



& Workers' Liberty

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 453 8 November 2017 50p/£1

Super-rich hide billions in tax havens

SEIZE THEIR WEALTH!

Another day, another revelation. The super-rich avoid paying tax.

The leak of 13.4 million data files (the "Paradise Papers") to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Germany, shared with media around the world, has shone a light on the pathologically anti-social behaviour of the rich as they pile up their wealth and refusing to contribute to the financing of hospitals, schools and the care of the old, sick and disabled.

They do this by getting fancy lawyers to set up obscure companies, massage profit figures, and stash money away in accounts in low-tax countries like the Bahamas or the Cayman Islands (many of which are British "dependencies", former colonies, but outside British tax laws).

Yet these people can afford to help pay for services. Their wealth is sometimes so vast that they need an army of personal shoppers to spend it, £6,000 on Cartier watches today, or £6 million on luxury yachts.

More page 3

Inside:

Hollywood, Parliament, and sexual harassment



Solidarity discusses the causes of and solutions to the sexual harassment scandal.

See page 5

No straight line from Balfour



Paul Hampton argues that history did not move in a straight line.

See page 8

Why the 70s shop stewards lost



Jim Denham writes on the life and legacy of Derek Robinson.

See page 9

Join Labour!

Labour, climate change, and energy democracy

See page 10



Spanish unions call for dialogue over Catalonia

Joint statement of the CCOO and the UGT [the General Union of Workers and Workers' Commissions, the third and first largest unions in Spain] (26.10.17).

The CCOO and the UGT reject the unilateral declaration of [Catalonian] independence and reaffirm that the solution lies in new elections.

The UGT and the CCOO have reiterated calls for dialogue in response to the situation in Catalonia. We maintain that this is a political problem that can only be dealt with through political negotiation, rather than legal and police measures.

On that basis, we have been deeply critical of the position that the Spanish government has maintained thus far.

We have also criticised the confrontational strategy adopted by the parties representing the independence movement in Catalonia.

We think the best way out of the problem, allowing the establishment of a new framework more conducive to negotiation and



agreement, would be for the Catalan President to call early elections and for the Spanish Government to suspend the application of Article 155 of the Constitution.

Our calls have been ignored by both sides and today we are facing the most undesirable and traumatic situation, bringing more risks for present and future coexistence between citizens.

Faced with this situation, which we can describe as a national emergency, CCOO and UGT want to express:

1. We reject the unilateral declaration of independence. The deci-

sion adopted by just over half of the Catalan Parliament to declare independence is clearly unconstitutional and outside of the parameters by which the European Union is governed.

This is a confrontational strategy, which the UGT and CCOO do not support, and which could have disastrous consequences for coexistence.

2. In the situation created by today's decisions, the priority for the CCOO and UGT is to preserve coexistence and avoid social fracture. That is why we warn that we will not support any strategy, wher-

ever it comes from, that in one way or another leads to confrontation.

3. The UGT and CCOO ask the government for moderation and caution when applying the measures adopted in the Council of Ministers in applying Article 155 of the Constitution, a situation that should never have been reached. That caution is essential to avoid social confrontation. Democratic and peaceful coexistence should be the ultimate goal that all political and social groups, first of all the Government, should pursue.

4. The CCOO and UGT continue to support bringing the situation

back to a climate of normality and coexistence by holding elections to the Parliament. In that sense, the call for elections on 21 December is an essential step for Catalan citizens to express themselves democratically. That is why we reaffirm that the solution lies in holding democratic elections.

But the elections and the period leading up to them cannot become a space of social confrontation. All the political and social forces must do everything possible to make this a period of dialogue allowing the conflict to be channeled towards a real solution that puts the interests of citizens as the main focus.

In the medium term we believe that the dysfunctions we have seen in the current State of Autonomous Communities [the constitutional arrangement of autonomous regions making up Spain] could be overcome through constitutional reform that, among other social and democratising measures, creates a Federal State.

Constitutional reform that must be submitted to a referendum.

Queensland votes on 25 November

The Labor minority government in the Australian state of Queensland has called an early election for the state's unicameral parliament on 25 November.

Current polls show Labor at around 37% or 38% — what it had at the last election in 2015 — and the main conservative party, the LNP, down from 41% to 34% or 35%.

But the demagogic right-wing One Nation Party, Queensland's equivalent of UKIP, is at 18% at some polls after going down to 0.9% in 2015.

The Alternative Vote system, used in Queensland as in other Australian states and in Australian federal elections, gives great weight to agreements between parties to trade preferences. Voters rank all the candidates, and then lower-ranked candidates' votes are transferred to their next preferences until some candidate has a majority.

The LNP says it won't do a deal on preferences with One Nation, but will probably benefit from informal preference-trading even so. The Greens, who generally swap preferences with Labor, are at 8%, about the same rate as in 2015.

Labor's comeback in 2015, after being reduced in 2012 to 7 seats in a state where Labor has been the dominant party most of the time since the 1890s, owed much to an effort by the trade unions, and a willingness by Labor leaders to swing along with the unions.

Much will depend this time, too. The Electrical Trades Union, one of the main architects of the 2015 result, is already out campaigning.

100,000 Kurds flee Kirkuk

By Simon Nelson

Over 100,000 Kurds have fled Kirkuk since the Iraqi army and the Hash'd al-Shaabi militia seized control of the territory, in the face of an overwhelming vote for an independent Kurdistan.

Kirkuk is of great importance for both Kurds and the Iraqi government. Its oilfields would have made any potential Kurdish state economically viable and allow it to quickly establish international trade links. Few oilfields now remain in the hands of the Kurdish peshmerga fighters.

The stepping down of President Masoud Barzani and the recent death of former Kurdish Iraqi President Jalal Talabani have left a great deal of uncertainty for Iraqi Kurdistan.

Elections for the Kurdistan Regional government have been

pushed back to autumn 2018 and tensions between Barzani's KDP and the Talabani family's PUK remain high. As the Iraqi army and Shia militias entered Kirkuk, the PUK laid down their arms, at the behest of the Iranian secret service chief Qasem Soleimani, and retreated back into KRG-controlled territory.

The Iraqi government has tried to reassert itself in Kirkuk as people flee. They have restricted the sale of alcohol, taking down Kurdish flags and potentially preparing the way for a re-Arabisation process.

Tensions within the largest Kurdish parties are nothing new. They fought a 20-year long civil war with each other. In 1996, Barzani actively encouraged Saddam Hussein to attack the PUK.

The referendum was viewed as a project of Barzani, with the PUK reluctantly supporting it. The inclu-

sion of Kirkuk, which has had great population shifts since the 1990s and remains ethnically more diverse than the KRG-controlled region, was always going to be disputed.

Sole Kurdish control was only established in 2014 following the incursion of Daesh and the effective dissolution of the Iraqi army in the city. Since the fall of Saddam there has been frequently stormy joint Shia-Kurdish control.

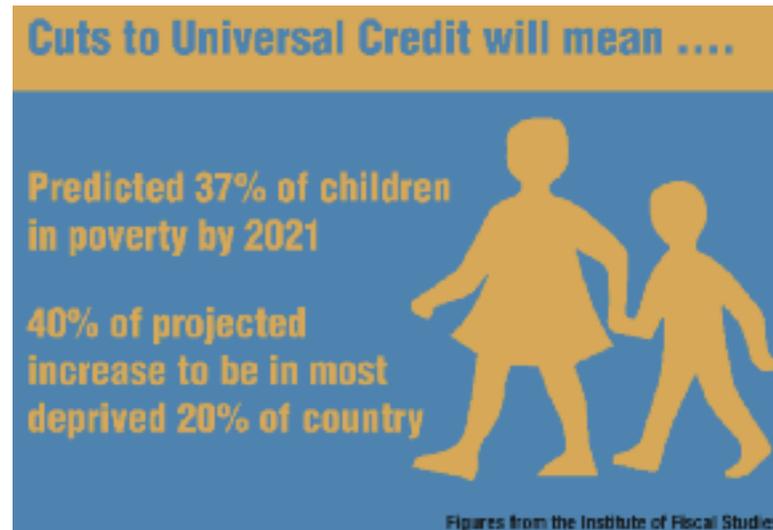
Kirkuk has had a changing population for a long time. Under Saddam the city was Arabised, with large numbers of Kurds displaced and forced into the area now under the control of the KRG.

In 2003, as the coalition forces advanced through Iraq and Kirkuk fell, the city was heavily looted and

occupied by Kurdish peshmerga. At the time the Kurdish forces did not expect to gain control quite so easily. Many of the Turkmen and Arabs who had made Kirkuk their home were driven out, not by waves of ethnic cleansing but through seizures, looting and an increasing Kurdish majority population. The Kurdish advance on Kirkuk was aided as in 2014 by the disintegration of the army.

The need for the oilfields to keep running is probably stopping all-out assaults on Kirkuk by the Iraqi Army. The KRG control one of the major pipelines into the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Daesh destroyed Baghdad's main pipeline, and they are now reliant on the oil going into Ceyhan.



The end of the "Islamic State"

Now Daesh have been driven out of Raqqa, the contiguous territory that they once controlled has been almost completely broken up. Good.

Trump has said; "We will soon transition into a new phase in which we will support local security forces, de-escalate violence across Syria, and advance the conditions for lasting peace, so that the terrorists cannot return to threaten our collective security again."

The defeat of Daesh also bolsters the Assad regime which looks increasingly stable in the face of a much beaten and fractured Syrian opposition. Trump claims that he wishes to offer "a political transition that honors the will of the Syrian people".

The will of the Syrian people is of course not clear, but Trump is de-facto granting Assad the USA's consent to continue Ba'athist rule of Syria.



"We didn't get filthy rich just so we could pay taxes to support a decent health service for the likes of you!"

Seize their wealth!

By Cathy Nugent

Another day, another revelation. The super-rich avoid paying tax.

The leak of 13.4 million data files (the "Paradise Papers") to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Germany, shared with media around the world, has shone a light on the pathologically anti-social behaviour of the rich pile up their wealth and refusing to contribute to the financing of hospitals, schools and the care of the old, sick and disabled.

They do this by getting fancy lawyers to set up obscure companies, massage profit figures, and stash money away in accounts in low-tax countries like the Bahamas or the Cayman Islands (many of which are British "dependencies", former colonies, but outside British tax laws).

Yet these people can afford to help pay for services. Their wealth is sometimes so vast that they need an army of personal shoppers to spend it, £6,000 on Cartier watches today, or £6 million on luxury yachts.

The fact that this behaviour is "legal" is for the rest of us, the *non-rich*, like having caviar rubbed in our faces. It seems the force of the law is always directed against us. We get evicted when we fall behind on our mortgage or rent. But the rich get away with what is, by any normal definition of the word, robbery!

And why would anyone *not* pay tax while people die for lack of ambulances, drugs, enough doctors?

These people, whom Bernie Sanders called the "new international oligarchy" don't think about people stacked up on hospital trolleys waiting to be seen by overstretched doctors because they live in a bubble. They sleep at night because they think that we, the have-

nots, are just jealous of their wealth. They think they deserve to hang onto as much as possible of their cash because it is "hard earned". That say their wealth will, eventually, "trickle down", but they don't know how and care less.

That's the point about being an oligarch — you do not know or do not want to know how the vast majority of the world lives.

Tax dodging is just another part of a system which ensures that a very few people can get unimaginably rich. This is a system where just 8 people are as wealthy as half the world's population.

In this system the wealthy own or part-own capitalist enterprises which accumulate wealth through squeezing profit out of waged labour. Governments around the world then pass laws to make it possible for that wealth to be hidden away in private companies so that it is out of the reach of their own tax collectors!

CRACK-DOWN

Sometimes governments make half-hearted attempts to "crack-down" on tax avoidance.

Theresa May claims an extra £160 billion in tax has been collected since 2010. But that's £26 billion extra a year, when total government expenditure is nearly £800 billion a year. When the best estimate of world-wide tax dodging is \$500 billion a year.

Governments like the current Tory government let tax evasion happen, just as they give tax breaks to the rich and allow the super-exploitation of workers. All the better to keep the UK's status as one of the most unequal developed societies in the world and the preferred home of the super-rich.

Meanwhile, as Jeremy Corbyn put it, "Schools, hospitals, housing, all those public services lose and the rest of the population have to

pay to cover up the deficit created by [tax avoidance]."

What should be done? The Tax Justice Network calls for public information on the activities of tax havens and tax avoiders. John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor, says that the government should be allowed access to company profits before firms are able to move them to tax havens.

That's good but not nearly enough. A Labour government needs to be tackling the system. In the first place by bringing into public ownership and democratic control the major sources of wealth.

Renationalising the utilities, the big six energy companies, and renationalising Royal Mail are necessary commitments.

Public ownership of the banks should be an active plank of Labour's policy. Banks and high finance are central to the economy's functioning, and their greed for profit has been central to the economic chaos, the licensing of rich people's greed, and the growing inequality.

Buy online now



£23 inc postage

www.workersliberty.org/books

Calais refugees: still there, still suffering

By Ruth Willis

Since the late 1990s the Channel Tunnel and the port of Calais have been a gathering place for migrants seeking a route into Britain.

Although a migrant make-shift campsite known as the Calais Jungle became well known in the last few years, there have been many camps established by migrants on plots of unused land.

Numbers of migrants reached a peak during the 2015 migrant crisis, when the Calais Jungle had over 7,000 people living in it. The Jungle was cleared in October 2016 and 6,400 people were relocated across France, often forcibly and violently. Possessions were destroyed, homes were burnt and bulldozed.

Yet migrants and refugees continue to arrive in Calais — despite the reports of brutal treatment by the Calais police. The reason for this is simple. You cannot claim asylum in the UK unless you are physically in the country and there are no legal routes to get here.

People attempt risky and dangerous routes; hiding under lorries, or trying to get through the tunnel. Migrants gather at other places, such as Dunkirk, anywhere where they may be able to find a way into the UK.

As long as there are forces which drive people from their homes there will continue to be men, women and children determined to make a better life. For many that means coming to the UK.

Care for Calais, a charity providing direct aid to refugees, reports around 1,000 refugees are sleeping rough in Calais and Dunkirk; another 500 in Brussels; and over 1,500 in Paris. They have no access to basic sanitation and may not have changed their clothes in weeks, leading to skin diseases. They have no shelter at night or regular food supply. Their health is in shocking decline.

Worse, the humanitarian efforts that are made to help people are being actively disrupted by the French police. This is documented in detail in a report by Human Rights Watch, *Like Living Hell*.

In March 2017 local authorities in Calais issued an order banning the distribution of food, water, blankets and clothing to migrants. Although this order was suspended by the courts, the Calais authorities continue to impede the work of charities, limiting the times when aid can be distributed.

Aid workers have told of police physically blocking them from approaching migrants or knocking food out of their hands; one group were encircled by police with rifles.

Police routinely harass and abuse migrants sleeping rough. They use pepper spray on people, including children, then take away blankets and sleeping bags. A 17 year old Er-

itrean girl told how the police woke her and took her belongings before driving her to a remote location and leaving her there.

The Refugee Rights Data Project found that 90% of Calais refugees and migrants had experienced violence at the hands of the police, including teeth being knocked out and broken bones.

This unfettered police brutality runs contrary to both French and international law and violates the prohibition on inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. It is also an unjustifiable interference with the migrants' rights to food and water. The Calais authorities deny police behave in this way.

French President Macron has made commitments to improve the treatment of refugees in France, but so far these are but empty words. What is needed is a clear and unequivocal directive to stop police interfering with aid distribution and intimidating and assaulting migrants. Those who are the subject of allegations should be held to account and be immediately suspended.

Immediate funding must be given to provide shelter to all those sleeping rough, or the cold Calais winter will lead to needless deaths. There should be offices in Calais to provide legal guidance to refugees on the asylum process and assistance with applications. Unaccompanied migrant children should have access to child protection services, including shelters with sufficient capacity and adequate staffing.

CULPABLE

The British government is culpable too.

They heartlessly shirk their responsibility to open the borders to those fleeing. When I visited the camp in 2015 there were a growing number of Syrian refugees arriving optimistic because they had heard Britain would take in some Syrian refugees, only to be devastated to learn that they would take no-one from the Calais camp.

Every person I spoke to had a different story of hardship with a young man from Sudan saying dangerous was an inadequate word to describe the journey he had taken. This man had lost a friend who while trying to sneak onto a train had been chased by police with dogs onto the tracks where he was run down by a train. His death was reported in the UK press, but not the circumstances of it, he was referred to as "a man from Africa".

We must keep up sustained pressure on the government to do more, to accept more people.

Otherwise tragedies like this will continue to happen, as human beings will continue to seek, with determination, a better life.

Oppose Brexit even short of socialism



I'm entirely with Duncan Morrison (*Solidarity* 452) that we should seek to win the labour movement and the Labour Party to a program for a workers' Europe.

But what if we fail to win a majority for that before March 2019?

We should assume no "inevitability of gradualness". But even if we, around *Solidarity*, increase our forces 20-fold in the next year — 20 times more activists, 20 times more readers, 20 times more influence — we may not win Labour conference 2018 to that program.

And, even if we do, a workers' Europe is not a program that can be realised by action in one country alone. A revolutionary socialist stand by the Labour Party would surely spark great upheavals in labour movements across Europe, but we cannot guarantee that we will have revolutionary socialist majorities in the big countries' labour movements, and they will have won government, by March 2019.

If we don't, even a Labour Party entirely won to the politics of this newspaper will have to offer an immediate response when the Tories try to ram through their Brexit package.

What do we do when the Tories try to force through a nationalist, rights-removing, anti-migrant, economically-regressive deal in early 2019?

We should try to stop them. We should demand a referendum, even if the Labour Party doesn't, and even if Labour's official line on Brexit is as rubbish as it is now.

Not to do so would be like workers faced with a wage cut saying: we want our union to commit to socialist revolution. If we can't win that in time, or if we do win it in time but other unions are not yet sufficiently revolutionised to enable a workers' government, then we should not busy ourselves with crappy alternatives like low wages or even lower wages, but just grin and bear it.

Yes, a referendum is a poor form of democracy. Yes, pretty much all referendums are a choice between the status quo and some description of change. Yes, of course we might lose that 2019 referendum, or face a nasty backlash after we'd won it narrowly.

But a poor form of democracy is better than none. A referendum, as the only way to exorcise the June plebiscite, is better than giving the Tories free passage.

The status quo — however nasty the politics of many pro-EU politicians, like France's president Macron — is better, as a baseline from which to fight, than a re-raising of barriers between Britain and the rest of Europe which will be very difficult to reverse in any medium term.

Duncan, if I understand him right, would not be opposed to a Labour Party which had been won to a workers' Europe program demanding a referendum on a Tory deal.

But, as socialists, we should not limit ourselves by what the top leaders of the Labour Party may or may not be pushed into in this or that timespan. We fight for our ideas in the Labour Party.

We also say what we think independently, and promote it as energetically we can, in the workplaces, in the unions, and on the streets, as well as in the Labour Party.

Stalinists worse than sectarian

LETTERS

Steve Cushion's *Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution* contains valuable research on Cuban workers' struggles in the 1950s. However its theoretical framework is flawed, allowing modern Stalinists to use his findings to boost the ruling Cuban Stalinists.

Cushion's response to my review (*Solidarity* 452) only reinforces my original criticism.

Cushion says he accepts the Cuban Communist Party was Stalinist, but found a "wide divergence between the sectarian 'party line' and the actions of individual communist militants". This is the standard recourse of historians who are soft on Stalinism, but it misconceives the characterisation. Stalinist parties were not just "sectarian": they were active agents of Russian foreign policy and embryonic agents of a potential new ruling class. They were not simply a strand of the labour movement (analogous to social-democratic reformists), but a poisonous, external class force. The virtues of individual militants is beside the point: the key is to determine whose interests these parties served. The

same applies to Castro's 26 July movement.

Cushion claims the January 1959 general strike thwarted efforts to prolong the civil war and averted US intervention. The evidence for this view is thin, but suppose he is right. It only underlines my fundamental point: the Castro forces used the general strike as a battering ram for getting their rebel army into power. Working class action was subordinated to the Castro movement's drive for power. The Cuban workers did not make the general strike to assert their own interests. Cuban workers' power was used by the Castroites to clear away the last elements of the old bourgeois state. While smashing Batista's state was undoubtedly in workers' interests, the general strike did not inaugurate any form of workers' rule but within a year, Stalinist totalitarianism.

POSITION

Cushion claims he takes no position on subsequent developments in Cuba after the 1959 revolution.

This is evasive and disingenuous. The same forces that led the revolution (and who subordinated workers' struggles to their cause) came to power in Cuba and have ruled

ever since. After nearly sixty years it is not unreasonable to expect a socialist historian to define the class character of the Cuban revolution and the subsequent regime that has dominated the workers.

My position at least has the virtue of clarity. The Cuban revolution was never a socialist revolution. Sadly, Cuban workers did not assert themselves as an independent class force, or established their own forms of class power (such as soviets), nor their own workers' state. The Castro movement smashed the old bourgeois Batista state and proceeded to establish its own state. The Castro leadership became the new ruling class of a new exploiting bureaucratic collectivist society. They constituted new exploitative (but non-capitalist) social relations of production similar to the Stalinist USSR. They atomised the Cuban workers and filleted the trade unions.

The Cuban Stalinists have made tentative moves towards capitalism since the 1990s, while retaining their grip on power — effectively the Chinese model.

The Castroites are therefore the enemies, not allies of the Cuban workers. Clarity on Stalinism is the prerequisite for socialist history and current politics.

Quoting Nazis to damn "the Zionists"

THE LEFT

By Dale Street

Had it not been distributed as a leaflet at this year's Labour Party conference, Moshe Machover's article "Anti-Zionism Does Not Equal Anti-Semitism" would have been just another turgid and distasteful article which had found a natural home for itself in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*.

A longer version of the same article — entitled "Don't Apologise — Attack" — had been published in *Weekly Worker* four months earlier. According to that article:

- Anyone who thought that a retweet by Naz Shah MP — which had suggested that Israel (and, presumably, its population) should be relocated to the USA — "was anything but a piece of satire should have their head examined."

- Jackie Walker "has been suspended for saying that there was not only a Jewish holocaust but also a black African one too." (Wrong: that was not the reason for her suspension.)

- There was nothing antisemitic about NUS President Malia Bouattia describing Birmingham University as "something of a Zionist outpost".

- Ken Livingstone was "certainly inaccurate" in having said that Hitler supported Zionism until he went mad. At the same time, "the point he was making was basically correct".

The inclusion of a shorter version of the article in a "Labour Party Marxists" bulletin distributed at Labour Party conference rescued it from obscurity.

Overnight, Machover's article became a cause célèbre for left antisemites (and antisemites in general).

Zionism is essentialised. Machover unceasingly refers to "the Zionists ... the Zionists ... the Zionists." Unlike any other nationalism,

Zionism is portrayed as a uniformly negative monolith.

Legitimate complaints about antisemitic arguments and ways of thinking are dismissed as a Zionist concoction: "And so the Zionists and their allies decided to launch the 'Anti-Zionism equals Anti-Semitism' campaign."

This "campaign" is an international (cosmopolitan) one: "The whole campaign of equating opposition to Zionism with anti-semitism has been carefully orchestrated with the help of the Israeli government and the far right in the United States."

Antisemitism is defined in such a way that its existence in the labour movement can simply be denied as being of no account:

"The handful of people of the left who propagate a version of the 'Protocols of Zion' carry no weight and are without any intellectual foundation."

Unlike others who share his current politics, Machover does not define Zionism as a form of antisemitism. But he does portray collusion with antisemitism as inherent in Zionism: "You can also attack Zionism because of its collusion and collaboration with antisemitism, including up to a point with Nazi Germany."

This brings Machover round to the trope of Zionist-Nazi collaboration: "Let us now turn to the Zionist-Nazi connection. ... The Zionists made overtures to the Nazi regime, so how did the Nazis respond? ... In other words, a friendly mention of Zionism, indicating an area of basic agreement it shared with Nazism."

The "friendly mention of Zionism" cited by Machover is a quote from an article written in 1935 by Reinhard Heydrich, published in the *Das Schwarze Korps*, the in-house magazine of the Nazi SS:

"National socialism has no intention of attacking the Jewish people in any way. The government finds itself in complete agreement with the great spiritual movement within Jewry itself, so-called Zionism."

Heydrich was a hardened antisemite from

the early 1930s onwards. He was one of the architects of the Final Solution. Only a few months earlier he had made clear his attitude towards Jews in another article in *Das Schwarze Korps*:



Reinhard Heydrich

"In order to preserve our people, we must be harsh in the face of our enemy, even at the cost of hurting an individual or being condemned as rabble-rousers by some probably well-meaning people. ...

"If someone is our enemy, he is to be vanquished subjectively and without exception. If, for example, out of false compassion, every German should make an exception for 'only one decent' Jew or Freemason whom he knows, we would end up with 60 million such exceptions."

Ten years before Heydrich's article Hitler had already dismissed a Jewish state as "a central organisation for their (Jews') world swindling ... a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks."

Thus, to illustrate the "basic agreement" which Zionism supposedly shared with the Nazis, Machover quotes an architect of the Holocaust, from an article in the magazine of the organisation which played a leading role in carrying out the Holocaust.

It is not about supporting the Palestinians. Machover says explicitly: that's not enough. You must also demonise "the Zionists" as an evil essence running through history to link Jews today back to the taint of the Nazis.



Unions must fight for robust rules

The public scandal which has erupted in the wake of reports of historical and current sexual assaults in Hollywood, and now the UK Parliament, has brought to light a day-to-day reality. The #metoo campaign was “successful” because it touched on a truth. Almost every woman has experienced some form of sexual assault or harassment.

The public conversation in wake of the reports and allegations is welcome and important.

The revelations about Harvey Weinstein, with which this public conversation began, showed how men in positions of power can perpetrate abuse on, in his case, an industrial scale. It showed how far the powerful will go to cover up their abuse. They showed how an “open secret”, the fear and collusion of people dependent on the powerful, allows abuse to continue. The contract Weinstein signed with his own company reportedly prevented the company from sacking him over any sexual assault allegation — if the money he used to pay for women’s silence came out of his own money.

A number of MPs have now either resigned from a cabinet position or had the whip suspended by their party, and are facing investigations. This includes more Tory MPs than Labour, but Labour MPs are involved. The fate of some MPs are hanging in the balance as we went to press, including First Secretary of State Damian Green. A spreadsheet compiled by Tory whips detailing the sexual conduct of 36 Tory MPs has been leaked to the press. Allegations mount up against party activists and staff members. These include: unwanted physical contact, manipulation and abuse of position to get someone to engage in sexual activity, harassing messages of a sexual nature and even rape.

The Tory whips’ list is information which had been gathered to use in factional battles, and some of it is more to do with various MPs’ sexual proclivities, their closeted sexuality and porn habits, than abuse, nonetheless many MPs are accused of being “handsy” their whips’ euphemistic term for unwanted physical contact. That such a list exists is not a surprise to anyone who has worked in Parliament. It demonstrates how sexual abuse has not been taken seriously, only recorded to be potentially used in a future battle against a political opponent.

The biggest shift in the public perception of sexual assault and harassment is a recognition that it is not just “extreme” cases that count, but seemingly smaller acts — an unwanted hand on the knee, repeated “flirty”

or sexual, text messages. Actions which put a woman (and sometimes men) in the position of being an object. Actions which amount to ostentatious and often unrelenting displays of power.

A 2016 Trade Union Congress (TUC) report, surveying different industries, showed an average of 52% of women experiencing some form of sexual harassment at work. In some industries it was much higher — up to 67% in hospitality. Male managers often use sexual violence to exert their power over mainly women workers in jobs such as cleaning.

Male workers may also target women managers who they see as “posing a threat” to their power. In our book *Why Socialist Feminism?* we quoted political activist Kavita Krishnan on the situation of women in India: “With the opening up on the market, women are more visible in the workplace [...] That they are entering male bastions of power has challenged the sense of superiority and entitlement of the traditional Indian male.”

Sexual harassment takes place in the relatively intimate space of the workplace but it also takes place in public places. In a 2015 survey of women who used the Paris Metro 100% said they had been sexually harassed on the Metro, and half of them said the first time it happened was before they were 18. In a 2012 survey of London women 40% said they had been sexual harassed or assaulted in a public place in the last year.

TOXIC

This is not something perpetrated by a small number of “bad eggs” in toxic workplaces or other institutions. It is perpetrated by a large proportion of “normal” men. That raises the question of what causes this behaviour? Why has it largely been considered ok?

The answer lies in the structure of society, the relative positions of power of men and women and other disparities of power.

Shamefully, while this welcome and so far fairly productive conversation about sexual harassment is taking place, some on the left still seem not to take this issue seriously. The *Skwaakbox* website, publishing Labour MP Kelvin Hopkins’ denial of allegations against himself, added an introduction implying that the “mainstream” media wouldn’t publish Hopkins’ statement because the allegation was a witch-hunt against the left. Another leftist blog post (The Framing of Kelvin Hopkins MP on azvsas.blogspot.co.uk) used every sexist trope in the book against the women who raised the allegations of abuse — criticising her clothes, her manner, her poli-

tics, asking why she didn’t defend herself, etc.

There is, and will be, abuse on the left. Left-wing men who are otherwise sound politically may also be perpetrators. All allegations should always be treated seriously, and be taken up using proper procedures (with due process for those accused), whatever the politics of the person who makes the allegation.

The culture around the Corbynite Labour left of constantly looking for the next right-wing witch hunt, of turning every accusation into a conspiratorial attack by the right, is not healthy. It is fine to criticise the Labour right wing for failing to act against sexism when they were in power. It is not okay to belittle women making accusations. The culture of knee jerk reactions against the right may have led the woman who has made allegations against Clive Lewis to keep those allegations quiet, in her own words because she “respected him as a politician” and thought Lewis was “a good guy” who has “consistently stuck up for good left-wing values”.

ALLEGATIONS

The scandal in Parliament is not over. More allegations are likely to come to light, and many more will not be publicly reported.

And while allegations against celebrities and politicians make good newspaper headlines, women continue to suffer daily sexual assault and harassment at work, at home, and on the streets. What can we do?

Throughout labour movement history collective struggles have contributed to shifting the attitude of male workers towards women and increasing women’s confidence and security.

Union organisation can make a big difference to sexual assault and harassment at work in the first place by tackling the issue itself, fighting for robust codes of conduct, reporting policies, and sanctions in workplace. These already exist, more or less, in some unionised public sector workplaces. We should get them generalised. By so doing we would also institutionalise due-process protections for those facing charges.

Unions can also address the issue by increasing the power of workers against their bosses. Well-paid, secure jobs with guaranteed hours will help address sexual harassment at work too.

If women aren’t reliant on putting up with harassment to keep their job, to get the extra hours they need, to get the tips that supplement their income, they will be better able to report abuse.

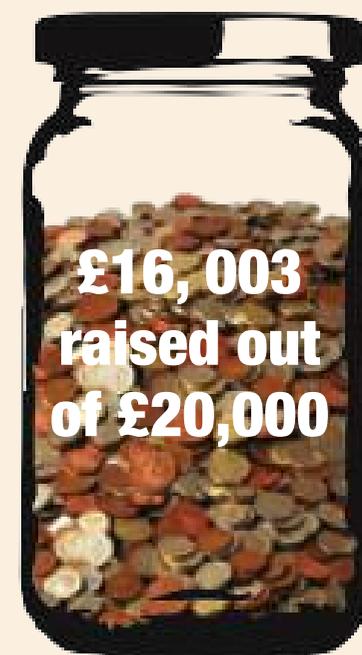
Help us raise £20,000 to develop our website

The newly restructured Workers’ Liberty website is online at www.workersliberty.org

Our website, including its extensive archive, aims to help build a different kind of socialist culture — one where discussion and self-education are cherished.

From Trotskyist newspapers of the 1940s and 50s, to older Marxist classics, to discussion articles on feminism, national questions, religion and philosophy and resources such as guidelines for Marxist reading groups — it’s all there on the Workers’ Liberty website.

To make our archive more accessible we have paid for professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date and subject, and optimised for mobile reading. We still need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our coverage is up to the minute and shared on social media. We would like to raise £20,000 by our conference in November 2017. Any amount will help.



- If you would like to donate by paypal go to www.workersliberty.org/donate
- Or set up an internet bank transfer to “AWL”, account 20047674 at Unity Trust Bank, Birmingham, 60-83-01 (please email awl@workersliberty.org to notify us of the payment and what it’s for); or
- Send a cheque payable to “AWL” to AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Rd, London SE1 3DG (with a note saying what it’s for).

The day of the revolution

At the dawn of November 7th the men and women employed at the party's printing works came to the Smolny and informed us that the Government had stopped our chief party paper and also the new organ of the Petrograd Soviet.

The printing works had had their doors sealed up by some Government agents. The Military Revolutionary Committee at once countermanded the order, took both papers under its protection, and placed the high honour of protecting the freedom of the Socialist Press from counter-revolutionary attempts on the valiant Volhynian Regiment. After this, work was resumed and went on continuously at the printing office, and both papers came out at the appointed hour.

The Government was still in session in the Winter Palace, but it had already become a mere shadow of its former self. It had ceased to exist politically. In the course of November 7th the Winter Palace was gradually surrounded from all sides by our troops. At one o'clock in the afternoon, in the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee, I announced at the sitting of the Petrograd Soviet that Kerensky's Government no longer existed, and that, pending the decision of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, the Government authority would be assumed by the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Lenin had left Finland some days previously and was living in hiding in a working-class quarter in a suburb. On November 7th he came secretly to the Smolny. Judging by the newspapers, he had gained the impression that we were coming to a compromise with the Kerensky Government. The bourgeois press had shrieked so much about the coming revolt, the march of armed soldiers in the streets, the pillage, and the inevitable rivers of blood, that it did not perceive the insurrection which, in reality, was now taking place, and accepted the negotiations between ourselves and the Military Staff at their face value. All this time, quietly, without any street fighting, without firing or bloodshed, one Government institution after another was being seized by highly disciplined detachments of soldiers, sailors, and Red Guards, in accordance with the exact telephone instructions emanating from the little room on the third floor of the Smolny Institute.

In the evening, the second All-Russian Congress of the Soviets held a preliminary meeting.

The report of the Central Executive Committee was submitted by Dan. He delivered an indictment against the rebels, the usurpers, and sedition-mongers, and tried to frighten the meeting by predicting the inevitable collapse of the insurrection, which in a day or two, he said, would be suppressed by troops from the front. His speech sounded exceedingly unconvincing and very much out of place in a hall in which the overwhelming majority of delegates were following with the greatest enthusiasm the victorious march of the Petrograd rising.

By this time the Winter Palace was surrounded, though not yet taken. From time to time shots were fired from the windows at the besiegers who were slowly and very

carefully closing in upon the building. From the Peter and Paul Fortress a few shells were fired at the Palace, their distant sounds reaching the Smolny. Martoff, with impotent indignation, was speaking from the rostrum of civil war, and particularly of the siege of the Winter Palace where, among the other Ministers, there were – oh, horror of horrors! – members of the Menshevik Party. Two sailors, who had come to give news from the scenes of struggle, took the platform against him. They reminded our accusers of the July offensive, of the whole perfidious policy of the old Government, of the re-establishment of the death penalty for soldiers, of the arrests, of the sacking of revolutionary organizations, and vowed that they would either conquer or die. They it was who brought us the news of the first victims on our side on the Palace Square.

MOVED

Every one rose as though moved by some invisible signal, and with a unanimity which is only provoked by a deep moral intensity of feeling sung a Funeral March.

He who lived through this moment will never forget it. The meeting came to an abrupt end. It was impossible to sit there, calmly discussing the theoretical question as to the method of constructing the Government, with the echo reaching our ears of the fighting and firing at the walls of the Winter Palace, where, as a matter of fact, the fate of this very Government was already being decided.

The taking of the Palace, however, was a protracted business, and this caused some wavering amongst the less determined elements of the Congress. The Right wing, through its spokesmen, prophesied our early doom. All were waiting anxiously for news from the Winter Palace. After some time, Antonoff, who, had been directing the operations, arrived. At once there was dead silence in the hail. The Winter Palace had been taken. Kerensky had taken flight. The other Ministers had been arrested and con-



News of the insurrection reaches Moscow

veyed to the Peter and Paul Fortress. The first chapter of the November Revolution was at an end.

The Right Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, numbering altogether about sixty persons, that is, about one-tenth of the Congress, left the meeting under protest. As they could do nothing else, they "threw the whole responsibility" for whatever might now happen on the Bolsheviks and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries. The latter were still wavering. Their past bound them closely to Tchernoff's party. The Right wing of this party had now shifted entirely towards the lower middle class and their intellectuals, to the well-to-do peasants in the villages; in all, decisive questions it was marching hand in hand with the Liberal bourgeoisie against us. The more revolutionary elements of the party, reflecting the Radicalism of the social aspirations of the poorest peasantry, gravitated to the proletariat and its party. They were afraid, however, to cut the umbilical cord which bound them with the old party. When we were about to leave the Provisional Parliament, they refused to follow us and warned us against "adventures." But the insurrection forced them to choose either for or against the Soviet.

Not without hesitation, they were concentrating their forces on the same side of the barricade where we stood.

From History of the Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk (1918) by Leon Trotsky

An alter

Paul Vernadsky reviews *The Experiment: Georgia's Forgotten Revolution 1918-21* by Eric Lee.

Eric Lee's mischievous new book, argues that the Georgian Menshevik republic was an alternative to the Bolshevik-led workers' government, which came to power in October 1917.

This is absolute fantasy, which confuses discussion of working-class politics at the time and the importance of the Russian revolution for today's class struggles.

Russia annexed Georgia in 1798 and the Transcaucasia region remained a largely underdeveloped part of the tsarist empire until the discovery of oil in the late nineteenth century. In 1892, Noe Zhordania founded the first Georgian Marxist circle, the "third group". It played a key supporting role in the Gurian peasant uprising between 1902 and 1906. Lee's book explains the origins of the revolt over grazing rights, as well as its limits (its courts dwelt heavily on punishing adultery). Zhordania's social democrats won a wide base of support during the struggle.

In 1903, Zhordania took part in the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, joining the Menshevik faction against the Bolsheviks. Georgian social democrats backed the central tenet of Menshevism: that the Russian revolution would be bourgeois and the socialists' primary task was to promote a bourgeois republic. In Georgia, the Mensheviks won landslide victories in elections to the tsarist Duma. Most of the prominent Menshevik leaders became Duma members, including Zhordania, Irakli Tsereteli and Noe Ramishvili. Zhordania led the social democratic faction in the short-lived First Duma, while Tsereteli headed the much larger united social democratic faction in the Second Duma.

WAR

Lee's book is strangely reticent about the First World War.

He says that a number of Georgian Mensheviks including Zhordania were sympathetic to the Allied cause. However the picture was worse than that. Tsereteli and other Mensheviks took a more internationalist position — at least until the tsar was overthrown. Zhordania fought for a "defencist" position and even wanted the Menshevik Duma fraction to vote for war credits.

Lee's book also brushes over the importance of Georgian involvement in the events of 1917. Tsereteli was freed by the February revolution and went to Petrograd, where he was the architect of Menshevik participation in the provisional government (he became a minister) and support for the war, known as "revolutionary defencism". Carlo Chkheidze promoted the same politics as chair of the Petrograd Soviet until September. As such they were responsible for the disastrous Menshevik orientation during the revolution.

Lee reports that in Tiflis after the February revolution, the local tsarist official Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich announced that

Alternative to the Bolsheviks?



A delegation of the Second International visits Georgia in 1920

he would be leaving, but expressed confidence that Zhordania and other social democrats could be trusted with power. As he put it, they were “on the side of order”. On 16 March 1917, the Tiflis Soviet was established. Zhordania was elected chair and promoted class collaboration.

The Georgian Mensheviks were united in their opposition to the Bolshevik-led seizure of power in October 1917. It was their visceral hostility to the Russian socialist revolution that dictated their course in the years afterwards. Lee admits that Georgia’s separation from Russia was not part of socialist agitation before 1917. The rejection of separatism was so strong that Georgian social democrat speeches would end with “Down with Georgia! Long live the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party!” Nevertheless, Zhordania and the Mensheviks embraced separatism.

On 22 April 1918, Georgian, Armenia and Azerbaijan proclaimed their independence, forming the Democratic Federative Republic of Transcaucasia. It dissolved five weeks later and the National Council of Georgia, chaired by Zhordania, made its declaration of independence on 26 May 1918. Immediately faced with attacks by Turkey, the new Georgian government turned to Imperial Germany for support. Lee argues that Georgia had no choice, because “small nations can only defend themselves if they have strong allies”. But Georgia could have remained part of Soviet Russia, rather than run into the arms of the imperialist powers.

In October 1918, Zhordania wrote to the Imperial German Mission, “I have never considered the international position of Georgia as that of an absolutely neutral state, as the contrary is being proved by evident facts”. Zhordania described Georgia’s policy as being one of “limited neutrality”. In fact the guiding line was to support whatever imperial power the Mensheviks felt would guarantee Georgia’s independence.

The ostensible reason for independence was the Brest-Litovsk treaty, where Germany forced the Bolsheviks to cede large chunks of Georgian territory to the Turks. Yet the first document signed by the Georgians and Germans acknowledged the Brest-Litovsk agreement. Germany forced the Turks to formally recognise the Georgian state, but only by al-

lowing Turkey to determine the size of Georgia’s army and to deploy Turkish troops inside Georgia. Lee rightly describes it as a “victor’s peace”.

When the First World War ended, British imperial forces arrived in Baku as early as 17 November 1918. Again Lee excuses the Georgian government’s accommodation with the British as merely *realpolitik*, what he calls their “working assumption” that the world was one in which “the ‘great powers’ could make decisions about the very existence of nation-states”. But this ignores the alternative of remaining with Bolshevik Russia.

Almost immediately the British government suggested it would “favour” the Georgian Republic – undoubtedly as part of its strategy to defeat the Bolsheviks. The Georgian Mensheviks represented their state at the Versailles peace conference. In December 1920 the Menshevik leaders unsuccessfully sought Georgia’s admission to the League of Nations. Lee presents the Georgian government as resentful of the British, yet they looked upon the imperial power as their guarantor.

RELATIONS

One of the most disappointing aspects of Lee’s book is its treatment of the Georgian Menshevik government’s relations with the counter-revolutionary White armies.

He emphasises the fundamental antagonism between them: the Georgian government espoused socialism and declared independence (under German protection), while Denikin’s Volunteer Army stood for an indivisible Russia, abhorred socialism and remained faithful to the Allies.

Yet it is well known that the Georgian Menshevik government sought to establish relations with Denikin’s forces and were prepared to support them against the Bolsheviks’ Red Army. In late August 1918 Georgian and White generals met. The Georgian government gave Denikin its only armoured train. In September 1918, a Georgian government delegation headed by foreign minister Evgeni Gegechkori met with Denikin and his generals at Yekaterinodar to establish an agreement. None of this is discussed adequately in Lee’s book.

Lee does admit that during 1919 the Geor-

gians supplied Denikin’s army with oil and other supplies, while denying these to the Bolsheviks. However Lee attributes this to the British, ignoring the importance of the Georgian government’s agency in agreeing to these conditions. Lee also ignores the supplies of soldiers and materials to Wrangel’s White army in 1920. Far from neutral, the Georgian Mensheviks actively supported both the imperial powers and the White armies that tried to overthrow the Bolshevik workers’ government during the civil war.

Perhaps the most repugnant aspect of the Georgian Menshevik government was its treatment of national minorities. Lee does represent these failings clearly in the book. On 18 October 1918, Armenian state troops entered Georgian territory and occupied some villages. In response Armenians in Georgia were subjected to a series of repressive measures such as the suspension of their newspapers and the arrest of Dashnak deputies to the Tiflis Duma. Armenians residing in Georgia were treated as prisoners of war and in one case paraded through the streets.

In 1919 the Georgian Menshevik government decided to suspend Abkhazia’s autonomous status and jail separatist leaders. Similarly, the Menshevik government responded to South Ossetian agitation by killing hundreds of civilians in what Lee calls a kind of “ethnic cleansing”. He quotes the Georgian militia leader Valiko Jugeli: “The Oset nationalists are our worst and most relentless enemies... These traitors... should be cruelly punished. There is no other way.”

The Georgian Menshevik government also repressed local communists, who Lee refers to as “fifth columnist” – a term originating with the fascist general Franco. On 10 February 1918, a Bolshevik protest meeting at the opening of the Transcaucasian parliament was dispersed by gunfire. Bolshevik newspapers were suppressed in Georgia, many Bolsheviks arrested and the party driven underground for two years.

Local Bolsheviks did try to overthrow the Georgian government in November 1918 and again in May 1920. Journalists and the Russian government both reported that communists were executed by the Georgian government. Lee dismisses criticism of the Georgian Mensheviks’ behaviour. He states that “as a group with utter contempt for democratic norms, the Bolsheviks could not be treated the way the Georgian Social Democrats treated all other opposition parties”. He justifies the repression, stating that “the Bolsheviks represented a security threat of considerable magnitude from the very beginning”.

Lee waxes lyrically about the achievements of the Georgian Menshevik government. He claims that “Georgia’s economy was slowly transitioning from one based on production for profit to one resembling Robert Owen’s vision of a cooperative commonwealth”. This is fantasy. After the international social democratic delegation visit in 1920, future Labour Party leader Ramsey MacDonald wrote that in Georgia, “the largest coal mine is run by the state, but the important manganese mines are

still in private hands... Most of the few factories are still in private hands”. The much-vaunted agrarian reforms, while redistributing some land to the peasants, nevertheless left many holdings in the hands of the nobles. The trade union movement was smaller than the ruling Menshevik party membership. The Mensheviks also intervened against strikes, got the unions to help increase production and introduced piece work. This was no socialist paradise.

On 12 February 1921, local communists led by Sergei Ordzhonikidze instigated the overthrow of the Georgian Menshevik government. Lee admits that neither Lenin nor Trotsky (then head of the Red Army) ordered the attack and seemed unaware of the facts on the ground at the beginning. The Politburo told the Red Army not to intervene on 14 February, only sanction its involvement the following day. By 25 February the Georgian Menshevik government had been overthrown. This was a mistake by the Bolsheviks: they violated their own principle of national self-determination; the civil war was over, the Georgians did not represent a threat and a *modus vivendi* could have been found. The takeover was an early sign of bureaucratic degeneration, which Lenin and Trotsky recognised at the time.

ALTERNATIVE

Georgian Menshevism was not a viable alternative to the Bolsheviks in 1917-21.

The Georgian Mensheviks presided over a bourgeois state that did not overthrow capitalist relations of production. There was no Georgian workers’ revolution, but some agrarian reform on a private property basis. The Georgian Mensheviks were not even consistent democrats, as their record towards national minorities and communists shows. The Georgian experiment was not democratic socialism; it was barely even bourgeois democracy.

The Georgian Mensheviks had political choices in the circumstances, but made the wrong ones. On 14 January 1920, Zhordania declared in the Constituent Assembly: “You know that Soviet Russia has proposed a military alliance with us. We have point blank declined... I know that our enemies will say that we are on the side of the imperialists. Therefore I must say here most emphatically: that I prefer the imperialists of the West to the fanatics of the East.” This was their fundamental error: the alternative to becoming satraps of the imperialist powers and the White armies was to have allied with Soviet Russia.

Lee does not consider that alternative, which ultimately diminishes his book. Instead he propounds the Menshevik dogma that “an impoverished, backward society cannot skip historical stages”. He believes that the Georgians’ role was first to create “a liberal democracy – socialism would wait”. At the time millions of workers across Europe did not simply want capitalism – they fought for socialism and were right to do so.

Menshevism was the programme of self-limiting defeat. Trotsky was right to consign it to the dustbin of history.

No straight line from Balfour to today

This month marks the 100th anniversary of the Balfour declaration, the promise made by the British government to support a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. Paul Hampton argues there was never an inexorable, linear development from the Balfour declaration to the creation of Israel, or indeed, to the current injustice towards the Palestinians.

By Paul Hampton

On 2 November 1917, British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour sent a letter to Lord Rothschild, one of the leaders of the British Jews, which stated:

"I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government [the favourable view for] the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

The novelist Arthur Koestler wrote that the Balfour declaration was one nation promising another nation the land of a third nation. Similarly Edward Said argued that it was a prime example of "the moral epistemology of imperialism". The declaration was made: "(a) by a European power, (b) about a non-European territory, (c) in flat disregard of both the presence and the wishes of the native majority resident in the territory, and (d) it took the form of a promise about this same

territory to another foreign group, so that this foreign group might, quite literally, make this territory a national home for the Jewish people" (*The Question of Palestine*, 1979).

But why was the British government promising a national home for the Jewish people in 1917, when only a year earlier, it had promised Arab independence from the Ottoman Empire (although whether this undertaking included Palestine is disputed)?

Britain was making promises to Arabs and Jews in an effort to undermine its opponents (which included Turkey) in the context of the First World War.

Israeli historian Avi Shlaim argues there are two main schools of thought on the origins of the Balfour declaration. The conventional wisdom is that the activity and skills of the Zionist leaders such as Chaim Weizmann induced Britain to issue the statement of support. Other historians regard the declaration as the work of hard-headed pragmatic British officials who took the initiative in approaching the Zionists, primarily motivated by Britain's desire to marginalise France, in an imperialist carve up of the Middle East after the war. It was this, rather than sympathy for the Zionist cause, that prompted Britain to sponsor a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. It was also thought that a declaration favourable to the ideals of Zionism was likely to enlist the support of the Jews of America and Russia for the war effort against Germany. Finally, rumour that Germany was courting the Zionists accelerated the pace at which Britain moved towards its dramatic overture.

Tom Segev provides a synthesis in his *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate*. Segev has British prime min-

ister David Lloyd George as the prime mover behind the declaration. In his memoirs, Lloyd George explained his support for the Zionist movement as an alliance with a hugely influential political organisation whose goodwill was worth paying for.

Shlaim says that Lloyd George in fact "despised the Jews, but he also feared them, and he proceeded on the basis of an absurdly inflated notion of the power and influence of the Zionists. In aligning Britain with the Zionists, he acted in the mistaken — and antisemitic — view that the Jews turned the wheels of history". Segev argues that the Balfour declaration "was the product of neither military nor diplomatic interests but of prejudice, faith, and sleight of hand. The men who sired it were Christian and Zionist and, in many cases, antisemitic. They believed the Jews controlled the world."

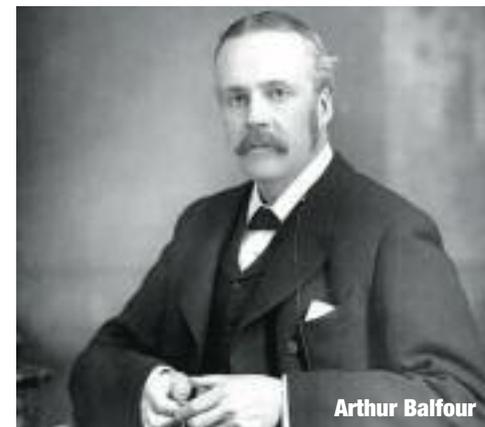
However, Balfour's proposal did not enjoy unanimous support in the cabinet. Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India was at the time, the only Jewish member of the government. He (unlike his cousin and future High Commissioner for Palestine Sir Herbert Samuel who shaped the ideas behind the declaration), considered Zionism a threat to the Jews of Britain and other countries. Montagu rejected the idea of the Jews as a nation and argued that the demand for recognition as a separate nation put at risk their becoming citizens with equal rights in the countries in which they lived. He believed it would be used as an excuse by governments to expel Jews.

Another opponent Lord Curzon argued: "What is to become of the people of the country?... [The Arabs] and their forefathers have occupied the country for the best part of 1,500 years, and they own the soil... They profess the Mohammedan faith. They will not be content either to be expropriated for Jewish immigrants or to act merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the latter".

Montagu and Curzon were overruled as Lloyd George, Balfour and Lord Milner (often regarded as the author who actually drafted the letter), threw their weight behind the proposal. At the San Remo conference in April 1920, the League of Nations incorporated the commitment to establish a Jewish national home into the terms of Britain's mandate to govern Palestine. Palestinian Arab resentment towards this development was immediate and expressed in the Nebi Musa riots.

Segev's verdict is that British actions over the whole mandate period considerably favoured the Zionist position and thus helped to ensure the establishment of a Jewish state. Similarly Sahar Huneidi argues that most of the political, economic and administrative measures taken by Samuel during his tenure in Palestine (1920-25) were designed to prepare the ground for a fully-fledged Jewish state.

However British policy also vacillated. Shortly after his arrival in Palestine in 1928, the High Commissioner Sir John Chancellor concluded that the Balfour declaration had been a "colossal blunder", unfair to the Arabs and detrimental to the interests of the British Empire. In January 1930, following pogroms against the Jews in Palestine, he sent a long memorandum to London. In October 1930, colonial secretary Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) issued a White Paper which restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. It assumed that the Jews would remain a minority. However the new policy was reversed within a few months. Similar lurches took place after the Arab uprising in 1936, when



Arthur Balfour

the British Peel commission came out for partition, but then recoiled with another White Paper, which planned to restrict Jewish immigration and land purchases.

Shlaim says that by the Second World War, "the costs of the British presence in Palestine were considerable and the benefits remained persistently elusive. Palestine was not a strategic asset: it was not a source of power but of weakness". After 1945, economic considerations reinforced the strategic arguments for withdrawal from Palestine.

The impact of the Balfour Declaration on the subsequent history of the Middle East was revolutionary. Shlaim argues that it "completely transformed the position of the fledgling Zionist movement vis-à-vis the Arabs of Palestine and it provided a protective umbrella that enabled the Zionists to proceed steadily towards their ultimate goal of establishing an independent Jewish state in Palestine".

The greatest contradiction lay in British support for the right to national self-determination of the Jewish minority, while implicitly denying it to the Arab majority. At the time of the declaration, the population of Palestine was around 670,000, including 60,000 Jews (much diminished by death and displacement due to the ravishes of war). The proviso that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" implied that, in British eyes, the Arab majority had no political rights; they were even not named. The authors may have wished to also include the smaller diverse populations in e.g. Jerusalem including a large Christian community. Nonetheless the declaration was "arrogant, dismissive and even racist" to refer to 90% of the population as "the non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

Shlaim regards the Balfour declaration as a colossal blunder, because it ultimately proved to be a catastrophe for the Palestinians and gave rise to "one of the most intense, bitter, and protracted conflicts of modern times". But he does not ignore the other drives that fed into the process of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. Spurred by Hitler's racial antisemitism that would culminate in the Holocaust, between 1932 and 1938, more than 197,000 people migrated into Palestine, followed by 138,300 more in the ten years between 1939 and 1948.

It was the formation of a Jewish national community in Palestine, reaching 37% of the population by the time Israel declared its independence in 1948, which made the conflict primarily a matter of two peoples both seeking self-determination.

The imperial background is important, but secondary to the final outcome in 1948. And it does not explain why Palestinians are still denied national self-determination today.

Gramsci and unpleasant truths

By Martin Thomas

"During the lifetime of great revolutionaries", wrote Lenin at the start of his pamphlet *State and Revolution*, "the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander."

"After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to hallow their names to a certain extent for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it".

Of no great revolutionary is that more true than Antonio Gramsci. He was jailed for his political activities from 1926 until the eve of his death in 1937; now the manuscripts of his *Prison Notebooks* have been put on display by the Italian state, in an exhibition running to 10 November in the Italian Cultural Institute in ultra-posh Belgrave Square, London (bit.ly/gram-ex).

A talk to mark the opening of the exhibition was so popular that the Institute removed all chairs from the meeting room and had the audience, of about 300, standing shoulder to shoulder as in a crowded Tube train.

The main talk, by Silvio Pons, president of the Gramsci Foundation in Rome, was a pol-

ished but bland description of the spread of Gramsci's writings, in translations and new editions, since the 1970s. The short speech after Pons's by the Italian ambassador was more political.

The ambassador is a career diplomat, and was chief diplomatic adviser to Mario Monti when Monti was the "technocrat", "above-parties" prime minister of Italy. He mentioned, however, that Gramsci favoured state education giving equal opportunities to working-class students, and supported European unity.

The 33 large-format, hardback manuscript notebooks are a remarkable sight. Almost all the writing is in the format of short observations, often crossed out and replaced by revised versions. The handwriting, even when Gramsci was desperately ill, is always neat, meticulous, tidy, and so are the crossings-out.

One of Gramsci's chief critical comments on the Italian socialist movement of his youth was that it was insufficiently literary. It relied too much on rousing speeches and loose agitational journalism.

Partly inspired by the contrary example of the Bolshevik tradition in Russia, Gramsci set himself to create a new sort of socialist writing: every phrase pondered, honed for precision, thought through carefully before it was set down, reviewed, revised.

"The subaltern classes", he wrote, "have an interest in knowing all truths, even the unpleasant ones, and in avoiding the... deceptions of the upper class and — even more — their own".

Why the 70s shop stewards lost

By Jim Denham

For a brief period in the 1970s, Derek Robinson (who has died, aged 90) was widely regarded as the most powerful trade unionist in Britain.

The so-called "Red Robbo" wasn't a full-time official. He was a shop steward (albeit a senior steward, allowed time off by management, to devote himself full-time, to union duties).

I was a shop steward at the same car plant as Robinson (Longbridge, Birmingham) in the 1970s, and was one of those who went on the picket line when he was sacked in 1979. If some of what I say about Derek seems harsh, it's because it's essential we learn the political lessons of his downfall and that of the shop stewards' movement. I have never doubted or questioned Derek's personal integrity nor his commitment to trade unionism, socialism, and the working class. Although we frequently clashed when we occasionally met in later years, Derek was unfailingly friendly and unsectarian.

When the company went bust the Wilson government promptly nationalised it.

The response of Wilson's government differed dramatically from that of Blair's which presided over the terminal decline and eventual closure of Longbridge (under Rover) between 2000 and 2005. This can be explained in part by the rise of neoliberal economics and the corresponding transformation in official Labour politics. But abstract ideology is not the decisive factor (after all, Heath's Tory government nationalised Rolls Royce in 1971). The crucial factor is the strength of the organised working class and, specifically, within the threatened workplaces. And in 1974 our class was strong and the Longbridge plant was probably the most powerfully organised (as well as the largest) workplace in Britain.

Longbridge had been gradually unionised after the Second World War. Communist Party (CP) members played a central, and in many ways admirable, role. The plant's first recognised union convenor, Dick Etheridge, was a CP member and in those days it seemed a natural step for active, militant trade unionists in the plant to join the Party. By the 1960s, the Party had a factory branch numbering around 50, and sales of the *Daily Worker* (later *Morning Star*) inside the plant (not on the gates) were in the hundreds. Management once tried to prevent sales by seizing a bundle, but were forced to back down by immediate strike action.

The CP's influence went far beyond its formal membership and permeated the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee (JSSC), numbering around 500 stewards from the AEU, TGWU, Vehicle Builders, Electricians and the multitude of smaller white and blue collar manufacturing unions like the Sheet Metal Workers.

Apart from a few bastions of right-wing (or "apolitical") trade unionism, the shop stewards' movement at Longbridge was dominated by the ideas of the CP, even though the Party never had a majority of card carrying members on the JSSC.

When, in the late 1960s and early 70s, the old British Motor Corporation merged with Standard-Triumph and Leyland to form the giant British Leyland Motor Corporation, the influence of the Longbridge-based CP stewards spread throughout the whole combine. The only organised opposition was the much smaller number of Trotskyist and semi-Trot-

skyist stewards grouped around the Socialist Labour League in the Cowley Morris plant.

By now, Etheridge had retired and handed the convenor's job to his protégé, Derek Robinson. When I worked at the plant Etheridge was still remembered with affection even by people with no political sympathy for the CP. Feelings about Robinson tended to be less enthusiastic. In Etheridge's day the CP's role was to be the best and most conscientious union organisers at shop floor level — a task they combined with low-key Stalinist propaganda. When Robinson took over in the early 70s he was immediately faced with a series of crises that demanded political answers and exposed the underlying weaknesses of the CP's approach.

First, there was the question of the abolition of piece-work and the introduction of measured day work (MDW). The shop stewards' movement throughout the motor industry had been built around the piece-work system: stewards determined staffing levels, arranged work patterns, negotiated the "price for the job" and, ultimately, their effectiveness could be judged by the weekly wage packet. Piece-work had many draw-backs, but it did at least ensure that stewards were directly accountable to their members and it gave the union a central role in determining the link between work and payment.

OPPOSITION

Robinson and the CP supported the introduction of MDW, dismissing the widespread shop-floor opposition as "short-sighted", "money-militancy" and (the ultimate put-down in those days) the work of "a bunch of Trots".

What they didn't understand was the vital part piece-work played in keeping the stewards' movement in touch with the membership. Bureaucratic arrogance and high-handed dismissal of shop-floor opinion was to characterise the CP's approach throughout the 70s and finally led to Robinson's downfall.

Nevertheless between 1971 and 1978 it seemed that Robinson and the CP had been right — the workforce enjoyed the security that came with MDW whilst retaining the mutuality and shop-floor organisation that had been built up under piece-work. It seemed like the best of both worlds. Meanwhile, a much bigger crisis was looming: in 1974 the company faced bankruptcy.

The Wilson government decided to nationalise the firm, but the price for the workforce was to be acceptance of the Ryder Report. Ryder recommended bailing out the company but insisted upon far-reaching "rationalisation" of work practices, with the aim of achieving speed-up of production and a "slimming down" of the workforce, though this last point was not spelt out in any detail.

These proposals stood little chance of success without the co-operation of the shop stewards' movement and thus was born "participation". This was a comprehensive scheme to involve stewards, convenors and officials in joint committees with management at almost every level of the company from the shop floor to national level — except that Ryder made it clear that management would retain the final say and full decision-making power.

The shop floor overwhelmingly saw "participation" for what it was: a scheme designed to take stewards off the shop floor and draw them into an unequal "partnership" with management.



Derek Robinson leads a demo in the late 1970s (to his left, Les Huckfield MP)

Robinson and the CP went for the scheme in a big way. As with Measured Day Work, shop-floor opposition was dismissed as an unprincipled alliance of "money-militants", right-wingers and the hated "Trots". Robinson (in an infamous pamphlet of 1975, written jointly with CP theoretician Jon Bloomfield) went so far as to describe participation as "a step towards workers' control".

Robinson and the CP argued now that the company had been nationalised the workforce had a duty to pull their weight and make a go of it. Robinson and the Longbridge Works Committee clamped down on unofficial strikes ("downers") and insisted that the disputes procedure was kept to at all times. "Continuous production" became the gospel propounded by the CP and by Leyland management alike.

When, in 1977, toolmakers throughout Leyland struck for a wage claim that in practice challenged phase two of the Labour government's Social Contract, Robinson and the CP joined forces with the AUEW Executive and the bosses in denouncing the toolmakers and breaking their strike.

The behaviour of Robinson and the CP was not the result of individual treachery or corruption (though that was often how it was regarded on the shop floor): it stemmed from a fundamentally bureaucratic political philosophy that equated nationalisation with socialism and regarded the spontaneous actions of the shop floor with suspicion and hostility. The result of all this for the shop stewards' movement throughout British Leyland (and in Longbridge especially) was nothing short of disastrous. Stewards were seen as little more than the bosses' policemen and an enormous gulf of distrust and cynicism opened up between the plant-based union organisation and the membership.

The rest of the story is tragic history: at the end of 1977 Labour appointed a proven union-basher called Michael Edwardes as chairman of British Leyland. Edwardes immediately announced 40,000 redundancies and the closure of 13 plants. Shop meetings throughout Longbridge voted to oppose the Edwardes plan and yet at the official presentation of the plan the Longbridge senior stewards (along with most other BL union representatives) gave Edwardes a standing ovation!

Edwardes must have realised that the majority of senior stewards in British Leyland were severely out of touch with their members. He dispensed with the soft-soap Ryder approach, drove a coach and horses through participation and, finally (with Thatcher's Tories now in power), thanked Derek Robinson

for his past co-operation by sacking him on a trumped-up charge in November 1979.

The Robinson sacking (in which the Duffy/Boyd leadership of the AEU was complicit) was a traumatic blow to union organisation in Longbridge and throughout BL. In fact, it was nearly a death blow: Leyland bosses gave serious consideration to the idea of withdrawing union recognition throughout the Group and creating a company union. Probably because they realised that they already had a de facto company union in the AEU, they pulled back. But they had won a decisive victory and followed it up with a purge of militants and left-wingers at Longbridge and Cowley in the early 1980s. Union organisation in the company survived but never recovered and was powerless, when in 2000, the then-owners, BMW, "sold" (for the token sum of £10!) Rover Cars and the Longbridge plant to the dodgy asset-strippers of the Phoenix Consortium, who renamed it MG Rover Group.

MODERN

Many financial commentators claimed that the plant was not modern enough and that the company would run out of money within a few years. In April 2005, this happened; the Phoenix Consortium put the MG Rover group into administration, leaving more than 6,000 workers without jobs.

The virtual collapse of the British Leyland shop stewards' movement was not inevitable: it happened because a tremendous strength built up under piecework was frittered away in participation committees; because stewards lost their roots in the shop-floor and became petty bureaucrats. Most of all, it happened because the dominant politics of the movement (i.e., the CP) had no answer to the financial crisis of the company beyond giving full support to everything that flowed from the Ryder Report. In the mid-70s they had the strength and (for a while) the shop-floor support to fight for real workers' control.

The tragic collapse was down to politics, not personal weakness or (as some shop floor workers occasionally suggested) personal corruption. The best of these people — Derek Robinson, for instance — were in fact personally principled and even courageous individuals, who devoted the best years of their lives to trade unionism and socialism, as they understood it.

So I feel I can say now, without any hypocrisy, farewell comrade Derek: you fought for what you believed in and you never sold out.

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!

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

Democracy review details emerge

LABOUR

Labour has officially launched a democracy review. Jeremy Corbyn says he wants the party to become a "movement" and to boost the involvement of previously marginalised groups.

The first deadline of the review is 12 January. At this point it will consider the roles of BAME Labour, Young Labour, and the National Women's conference.

The second phase covers the governance of Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), the role of socialist societies, improving diversity and gender representation, strengthening participation, recruitment and social media.

The third phase covers elections of the leader, composition of the

National Executive Committee, regional structures, freeze dates, policy process including CLP motions, local government, and the trade union link.

The review will seek submissions from CLPs, affiliated unions, other affiliated organisations and the Parliamentary Labour Party and individual members. Submissions to the review will be received by an email and online hub as well as by post. There will be a consultation event held in each region and a member of the review team will visit party units, CLPs and other organisations to observe best practice.

The Momentum Member's Council meeting on 2 December will discuss how a "broad range of voices from across Momentum and the Labour Party can help create

and discuss proposals from the various areas of focus within the review."

Workers' Liberty will work with others in the coming weeks to develop proposals for the review. In the first instance we will refer people to the "A Living Breathing Party" submission to the 2011 Labour Party Democracy taskforce (bit.ly/lb-p).

Previous reviews have effectively ignored all submissions. We hope this review is genuinely participatory and also looks and engages with the submissions it receives. In the coming weeks we may need to apply pressure to ensure this happens.

The whole process should end by 29 June, with the review panel set to launch a report at Labour Party Conference 2018.

Crack six big eggs to make climate omelet

By Neil Laker

To limit the devastation of climate change, we need a rapid move to end dependence on fossil fuels. But what the Labour Party is currently advocating on this question is insufficient in urgency, scale and ambition.

Its present policy fails the working class employed in carbon-intensive jobs, as well as the millions from whom energy companies draw their scandalous profits. We need democratic control of energy as a measure both to fulfil our obligations to minimise climate change and as a positive step towards full socialist ecological planning.

During this year's election, Labour said it would:

- introduce an energy price cap
- create manufacturing and energy jobs through large renewable energy projects
- "support the creation of publicly owned, locally accountable energy companies and co-operatives to rival existing private energy suppliers, with at least one in every region"
- legislate "to permit publicly owned local companies to purchase the regional grid infrastructure, and to ensure that national and regional grid infrastructure is brought into public ownership over time". (*For the Many Not the Few*)

This was a major advance from the timidity of Labour's previous policy. Yet it remains far from what is necessary to reduce fossil fuel consumption in time to avoid major tipping points in the Earth System.

One major issue is that Labour's strategy will maintain a competitive market framework in both energy generation and supply. The new public companies will compete against the existing suppliers, allowing the Big Six companies [1] which dominate UK energy chance to continue profiting from climate change. It dangerously leaves emissions reduction to the dynamics of



a market, rather taking control of that process.

These issues would be most effectively resolved through abolition of market relations in energy by taking energy infrastructure and those companies under democratic control.

We want their assets in public hands, and the workers in their employ to become responsible to the environment and to ending of fuel poverty, not the shareholders of the Big Six.

JOB

We don't want to put those workers out of jobs by competing with them in an energy market. Luckily that is not the choice.

We could have a process involving the phasing-out of carbon and modernisation of infrastructure with re-skilling at the forefront. This would allow for the development of both large scale and community-owned renewable projects developing at the expense of fossil fuel energy generation.

Climate change underlines the need for the development of the British left towards unapologetic class politics and transformation of the economic relations which have led to ecological crisis. But the current approach from Labour on en-

ergy reflects the impasse of their wider economic strategy

Their policies avoid major confrontations with powerful interests (in this case the Big Six; in a wider sense the super rich and financial class) to appear amicable to both wealthy and dispossessed. But advancing workers' interests and delivering on climate justice with the necessary urgency requires far more than that. It requires renewed initiative to organise workers in polluting industries, while supporting climate justice politics in their unions.

It requires ending the private ownership model which makes carbon emissions and the destruction they entail profitable.

And it means a shift to a new way of looking at the world based on the value of lives and ecosystems, starting with democratic ownership and ecological planning in industry.

We need to crack six big eggs to make a climate justice omelet.

[1] The big six: British Gas, EDF, E-on, Npower, SSE, Scottish Power. They own and run over 92% of operations in UK energy provision. Since 2007 their profits have increased tenfold.

Events

9-12 November

Historical Materialism conference
SOAS, London WC1H 0XG
www.historicalmaterialism.org

Monday 13 November

Is the Russian revolution something to celebrate?
6.30pm, The Packhorse Pub, 208 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX
bit.ly/2zob0R7

Wednesday 15 November

National demo: Free education now — Tax the rich
1pm, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX
bit.ly/2xJU6IN

Friday 17 November

Decoding capitalism: 150 years of Marx's Capital
7.30pm, Room 675, Institute of Education, London WC1H 0AL
bit.ly/NovForum

Saturday 18 November

Shut Down Yarl's Wood Demonstration
12noon, Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, Bedford MK44 1FD
bit.ly/2j6DQzp

9-10 December

NCAFC winter conference
TBC
bit.ly/2zoUNv3

Have an event you want listing? Email: solidarity@workersliberty.org

London Living Wage up to £10.20

By a Picturehouse worker

Picturehouse workers at the Ritzy cinema in Brixton, and East Dulwich, Crouch End, Hackney and Central Picturehouses struck on Sunday 5 and Monday 6 November for the start of Living Wage week.

On 6 November the new Living Wage was announced, and in London it rose from £9.75 an hour to £10.20 an hour. Striking on the day of this announcement meant the strike gained national press coverage, including on ITV news, as the press covered the raise in the Living Wage.

Strikes completely closed the Ritzy cinema in Brixton and partly closed other sites. The Mayor of Hackney joined picket lines at Hackney Picturehouse. Other sites had strong delegations from CLPs and trade unions branches, which helped buoy up striking workers morale.

In the first picket lines, a year ago, workers often picketed alone.

In other strike news, the in house staff forum, which is used to rubber



stamp company pay offers and act as legal block to BECTU recognition, appears to be rebelling against its role of being the company's lackey. At an emergency general meeting last week members removed all elected official and all executive committee members from their positions, paving the way for fresh elections for pro-Living Wage candidates.

A move which may well remove the company's fig leaf of

approval for their pay offers, which will only embarrass the company further.

Fundraising events for the Picturehouse strike:

- Poets on the picket line hosts 'A cellarfull of solidarity' on Saturday 18 November: bit.ly/2yEsObG
- Fundraiser as part of *The Clarion* magazine's first birthday party on Thursday 23 November: bit.ly/2yDvzdh

Tube driver Danny Davis reinstated

From Tubeworker bulletin

Tube worker Danny Davis will be reinstated with a guaranteed job as a train driver from 12 months after the date he was sacked for a routine error ordinarily treated as a performance and coaching issue, rather than a disciplinary matter.

He is already about six months into that period, having been recently reinstated as a CSA.

This is a great win for workers' solidarity. Undoubtedly we'd all prefer to see Danny reinstated as a driver immediately, but the fact is that forcing a previously intransi-

gent management first to reinstate him as a CSA, and then to guarantee reinstatement as a driver after a fixed period, is still a victory. What forced this climb down from the company was the thumping majority for strikes secured by RMT Central Line drivers.

The campaign in the depots has been exemplary. Workplaces were plastered with propaganda and communication, making sure everyone knew the facts of the case. Members were engaged and encouraged to take an active role, speaking to friends and colleagues to raise the profile of the case and ensure everyone returned their bal-

lot papers. The leadership of workplace reps across Central Line depots was key.

The lesson for all of us, wherever we work and whatever our grade, is that solidarity is our best weapon. When we stand up and say that we will not let the bosses ride roughshod over us, whether on an individual basis or collectively, and back that up with votes for strikes, we can force the employer back.

Tubeworker extends our congratulations to Danny and all reps, activists, and members at Central Line train depots for a battle well fought.

Capita pension nine day strike

By Charlotte Zalens

Workers employed by Capita across the country struck for nine days between 28 October and 5 November in a dispute over the ending of their current defined benefit pension scheme.

The Unite union has calculated that a 35 year old worker's pension

would be halved under the new scheme, and a 60 year-old who planned to retire at 65 would lose about £1,650 a year.

Capita handles outsourced contracts from a large number of private and public sector organisations. The workers affected by the pensions change work for Capita Life & Pensions Regulated Services Ltd, and a few for Capita

IT Services Ltd in Birmingham, Reading, Bristol, Manchester, Stirling and Belfast.

Workers voted by 95% in favour of strikes, on a 72% turnout, when talks at ACAS broke down.

• Messages of support can be sent via their Facebook page: bit.ly/2lZqLJg

British Airways workers win pay rise

By Gemma Short

Mixed fleet workers at British Airways have accepted a pay deal, ending a year long dispute.

The final deal, which was ac-

cepted by 84%, will give workers pay rises of between £1,404 and £2,908 by March 2018. British Airways has also returned travel concessions and entitlements to bonus schemes returned to workers who struck. The victimisation of work-

ers who struck by removing these benefits had previously been the reason workers had rejected a deal.

The pay rise for Mixed Fleet workers after 85 strike days will boost the morale of others fighting over pay.

No money for equal pay?

By Dale Street

On Monday 6 November Glasgow City Council finally released the workforce pay data needed for talks aimed at resolving the Council's long-running equal pay dispute.

The dispute centres on implementation of the Single Status Agreement (SSA), intended to end the historic discrimination against women in local authority rates of pay. Over a decade later the council still has 11,000 SSA claims unresolved.

In Scotland as a whole, there are nearly 27,000 pending or unresolved SSA equal pay claims, 90% of which are from female workers.

A report by the Scottish Accounts Commission found that the steps taken by Scottish local authorities to deal with SSA claims had "kept men's salaries higher than women performing equal roles."

Long-running legal proceedings against Glasgow City Council saw the Court of Session rule in August that the Council had failed to demonstrate that its job-evaluation scheme was fit-for-purpose in identifying and rooting out discriminatory rates of pay.

The response to the ruling by the SNP-run Council was to apply for leave to appeal to the Supreme

Court — despite the SNP election promise only a few months earlier that it would resolve all equal pay claims.

At the same time the Glasgow Council SNP group is claiming that its real aim is to resolve the claims by way of negotiations, even though, until last Monday, it had failed to release the workforce pay data needed for those negotiations.

The SNP Group is arguing that it is only seeking leave to appeal to the High Court, as opposed to actually appealing — although, of course, an appeal cannot be lodged without leave to appeal first being granted.

Agreeing to the SSA claims would cost the City Council between £500 and £750 millions. But thanks to the cuts in the funding of local authorities imposed by the SNP government in Holyrood, SNP-run Glasgow does not have that money.

Thus, when the new SNP administration settled the year-long dispute with school janitors, council officials told schools that the cost of the pay rise could be met by taking money from the Pupil Equity Fund — created to improve levels of educational attainment by pupils from poorer backgrounds.

PCS pay ballot returns yes vote

By Gemma Short

A consultative ballot on pay by civil service union PCS has returned 80% in favour of strikes on a 49% turnout.

This turnout is higher than many sector wide ballots PCS has carried

out before and, whilst just shy of the required 50% turnout under the Trade Union Act, is good news.

Union activists are calling for the union to use information about turnouts in different sectors to target organising for real ballots.

Showroom cleaners reinstated

By Peggy Carter

Cleaners working at Ferrari and Maserati car showrooms in south Kensington have won the London Living Wage after strikes and protests.

Two cleaners were sacked after striking. After over 60 people descended on the showroom in a protest organised by their union, the United Voices of the World,

they were reinstated. However the company still only offered a small interim pay increase while delaying implementation of the Living Wage.

Cleaners rejected this offer, and the company came back to offer an immediate implementation of the London Living Wage, with subsequent annual increases in the month following the Living Wage announcement in November each year.

49 strikes for housing workers

By Gemma Short

Housing maintenance workers employed by contractor Mears have launched a program of 49 strikes due to last from November until February 2018.

The first strike will be for 48 hours on 16 November.

Workers have already struck for 40 days in a dispute over pay, with some workers being paid as much as £3500 less than workers doing the same job on another Mears contract.

The strikes are scheduled for a time where bad weather usually results in more housing repair work needing to be done.



Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 453 8 November 2017 50p/£1

Madrid tries to bludgeon Catalonia

By Martin Thomas

The people of Catalonia are caught up in a macabre game of bluff and who-blinks-first.

The democratic way out is for the people of Catalonia to be able to vote in a fair referendum on independence. Previous polls have indicated no majority for secession, and many on the left in Catalonia (for good reasons, we think) oppose creating a new border; but if there is now a majority for separation, then Madrid, and the EU, should respect it.

Over 100 years ago, in a classic statement of Marxist and democratic ideas on disputes between nations, Lenin described the procedures in the secession of Norway from Swedish rule — a referendum in Norway which the Swedish government respected — as a model.

More to the point for us, he cited as a model the attitude of the Swedish workers — understanding that Norwegian workers might or might not back secession, but insisting that the Swedish government respect the Norwegians' choice (bit.ly/norwm). That was and still is a model for preserving and developing working-class solidarity and unity across national divides.

The Catalan government declared independence to call Madrid's bluff. Madrid responded by imposing direct rule.

It has jailed eight members of the Catalan government, to face charges including rebellion and sedition, and issued an arrest warrant for Catalan president Carles Puigdemont, who has fled to Belgium.

Puigdemont and four Catalan



ministers are due to appear in a Brussels court on 17 November to oppose extradition. Around 200 separatist mayors from Catalonia are arriving in Brussels on 7 November to lobby in favour of Puigdemont.

The Catalan government hopes that Madrid's repression will turn people against Spain, and rally a majority for a pro-independence coalition in elections to be held in Catalonia, by Madrid's decision, on 21 December.

Madrid's conservative government hopes, on the contrary, that its heavy hand will scare off tepidly pro-independence people, and create an anti-independence majority in those elections. It's impossible to say, at least from this

distance, which way it will go.

So far Madrid has gained some points. Catalonia's police chief, put on charges by Madrid after the 1 October referendum, has advised his ranks to obey Madrid's orders.

NO DEFIANCE

The Catalan government has made no attempt to continue exercising authority and defying direct rule.

Tuesday 7 November, the day we go to press, is the deadline for the registration of coalitions for the 21 December poll, and it looks unlikely that the pro-secession parties can get the broad alliance they want.

Catalunya en Comú, the leftish

party of Barcelona mayor Ada Colau, is standing against the push for independence and the imposition of direct rule and the jailings, as well as against welfare cuts by Puigdemont's government. Its coalition in Barcelona city council with the PSC (Catalan branch of the social-democratic PSOE, which has supported direct rule) may break up.

Podemos, Spain's big left-wing party, with roots in the Indignados anti-austerity movement of 2011, is divided. Some of its Catalan MPs backed the declaration of independence, and so does the Anticapitalistas faction within Podemos, which includes supporters of the "Mandelite" Fourth International. But the main

Podemos leaders do not.

The leader of Podemos in Catalonia, Albano Dante Fachin, resigned on 6 November, and Podemos members in Catalonia voted 72%-28% to participate on 21 December in coalition with Catalunya en Comu and "sister political forces."

"These forces back neither the declaration of independence nor the application of article 155 [direct rule]."

Across Spain, an opinion poll taken on 2-11 October and published 7 November shows continuing losses for the ruling PP and for the PSOE and Podemos, and gains for the less-conservative neoliberal Spanish unionists of Ciudadanos.

Subscribe to Solidarity

Trial sub (6 issues) £7
Six months (22 issues) £22 waged , £11 unwaged
One year (44 issues) £44 waged , £22 unwaged
European rate: 6 months €30 One year €55

Name

Address

I enclose £

Cheques (£) to "AWL" or make £ and Euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub
Return to 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

Or subscribe with a standing order

Pay £5 a month to subscribe to Solidarity or pay us more to make an ongoing contribution to our work

To: (your bank) (address)

Account name (your name)

Account number Sort code

Please make payments as follows to the debit of my account:
Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB (60-83-01)

Amount: £.....

To be paid on the day of (month) 20.... (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing.
This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date Signature

Contact us

020 7394 8923

solidarity@workersliberty.org

Write to us: The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

Solidarity editorial: Michael Elms, Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent (editor), Gemma Short, and Martin Thomas

Printed by Trinity Mirror