in this aggressive way. To start the process for dismissing firefighters to then simply re-engage them on an un-negotiated contract is really

appalling, and a serious breach of the agreed mechanisms for industrial relations in the UK fire and rescue service. We at the FBU will do everything we can to resolve what could turn into a bitter and damaging dispute using agreed procedures. Since the notice of the sacking proposals was issued, we have been contacted by lots of angry FBU members. We will continue to consult with them regarding the best way forward.

"This is the third change to shift systems in Greater Manchester since 2006 – surely firefighters are entitled to some sort of stability in their working lives."

Tube drivers' strike is solid

By Ollie Moore

Drivers on London Underground's Hammersmith and City and Circle Lines struck from 14-15 September, almost entirely shutting down the service.

The Circle Line was reduced to running just one train every 20 minutes.

The drivers, who are members of the RMT union, were striking against an increasingly authoritarian management, which the union says has been abusing disciplinary procedures and even timing drivers' toilet breaks.

An RMT statement said: "This dispute is about the basic issues of protecting working conditions of our members and defending agreements from attempts to drive a coach and horses through them. The management are out of control and the anger at their failure to follow procedures has boiled over."

RMT has also had a recent dispute with management on the Piccadilly Line over similar issues, with reps on stations also reporting similar management abuse of pro-



cedures.

RMT reps and activists are meeting on 26 September to discuss possible new disputes against cuts on London Underground.

Bosses cut benefits to meet minimum wage

By Dale Street

Unite members working in Menzies Distribution centres – which ship newspapers and magazines to newsagents – are due to hold two 24-hour strikes later this week: from 23.00 on 23 September, and from 19.00 on 26 September.

In April Menzies Distribution imposed a pay rise which increased pay to £7.25 an hour, just 5p an hour more than the Tories "National Living Wage".

At the same time, it scrapped double time pay and time off in lieu for seven of the eight statutory bank holidays, replacing them by the ordinary rate of pay.

In a ballot on industrial action held in June, 86% voted for strike action, and 91% for action short of

a strike. Despite Unite entering into further negotiations, Menzies Distribution refused to budge.

A work to rule has already been in operation since 8 August, and a ban on overtime will commence on 23 September.

This will be the first strike by Unite members in Menzies Distribution and will involve 300 packers, pickers and drivers. The company has responded by claiming that it has "robust contingency plans" to beat the strike.

The main distribution centres are in Ashford, Aylesford, Bromley-by-Bow, Greenwich, Norwich, Ipswich, Portsmouth, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Irvine and Paisley.

Unite activists should make a point of providing support for their fellow union members, especially on picket lines.

Win for library campaigners

By Charlotte Zalens

Library users and workers in Bromley have had a victory in their battle against the privatisation of eight libraries.

The preferred private bidder for

the libraries has now pulled out of the process, likely as a result of a sustained campaign by library campaigners.

The fight to keep Bromley libraries in public hands continues, and more strikes and protests are being considered.

Post office workers strike



By Peggy Carter

Speaking to a packed London rally as post office workers struck on Thursday 15 September Andy Furey, CWU assistant general secretary, said "For the first time ever, we've had Counters, Supply Chain and Admin members out on the same day ... despite senior management's dirty tricks, the National Day of Action has been overwhelmingly supported by our members."

The strike is part of a dispute

over the closure of the post office pension scheme, leaving many workers at risk of being out of pocket come retirement.

Bosses had been threatening to reduce severance money to those striking and withdraw some special payments. They were forced to publicly back track when the "bribes" were exposed.

Post office workers are planning more strikes, but also want to combine strikes with political action and are calling on the public to put pressure on the government.



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Support the Ritzy cinema strike!

By Michael Elms

Workers at the Ritzy Picturehouse in Brixton are set to take their first day of strike action on Saturday 24 September, as they embark on a new dispute with Picturehouse and the Cineworld empire of which the arthouse cinema chain is a part.

The Ritzy Picturehouse cinema and its BECTU branch last took on Picturehouse management in 2014, when they struck for the London living wage. 13 days of strike action forced Picturehouse bosses to concede a 26% pay increase, which fell just short of the London Living Wage. Now Picturehouse workers have reorganised and regrouped, and are pushing ahead with new demands – for the London Living Wage, sick pay, maternity, paternity and adoption pay and allowances for late night working.

Management have so far refused to negotiate these elementary demands with the workers' union BECTU, preferring to harangue workers at "staff meetings" which they can control. Cineworld is hardly too poor to pay for very basic rights for its workers: in the six months ending in June 2016 it reported profits of over £30 million...

Ritzy staff will hold an all-day picket in Windrush Square from 12 noon on Saturday, with music, face-painting, theatre and balloons.

Workers at the Ritzy are leading the way for the organisation of workers across the chain – workers at another Picturehouse cinema are shortly to ballot for union

recognition, and join in the Ritzy workers' dispute, demanding the same basic improvements in pay and conditions of work.

Socialists and trade unionists should do everything they can to spread the news of the strike, and the inspiration of Ritzy workers' achievements. First and foremost, the strike should set an example for workers across the Cineworld empire, with its 2,000 screens across nine countries. But the story of a group of low-paid workers in a sector rife with zero-hours contracts, union-busting and bullying mounting a strike of this scale should be an inspiration to workers across the private sector and especially in cafés, bars and restaurants. That's why a group of workers from the Ritzy Picturehouse will be travelling to Liverpool next week for the Labour Party Conference, where they will speak at the World Transformed festival.

Also speaking at the World Transformed will be activists involved with the Deliveroo dispute, where spurious "self-employed" couriers struck against bosses who used the atomisation of their workforce to gouge profits. These two groups of workers, each of whom is making waves in an under-organised, hyper-exploited, sector, will bring an important message of hope to the political wing of the Labour movement when they speak in Liverpool.

If the Labour movement is to renew itself, many more workers will need to follow the example of the Ritzy strikers, and organise the un-organised.



How you can support the Ritzy strikers

When workers at the Ritzy struck two years ago and won a 26% pay increase, they took many strike days to achieve this. Despite the pay increase Ritzy workers still do not earn the London Living Wage, and striking can be a financial hardship.

- Please support the Ritzy workers both financially and politically by doing one or all of the following:
- Get your union, Labour and/or Momentum branch to pass a motion of support and make a donation
 - If you are in London visit the picket line in Brixton and bring along other activists
 - Donate to the strike fund personally or do a collection in your workplace or at a meeting
 - Organise a solidarity protest at a Picturehouse or Cineworld cinema near you, leaflet staff about the union and ask customers to hand in letters of protest.
 - Follow them on Facebook: www.facebook.com/RitzyLivingWage and on Twitter: @RitzyLivingWage

Donations to the strike fund can be made by bank transfer to: Unity Trust Bank, Account No: 37000099, sort code: 60 – 83 – 01, account name: BECTU. Write RITZY STRIKE FUND as a reference.

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