



Labour conference: oppose Brexit



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He has been pushed back. He can be stopped.

That calls for a Labour Party and a labour movement with a clear voice for workers' rights, for migrant rights, for free movement, for social and ecological levelling-up across Europe, against Brexit, for Remain and Transform.

Not for mumbling, triangulation, and equivocation.

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Bolton gone, dangers stay

By **Barrie Hardy**

The prospect of Donald Trump with his grubby little finger on the nuclear button horrified millions when he was elected.

That fear factor rose still further when he made John Bolton his National Security Adviser in April last year.

Bolton is a dangerous ultra-nationalist who believes that the USA has exclusive power to do anything it wants to advance its geopolitical interests. He sees the principal vehicle for that as war.

A psychopathic warmonger, Bolton was a major mover behind Bush junior's disastrous invasion of Iraq which unleashed a Pandora's Box of evil from which the region is still far from recovering. His term under Trump saw the US leaving the UN Human Rights Council because in Bolton's mind respect for human rights was a roadblock in the way of total US power.

In spite of America still being embroiled in several conflicts worldwide, Bolton wanted more wars against targets which included Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua and even China.

Bolton did everything he could to push the Trump administration into war against Iran in particular and nearly succeeded last June.

However, Trump called off an air strike against Iran in response to their shooting down a US drone with ten minutes to spare.

"John Bolton is the kind of man with whom I would want to stand at Armageddon," said one of his right wing Republican mentors at the start of Bolton's political career.

Yet Trump doesn't fancy going to Armageddon just now — at least this side of next year's Presidential election. He still believes he has a chance of winning and avoiding the jail time which could result from the various investigations into him and his clan if he loses.

Bolton was appointed in the first place to undo the Iran nuclear deal brokered by Obama. Once that was achieved two choices were available — war with Iran or a new Trump style deal.

A major plank in Trump's 2016 campaign was to extricate the US from foreign entanglements. To give his re-election bid a chance he is now flailing around for a magical deal with one or more of American imperialism's long standing adversaries.

Obviously unfit for high office even by bourgeois standards, Trump runs his foreign policy as if it were a TV game show. It's all about "making the deal". He's trumpeted up his love fest with murderous Stalinist tyrant Kim

Jong-Un as a great foreign policy achievement and this seems to be a kind of template for similar arrangements with others.

The rapprochement with Kim was anathema to Bolton whose own "solution" to the North Korea problem was to nuke it.

Then there was the prospect of the Taliban coming to tea at the presidential retreat of Camp David on the eve of 9/11, where a deal could be concluded allowing the pullout of US troops from Afghanistan. Bolton was pulling his grey hair out at the very idea of such a get-together.

So Bolton's ouster ushers in a period where Trump seeks to shake hands with enemies and announce "breakthrough" deals. Things could of course all go belly up again if deals fail to materialise and Trump decides to bang the war drum again as an alternative way of energising his base.

American socialists must resist Trump's warmongering antics and redouble their efforts to remove this dangerous mountebank from office.

Their war must be against poverty, ill health and inequality, in a country which is now more receptive to socialist ideas than it has been since the late 1940s.

Paris metro strike on pensions

By **the NPA**

A strike on RATP (the Paris metro) has got the ball rolling in the fight against pension reforms in France.

After 12 years of lethargy — at least on the surface — the strike has made a smashing comeback in Parisian transport: 100% of strikers on the metro, 60% on buses and in maintenance workshops. The capital was paralysed on Friday 13 September. Well dug, you old mole!

Two days earlier, the traffic forecasts announced by the manage-

ment had the effect of a bomb, triggering the media comedy: RATP agents would be privileged, retiring on average with 3700 euros!

"3700 euros? I earn 2000 euros by working staggered hours and public holidays with work periods of 6 days in a row!" corrects a striking driver interviewed during the rally in front of the company headquarters. "Retirement at age 50? A legend. Many leave at 58. Not to mention the stories of the reductions", confirms another.

The work regime is no longer so special, except for the lower start-

ing age. Leaving early, but with what? Since the contribution period is the same as for all employees, the reduction works to penalise earlier retirement through a lower pension for the same contribution.

The pension is calculated over the last 6 months – a "speciality" that still concerns more than 5.5 million civil servants.

• This report on the Paris metro workers' strike appeared in the newspaper of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and was translated from the French by Luke Neal.

FE strikers to join Climate Strike



Climate

By **Vicki Morris**

UCU members at Nottingham FE College are continuing their industrial dispute against the imposition of draconian new contracts.

Their first strike day out of a planned 15 was on 11 September. Their next strike days are 19-20 September.

The trade unionists are planning to link up with the climate campaigners on the 20th. They are printing a leaflet drawing the links

between their struggle and the political fight to save the planet.

Supportive students are working to maximise the student turnout on the picket line and then in Nottingham's Market Square, where there will be a Climate Strike rally from 11am-2pm.

We look forward to more unions looking for ways to support the young people's campaign for their future, and find ways around the anti-union laws which aim to stifle our voices.

• Moret@ucunottmcollege

Lewisham Climate Emergency Assembly

Friday 27 September 2019, 5pm-8pm

at Goldsmiths, University of London, 8 Lewisham Way, London SE14 6NW

bit.ly/lew-27-9



HK spirits stay high

By **Chen Ying**

It's 100 days since the protests in Hong Kong burst onto the TV screens around the world. Since last week [9-14 Sep], the Government has started to make some moves to address the deep structural problems of land and housing, and attempting to copy Macron's rounds of public consultation.

Even Beijing has issued a statement indicating that young protestors with heavy student loans and poor job prospects faced with no housing solutions could do better by seeking jobs in China!

Hong Kong's richest tycoon, Lee Ka Shing, has appealed to the Hong Kong government to mend bridges with the "future masters and mistresses of the city". However, the Hong Kong police force continues to ride roughshod over protestors and blatantly show its bias whenever democracy protestors clash with China loyalists in various guises on the streets.

The Hong Kong government still will not yield over the most substantial demand – setting up a Commission of Inquiry.

After the relative calm of the mid-autumn Moon Festival on Friday night, last Sunday [15th] saw yet another massive demonstration which took over the main streets of Causeway Bay, Wanchai and Central.

This time the march went ahead without police permission, and was therefore deemed illegal. However the sheer size of the march meant that the police could do nothing other than pick off demonstrators towards the end of the day.

The most militant sections of the demonstration are now equipped with plenty of Molotov cocktails, and one of the newly deployed water-cannon vehicles was briefly set alight.

The demonstrators have turned on the Mass Transit Railway sys-

tem, angry about the MTR's management decisions to close stations and stop trains seemingly to aid the police, with the bitter memories of riot police entering Prince's station on 31 August in huge numbers, beating and arresting protestors and passengers indiscriminately.

Station entrances, corridors, ticketing machines etc have been extensively vandalised and set alight. It is unfortunate that the protestors have not yet managed to reach out to the MTR ground-staff and their union. If only the MTR workers can be mobilised alongside the protest movement a wider strike movement could spread and bring the city to a halt.

A section of the protest movement is waving the colonial flag of Hong Kong, the Union Jack, and the USA flag, marching to the US and UK consulate buildings, hoping to bring some pressure on US and UK governments to take action in support of the protest. Many holders of the British National Overseas (BNO) passports are hoping that the UK Government would allow them to have the right of abode in the UK.

This sentiment is naive, as the track record of the UK Government over many of its former colonies have shown. The protest movement badly needs its own emblem rather than rely on those other flags.

However, it now has its own anthem, a brilliantly composed song recorded by a 150-strong orchestra of volunteers. The spirit of resistance remains high as we enter the last two weeks before the People's Republic's 70th anniversary on 1 October.

• bit.ly/hk-rock — rock music version showing the orchestra playing with gas masks on
• bit.ly/hk-can — Cantonese version
• bit.ly/hk-eng — English version
• bit.ly/hk-cyhrs — a Cantonese version of "Can You hear the People Sing?"

On the streets 20 September!

Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

Students in hundreds of locations across the UK will walk out on 20 September on a global climate strike. Students in over 100 countries will be participating, and it looks likely to be the biggest yet.

This time, prominent school strikers have called on workers to join them.

On 8-11 September the Trades Union Congress — representing 5.5 million workers in affiliated trade unions — voted to support the 20 September climate strike, and called on affiliated unions to show solidarity with 30-minute walk-outs.

On 16 September, a poll found that 61% of teachers support students missing lessons for protests. The National Education Union — the main teachers' union — has

voiced support for the strikes and the 30 minute walk-out.

Restrictive legislation and a timid trade union movement means that teachers, like many other workers, will as a whole not be joining for a full strike on 20 September. Indeed, many teachers who privately support the walkouts and are members of the NEU will likely end up enforcing policies which prevent school student strikers from leaving.

In some places teachers and other workers are organising lunchtime protests or photoshoots. Some will then join local demonstrations or even stay out all afternoon.

This all provides an important step for further action around climate and workplace issues. Some workplaces are seeing large turn-outs, often larger than they have seen on more “conventional” workplace issues, such as pay or conditions, for years or longer.

However big or small an action has been organised in your workplace, school or campus, the impor-

tant thing is to use it to get organised for more.

Plan and discuss with your colleagues how to hold even bigger and bolder actions in future months. Let *Solidarity* know how it went, and about future plans, to inspire others around the country.

Turn attention to the workplace and the employer. Are there workplace environmental issues which you could organise around? Doing so can raise environmental consciousness, the idea of workers' control of our workplaces, and can highlight some of the class dimension of climate change. It can build confidence and organisation to fight on other workplace or environmental issues.

Turn attention to the social roots and answers of global warming. Bring motions for a “socialist Green New Deal” to your union branch. Start a reading group around on Workers' Liberty's climate pamphlet (workersliberty.org/climate-pamphlet).



Rekindling workplace climate action

Climate

By Paul Vernadsky

Union climate action is still taking place. Union environment reps in a variety of unions are organising audits, inspections, member meetings and newsletters in their workplaces.

A number of national unions — notably PCS, Prospect, Unison, UCU and Unite — still organise networks of green reps and provide them with guides and campaign packs. Even more unions provide some training on environmental issues as part of their courses.

Yet previous surveys indicated more than 1,000 green union reps active across workplaces. At present the number of activists is far smaller and the scale of action often limited.

A decade ago there was high level TUC coordination of green reps networks, with useful reports, conferences and other resources, such things are almost entirely absent at present. Over the last decade of economic downturn and subsequent Tory-led government austerity, TUC leaders have consciously downgraded climate campaigning as a priority.

The recent upsurge in climate protest has triggered a resurgence of interest in these issues within the trade union movement in the UK. The recent TUC Congress carried resolutions supporting the 20 September climate action and re-

newed calls for the public ownership of key polluting industries.

Can that spur new workplace activity?

The Labour Research Department's latest booklet, *Union action on climate change — a trade union guide*, has a comprehensive summary that activists should assimilate to guide their own activity.

Some reps and officials are still negotiating “workplace transition agreements”, “sustainable framework agreements” or similar arrangements with their employers. The LRD guide highlights a multi-union agreement negotiated at the Devonport Royal Dockyard in 2016. Other examples of very active large workplaces where green reps are doing useful work include the National Library of Scotland and at Surrey County Council.

National trade unions and union-based campaigns have continued to produce valuable reports on industrial issues with a wider climate perspective. PCS union has been particularly prolific in recent years.

Unison has produced *Power to the People* — how to achieve zero emissions through public ownership of the big six — and other reports, such as on hydrogen. There are important guides opposing fracking from the TUC and PCS. Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED) has published weighty reports on the public ownership of renewable energy and public transport.

The LRD guide gives useful insights into the current industrial landscape in the UK. There are cur-

rently 15 nuclear reactors generating around 21% of its electricity, but almost half of this capacity is to be retired by 2025.

It also briefs us on a whole range of health and safety concerns, both for the public and for workers, such as clean air and chemicals exposure, where unions can campaign successfully for the wider interest.

This new LRD booklet demonstrates that there is still life in the unions on environmental matters. However it is clear by comparison with previous editions (in 2007, 2009, and 2012) that union activity on climate change has been thrown backwards.

One consequence of this has been the disappearance of campaigning around winning legal rights for union reps to take action at work on environmental matters, similar to the rights gained by safety reps. This is a crucial area of the anti-union laws and positive rights that much of the trade union movement appear to have forgotten. One of the virtues of the Free Our Unions campaign has been to keep alive the links between these issues.

Another consequence has been the emergence of what might be called “energy workers sectionalism” about climate issues. The 2018 TUC Congress carried a resolution, driven by GMB, Prospect, Unite and Unison, which stated that energy workers “should be paramount and central to the development of all TUC policies on energy, industrial strategy and climate change”.

This was a slap in the face for

workers in other sectors, ranging from transport, education, health, fire and civil service, with a significant industrial stake in environmental matters. Giving UK energy workers a veto makes no sense for the political economy of climate change, which is global and interdependent.

The statement these four unions produced last year, along with the TUC's own report, *A Just Transition to a greener, fairer economy*, only compounded that sectionalism. Both conveniently ignored widespread union policy for the public ownership of energy and other carbon-polluting sectors. They failed to explain what the end point of the “transition” will look like and fudged the means by which climate targets might be met.

These backward steps underline the need for rank and file organising within and across the trade union movement on climate politics

There are some existing campaigns, such as TUED, the Campaign against Climate Change and Trade Union Clean Air Network, which have continued to promote a radical climate politics. We are not starting from scratch. But the level of organisation is lower than a decade ago.

This could change very quickly if we can mobilise workers in large numbers.

A working class-based climate movement is irreplaceable. It is the job of socialist activists at work to make it happen.

Cambridge Workers' Climate Action

By a Cambridge science teacher and UCU activist

In solidarity with the youth strikes and aiming to build a worker-led campaign against climate change, *Solidarity* readers in Cambridge have taken the initiative to launch a “Cambridge Workers Climate Action” campaign.

Whilst a major initial target of this campaign will be encouraging university workers in scientific disciplines to take action on 20 September, efforts are being made to orient the campaign more widely — engaging with local shopworkers, catering staff and construction workers. Climate change is a class issue, and we need to unite all workers in fighting it.

The first campaign action will be a large solidarity strike photo on 20 September, for which bulletins are being prepared. Over 250 leaflets were delivered to various workplaces last week inviting all nearby workers to join, and UCU reps have been sending emails and making announcements at staff meetings in their various departments.

The campaign will be holding a larger meeting early into the start of the next term, with the aim of linking up student and worker activists to take climate action.

The tragedy of Arthur Scargill



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Arthur Scargill emerged from semi-retirement from politics to speak at a meeting of the Communist Party of Britain's wretched little pro-Brexit front organisation Leave Fight Transform (LeFT) in Brighton on 11 September, alongside Eddie Dempsey (the man who said Tommy Robinson supporters were right to hate the "liberal left") and other assorted xenophobes, nationalists and social conservatives.

According to the *Morning Star* Scargill said that "every single MP who wants us to go back into Europe should be opposed." That would be the majority of Labour MPs, then, Arthur?

It's easy to mock Arthur Scargill.

These days he only gets to speak at the crankiest of Stalinist events. Scargill has so burnt his bridges with the NUM and the broad left of the labour movement that his name is never mentioned at Durham miners' gala or at other miners' strike commemorations. Yet he was a decisive figure in the great strike of 1984-5.

There are those on the would-be "left" who

will willingly attempt to defend people accused of rape, individuals who beat their partners, those who think there is vast Jewish conspiracy against Corbyn, and elements that think trans people are mentally ill.

Scargill seems to have almost no-one to advocate for him. Not even many of the Stalinists he hangs round with. Perhaps they're embarrassed by this reminder of how the Stalinist and reformist left squandered the power and influence it once had in British politics.

Yet he was a trade union leader who helped lead a strike that brought down a Tory government (1974) and correctly understood that Thatcher was out to smash the unions and that they needed to fight back.

A SERIOUS FIGHTER

We may criticise some of the tactics he used in the 1984-5 miners' strike, but we cannot dispute that he gave real leadership and was serious about wanting to defeat the Tories.

In March 2014 ex-miner John Cunningham attended the memorial meeting for the two Yorkshire miners killed in the strike, Davy Jones and Joe Green. This event is held every year at the Barnsley Headquarters of the NUM and acquired particular poignancy that year as it coincided with the 30th anniversary of the strike.

John wrote in *Solidarity*:

"Arthur Scargill was in attendance but it was noteworthy (and significant) that he remained a peripheral figure being greeted by only a few of those attending. He was not addressed or greeted from the platform, though as Honorary Life President of the NUM it might be expected, as a courtesy if nothing else, that his presence would be acknowledged. Scargill, once the hero of the miners, now cuts a rather sad, isolated figure and this is a complex post-1985 story.

"At the risk of paraphrasing, Karl Marx once wrote that the great figures of history appear first as tragedy and then as farce. However, if the outcome of the 84-5 strike can be regarded, at one level, as a tragedy, then Scargill's post-85 trajectory can only be viewed as an even deeper tragedy.

"His post-1985 decision to try and build a political organisation — the so-called Socialist Labour Party — turned out to be a disaster and created nothing more than a pathetic, personal bandwagon which spluttered briefly before the wheels fell off. Riddled with Stalinist politics and practice and some of the worst sectarianism imaginable, it has no meaningful existence today".

Back in 1983 (even before the great miners' strike) the forerunner of *Solidarity* (*Socialist Organisation*) condemned Scargill's attacks on the independent Polish union movement Solidarnosc, but also identified the root cause of Scargill's tragic error (nationalism) and de-

nounced the hypocrisy of many of his critics within the labour movement:

"It's no news that Scargill has a scandalous attitude to Solidarnosc. ... [he fails to see that] the working class is a world class. The motto, 'An injury to one is an injury to all', applies world-wide. Yet Arthur Scargill clearly sees class struggle as just British workers versus British bosses.

"That's why he can write one third of the world's workers — those who live in the Stalinist states — out of the class struggle, allotting them no role but to support their 'socialist' rulers..."

"The same nationalism explains why Arthur Scargill, alongside his industrial militancy, supports a not-at-all-militant programme of import controls, withdrawal from the EEC, and siege economy. He is looking for 'socialism in one country', and since that is impossible he ends up with a recipe of 'capitalism in one country'".

That is what we need to remember these days when we think of Scargill. His nationalist backwardness on Brexit (and immigration, to judge by a letter published in the *Guardian* on 29 August 2017) cannot be forgiven. We also remember his relatively principled role within the UK labour movement of the 1970s and 80s.

Which makes his present-day role (such as it is) in politics all the more tragic.

Know Nothings



Letters

I would like to add a couple of comments to Barrie Hardy's review "Sweden in the 1930s: a shithole country".

Barrie mentions the strikes in Adalen in the 1930s. The Swedish director Bo Widerburg made an interesting film featuring these events: *Adalen 31* (1969). I haven't seen it for a long time but if you can find a DVD check it out. Widerburg also directed a film about

Joe Hill in 1971.

Barrie mentions the Native American Party, noting that they were "appropriately dubbed the Know Nothings".

No doubt they were as thick as planks but their name, as far as I am aware, doesn't originate in their undoubted lack of intelligence.

It comes from the fact whenever members were asked a question they would automatically reply, "I know nothing that is in our political programme that conflicts with the US Constitution" (or something similar).

John Cunningham

Labour selections suspended



Letters

Labour activists in Nottingham have been told that Labour's parliamentary selections have been suspended, apparently on the authority of the General Secretary, while the Party focuses on managing trigger ballots.

A comrade well-informed on such matters tells me:

"It was expected that some moderate MPs in safe seats would be triggered by local members [under the new 'trigger ballot' procedure to decide whether to have a selection contest] and have to face reselection. If that happened, it would be a good opportunity for the Leader's Office and the unions to get their candidates into nice safe seats.

"But several MPs thought to be vulnerable to the trigger have (easily) survived it. Therefore, the suspicion is that those at the top are looking at other options to get their people into safe seats (Nottingham East being one)" — i.e. to make sure selections can't be completed until an imminent general election allows the NEC [National Executive] to decide them on emergency grounds.

I also hear that Unite and GMB have already decided the candidates they want shooed in by the National Executive and have shared out the regions.

This stinks. It looks possible that Enfield North are continuing with their selection. Whether they are flouting the General Secretary's instruction or not, I don't know.

Ralph Peters, Nottingham

Raising £25,000 by 9 December

Vote Leave had their offices in Westminster Tower, a big new office block on the south side of Thames, near Parliament.

The Brexit Party has its in an older but high-grade building just the other side of Parliament. Rents in Victoria St are about £60 per sq ft. In its first three months of existence, it got over £1 million in donations.

The internationalists campaigning against Brexit, for workers' unity, and for a socialist Europe — we, Workers' Liberty — do not need big salaries and glossy offices.

But we do need an office.

For the last 11 years we have had a unit on an industrial estate owned by Southwark council (rent: about £15 per sq ft).

Now the council has deliberately let the leases on all the units run out, and talks of selling off the space to property developers.

We don't know when, but soon we're likely to need new office space, money to pay (probably) a higher rent, cash to cover moving, renovations, and adjustments.

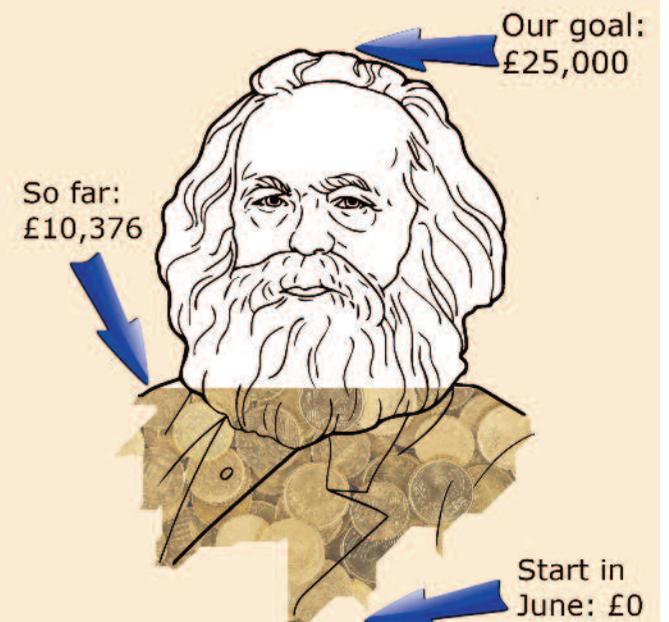
Our fund drive total is now up to £10,376 but this last week has been the

thinnest for a while.

No doubt readers have been preoccupied with preparations for the 20 September climate strike, and the 21-25 September Labour Party conference, but the result has been no new donations this last week.

We are working to raise another £14,624 by 9 December.

• www.workersliberty.org/donate





Labour: oppose Brexit

Boris Johnson is still trying to do his “poundshop Mussolini” act and push through decisions against the duly-voted will of Parliament and against majority opinion in the electorate.

He has been pushed back. He can be stopped.

That calls for a Labour Party and a labour movement with a clear voice for workers' rights, for migrant rights, for free movement, for social and ecological levelling-up across Europe, against Brexit, for Remain and Transform.

Not for mumbling, triangulation, and equivocation.

Johnson has been defeated in every vote he's called in Parliament. The condemnation of him as a blustering opportunist by former Tory prime minister David Cameron reflects a sizeable chunk of the Tory party which has turned against him.

He has been heckled almost everywhere he's gone. His shutdown of Parliament has been ruled illegal by the highest court in Scotland, and that ruling may be confirmed by the Supreme Court sitting 17-19 September.

SERIOUS

Leading figures in the EU dismiss Johnson's claim that he has a chance of getting a Brexit deal before 31 October, and say he hasn't even put a serious proposal, let alone got near getting it agreed.

But still Johnson stands on the high ground of the unelected machinery of government. There will be a general election soon. Labour can win that election. We can get a new public vote on the available Brexit formulas vs Remain, and stop Brexit.

But for that we want Labour to be clear, sharp, forceful, convincing.

Labour has been edged by circumstances into de facto anti-Brexitism — opposing the available Brexit formulas, supporting a new public vote with a Remain option.

But the Labour leadership, centrally the Leader's Office, is ostentatiously reluctant

about it. Equivocal. Wishing it weren't put on the spot.

It still talks about negotiating a better Brexit deal (better, apparently, mainly by way of a greater degree of customs unification than the “Irish backstop” already mandates, but still without free movement). Jeremy Corbyn refuses to say what vote he'd recommend in a referendum on that imaginary better Brexit deal vs Remain.

Ninety local Labour Parties have submitted policy proposals to the 21-25 September Labour Party conference on Brexit. 81 of them call for an unequivocal “Remain” policy.

Workers' Liberty and other activists at the conference will push against that rank and file demand being fobbed off with ambiguous formulas, as it was in 2018.

Another thing needs to be done in the Labour Party.

Since 2017 Labour's leadership has allowed the sweeping anti-cuts message it had then to be thinned down into, often, little more than a complaint about reduced funding for the police.

Boris Johnson's talk of ending austerity is shallow demagoguery. We call for Labour to counter it with programs for real revival of the Health Service, of schools, of benefits, of local government services.

Those should include making the NHS again a fully publicly-owned, publicly-run, service, without contracting-out and marketisation, and bringing all schools back into local authority control and standard work conditions.

The only reliable living champion, guardian, and enforcer of social rights is a revitalised labour and trade-union movement with the right to take solidarity action.

All social promises will be thin and unstable unless they are linked with action to repeal the Thatcher anti-union laws (not just the latest 2016 Trade Union Act) and institute full union rights.



**Stop Brexit:
Labour for a
Socialist Europe**

RALLYING LABOUR'S ANTI-BREXIT LEFT

Labour for a Socialist Europe is a campaign by Labour activists fighting to stop Brexit and build a socialist resistance to the right-wing forces and ideas driving it.

It was launched from the Another Europe is Possible conference in December 2018, and held a formal constituting conference on 9 March 2019.

It produced independent pro-Labour, anti-Brexit publicity for the Euro-elections in May 2019, and bundles of leaflets totalling some 50,000 were taken and used by local Labour campaigns and by individuals.

It has also been active in the effort to get anti-Brexit, pro-free-movement policy motions to the Labour Party conference.

• labourforasocialisteurope.org

Workers' Liberty videos

Explore Workers' Liberty's videos and playlists, and subscribe to our youtube channel, at bit.ly/wlvideos

FEATURING:

- A debate on Marxist perspectives on Irish history, between Rayner Lysaght and Sean Matgamna
- *Two nations, Two states* 101 — Camila Bassi explains the background and ideas of our perspectives on Israel/Palestine
- *In Defence of Bolshevism*: a series by Martin Thomas to accompany the book of the same name

Plus many more debates, introductions, and coverage.

Who obeys whom?

“Not obeying the law must surely be a non-starter. Period”, says John Bercow, Speaker of the House of Commons, responding to Boris Johnson's statement that he will not ask the EU to extend the Brexit deadline of 31 October.

“It would be the most terrible example to set to the rest of society”.

He's right that it is an outrage for the Prime Minister and the unelected state machine to try to overrule the elected assembly to which they are answerable.

He signals, however, that he is even more bothered by the example that “not obeying” would send to others than by the action itself.

What he has in mind is not Margaret Thatcher's statement during the miners' strike of 1984-5 that if the unprecedented police blockades against the miners were ruled unlawful, then she would change the law as much as was necessary to maintain the blockades.

It is action like Poplar Labour Council's in 1921, when it defied unfair local government finance laws, and forced change, under the slogan “Better to break the law than break the poor”.

Or the mass defiance of the poll tax in the early 1990s, when thousands faced jail sentences for not paying the tax, but the police warned councils there were so many tax-defaulters that they couldn't arrest them all. The Tories backed down and repealed the tax.

Or the strike wave in July 1972 which made the Tories' anti-union law of that time, the Industrial Relations Act, unworkable. The Labour government elected in February 1974 felt obliged to repeal that Act completely and promptly.

Or the strikes and industrial action, strictly speaking in breach of the ultra-strict anti-strike laws currently on the law books, which still go on under the radar.

The right of an elected assembly or Parliament to control the government which claims authority on that basis of that parliament is one thing.

The supposed “right” of a parliament elected and operating through very limited forms of democracy, and of a government claiming authority from that parliament, to control the people, is another.

The 1793 constitution coming out of the French revolution, the founding document of democracy in the modern era, said:

“When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for the people, and for every portion thereof, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties”.

Johnson's moves warn us that the Tories' adherence even to their limited forms of democracy is always conditional.

They warn us about how the Tories would respond faced with a left-wing, working-class majority in Parliament.

They tell us that the real substance of democracy always depends on class struggle.

NATIONAL ANTI-BREXIT MARCH

**Saturday 19 October, 12-5pm
Assemble Park Lane, London W1**

PROTEST AT TORY PARTY CONFERENCE

**Sunday 29 September, 12-4pm
Oxford Road, Manchester**

A poundshop Lloyd George?

By Colin Foster

"Principles mean nothing to him — never have. His mind doesn't work that way."

"It's both his strength and his weakness".

That was how the Tory politician Arthur Balfour described David Lloyd George, prime minister 1916-22, a leading government minister 1906-16, and a dominant figure in Liberal Party politics for most of the first half of the 20th century.

A minister who worked with Lloyd George saw him as having an "absolute contempt for detail" but a strange capacity to improvise and "pick up the essential details of a question by conversation".

A biographer described him as "always in a hurry". He would "turn his mind to a subject only when there were urgent decisions to be taken, imminent advantage to be gained or pressing danger to be averted".

Lenin saw Lloyd George as a "first-class bourgeois manipulator, an astute politician, a popular orator who will deliver any speeches you like even r-r-revolutionary ones, to a labour audience". "This hardened politician, this lackey of the money-bags... Liberal charlatan..."

If Boris Johnson has been trying to act as a poundshop Mussolini, he is also a poundshop Lloyd George. What Johnson looks like trying to do with the Tory party echoes what Lloyd George tried to do with the Liberal Party after 1916.

Johnson's effort may well turn out to be only a caricature of Lloyd George. Lloyd George, the quick-witted stepson of a village cobbler who made himself a small-town lawyer, was more skilled at popular demagoguery and opportunist improvisation than the relatively routine Eton-and-Oxford Johnson is ever likely to be.

World War 1 started with Britain under the Liberal prime minister H H Asquith. In May 1915, discredited by the Gallipoli fiasco and the government's failure to organise sufficient munitions production, Asquith was forced to form a coalition with the Tories (and one Labour minister).

Asquith, with his languid, patrician manner ("Mr Asquith, do you take an interest in the war?" asked his sarcastic friend Helen Beerbohm Tree), and his heavy drinking, became further discredited. In the Battle of the Somme in July-November 1916 there was huge bloodshed, and almost no movement in front lines.

Lloyd George had been the Chancellor of the "People's Budget" of 1909, old-age pensions, and the beginnings of "national insurance" for the unemployed or sick. He was an energetic and effective Minister of Munitions in 1915-16. He allied with Tories to force Asquith to resign, and became prime minister at the head of a new coalition.

Now, oddly, the prime minister (Lloyd George) and the Leader of the Opposition (Asquith) were both members of the same party.

Lloyd George used the crisis to remake the machinery of government, and to try to employ that government machinery, the press, and businessmen brought into central government posts, to remake politics.

That is what we can see echoed in Johnson's moves to create a new political centre round his section of the Tory party, non-Tory "Vote Leave" people like Dominic Cummings, and the Brexiter press like the *Sun*,

Mail, and *Express*. The parallel will become closer if Johnson can do a deal with Farage.

All Cabinets had previously been ramshackle affairs, with no secretariat and no minutes of meetings.

Lloyd George instituted a War Cabinet of only five members, meeting almost every day, and a Cabinet Secretariat.

In his War Cabinet he had Bonar Law, the Tory leader who had threatened civil war (over Irish Home Rule) in 1912-4 against the Liberal government in which Lloyd George was Chancellor. He had Lord Milner, a Tory arch-imperialist. (Lloyd George, though always broadly pro-imperialist, had opposed the Boer War of 1899-1902). The Tory Lord Curzon, former Viceroy of India. And a captive Labour nominee, Arthur Henderson.

Behind the scenes, Max Aitken, owner of the *Daily Express*, later Lord Beaverbrook, had been central in the ousting of Asquith, and soon became a minister. Lord Northcliffe, owner of the *Daily Mail*, also helped oust Asquith and took a government position, though his relations with Lloyd George were more erratic.

Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, added system and attention to detail. Maundy Gregory, later, sold official honours, building up a "Lloyd George Fund" for politics.

Eric Geddes, a railway boss, one of the businessmen whom Lloyd George brought into government, became a close associate and from August 1921 author of the "Geddes Axe" of post-war social cuts.

TORY

Lloyd George, however, had not just become a Tory. The Tories had come to recognise that some bureaucratic social reform was necessary: "a slice of Bismarckism", as Winston Churchill, then a Liberal and an erratic ally of Lloyd George, put it.

Lloyd George and the Liberals round him were happy to postpone the Liberal-legislated Home Rule for Ireland and to go some way towards the Tories on tariff preferences for the Empire in place of traditional Liberal Free Trade.

The huge National Liberal Club, only a few steps from Parliament, built in 1887 and much grander than any central building the Tory or Labour parties have ever had, is visible evidence of the weight of the Liberal Party in those days.

The Liberals were no longer the chief party of the landed aristocracy, as the old Whigs had been. Most industrial and commercial capitalists had, in the second half of the 19th century, gone over to the Tories. As Engels put it in 1892, "the Liberals derive their strength now from the non-conformist petty and middle-bourgeoisie". But they were still a great force.

Local Liberal Associations continued to operate round the country, uneasily divided between Lloyd George and Asquith supporters.

At the end of the war, Lloyd George called a snap election, soon enough that rejoicing at Britain's victory and his own (undeserved) prestige as "The Man Who Won The War" were still strong.

He got the Liberal Chief Whip and a leading Tory official to share out the constituencies, some to "Coalition Liberal" candidates, some to Conservatives, a few to Labour renegades ("Coalition Labour" or "National

Democrat").

His coalition swept the board in that "coupon" or "khaki" election, winning 523 seats out of 707. Labour had broken from the coalition and won 57 seats; Asquith's wing of the Liberals, only 42.

The renewed coalition survived until October 1922. It promised "a land fit for heroes", and at the start doled out some social reforms, before resorting to the "Geddes Axe" as an economic crisis developed.

It battled against Ireland's war of independence, and forced a botched settlement in Lloyd George's typical manner, with an ambiguous formula which both Irish nationalists and Unionist die-hards could interpret as favourable.

Lloyd George spent much of 1919 in Paris, negotiating the Treaty of Versailles, "brutal and despicable" as Lenin called it.

As working-class anger mounted, the coalition dealt with great industrial disputes, sometimes by Lloyd George's method of ambiguous promises, sometimes by directly facing them down.

Lloyd George became convinced that working-class revolution was an imminent danger. He pushed for the creation of a new party bringing together elements from Liberals and Tories, under his leadership, an idea he had already toyed with in wartime.

As Lenin commented: "Lloyd George argued that a coalition — and a close coalition at that — between the Liberals and the Conservatives was essential, otherwise there might be a victory for the Labour Party, which Lloyd George prefers to call 'Socialist'... 'Civilisation is in jeopardy'... and consequently Liberals and Conservatives must unite..."

The idea didn't come off. The Tories withdrew support from Lloyd George in October 1922. Lloyd George reunited his faction with the Liberals under Asquith's leadership for the December 1923 general election. From October 1924, when Asquith lost his seat in another general election, Lloyd George became parliamentary leader of the Liberal Party.

In October 1926 Asquith retired and Lloyd George became overall Liberal Party leader. The "Lloyd George Fund", acquired through the sale of honours, had been an important factor.

He had still not lost his capacity for leftist gestures. In 1929 he wrote a pamphlet advocating "Keynesian" (public-works programs) measures against unemployment. He had the help of Keynes himself, though Keynes had loudly denounced Lloyd George's role in the Treaty of Versailles. Lloyd George was quicker than the cautious Labour lead-



The War Cabinet of 1916 had only five members.

ers to reject "economic orthodoxy".

Lloyd George was offered a place in the World War 2 coalition government by Churchill. He remained an MP until 1945. The Liberal Party never recovered much strength, mostly because the Labour Party had scooped up the more left-wing and working-class element of its vote.

Johnson's efforts now also have parallels with what Trump has done with, or is trying to do with, the Republican party in the USA.

Theresa May, of all people, in 2002, coined a phrase to describe the axis around which Boris Johnson is trying to reconstruct Tory politics: "the nasty party". "Some Tories have tried to make political capital by demonising minorities instead of showing confidence in all the citizens of our country".

David Cameron in 2006 took up May's idea. "While parents worried about childcare, getting the kids to school, balancing work and family life — we were banging on about Europe... We obsessed about a handful more grammar schools... We put our faith in opt-outs for a few".

Cameron failed to reshape the Tories into smoother, more Blairite shape. There is a good chance that Johnson will fail.

But for sure labour-movement people who give credence or semi-support to Johnson's hard-Brexit "commandism" will play as harmful a role as those Labour people, back in the day, who gave credence to Lloyd George's "social" imperialism.

Preview of Labour conference

By Michael Elms

2019 Labour Party Conference (21-25 September, Brighton) is an opportunity for socialists in the Labour Party to stop the political retreat that threatens to bring to an end the left-wing "Corbyn surge" which started in 2015.

The most pressing business is about Brexit. 90 motions have been sent in about Brexit. 81 of them call for Labour to take a clear Remain stance. Most originate with left wing Remain groups Labour for a Socialist Europe and Another Europe is Possible.

Yet a few days before conference, a small group of senior trade union bureaucrats met with Corbyn's staff and tried to pre-empt Conference by declaring for a "Labour Brexit".

The face-off between an overwhelmingly pro-Remain Party membership and a pro-Brexit clique influenced by the *Morning Star* ensconced in the towers of trade union officialdom is clear.

The fact that no motions to conference call for a Labour Brexit makes strategy of the *Morning Star* axis clear. Unable to win the membership to their right-wing, nationalistic position, they will instead fight at conference for a fudge to allow Corbyn's office to sidle towards their preferred option after conference, by means of policy announcements or anonymous briefings from unelected advisers.

In short, pro-Leave bureaucrats want to keep matters out of the membership's hands.

To beat them, left wing delegates will have to insist on clarity instead of vagueness. We should not flinch from forcing contentious votes, even if we calculate that big union block votes make it likely we will lose them. The voice of the rank and file must be heard, not buried in applause for fudged read-it-either-way formulas.

On freedom of movement and closing detention centres, too, it appears that the leadership is trying to wriggle out of letting firm policy commitments be put to the vote. Internationalist-minded Labour supporters from a number of CLPs have submitted text calling for freedom of movement and the closure of detention centres. But through a procedural trick the Conference Arrangements Committee is trying to keep this text off the order paper, by refusing to composite similar motions together.

MISDIRECTION

A year of the leadership using weasel words and misdirection to overcome calls for more consistently internationalist policy from the membership has scattered and demoralised Corbyn's base.

We've had silence or evasion on migrant rights and detention centres, endlessly confusing to-ing and fro-ing on whether to hold a referendum on Brexit or whether to back Remain, and a lack of clear left-wing leadership over other issues like antisemitism has sapped the zeal of the people who won Corbyn's two leadership elections. Many of them, in fact, voted Green in the 2019 European elections.

One measure of the problem is that the turnout for the Conference Arrangements Committee elections this year was down on the previous vote in 2017, even though the poll was as hotly contested as then.

This time left candidates Seema Chandwani and Billy Hayes got 53,606 and 43,763 votes, as against 28,116 and 24,620 for the right-wing candidates. In 2017 it was 109,763 and 92,205 vs 55,417 and 50,439. In 2015, the right won, 109,888 and 100,484 vs 80,193 and 37,270.

One encouraging sign of revival was the lively way that Labour members threw themselves into demonstrations against Johnson's



coup. Hopefully that renewed political vigour will make itself felt at conference.

Much of the problem lies with a left that has failed to hold Corbyn to account. Momentum nationally abolished its own democratic structures in January 2017 in order to prevent those structures from being used to exert leftward pressure on Corbyn. The idea that the role of the Labour left should be to give Corbyn a "blank cheque" is still widespread, and represents an unhealthy inheritance from Blairite days.

It is important that the Labour Green New Deal campaign does not fall into the same mode of thinking. The campaign has topped the chart of motions submissions to conference, with 128.

The Green New Deal makes much – rightly – of the need for a Labour government to make substantial inroads into the rule of profit in order to face up to the climate crisis. It has enjoyed much support from leading Corbynite Labour MPs and among the broader membership. But to make good on its promise, the campaign must not fall into

the trap of the Labour left in recent years, of letting the leadership oppose radical policies obliquely, by burying them in vagueness or silence.

Supporters of Workers' Liberty have promoted a version of the Green New Deal motion that includes calls for an end to airport expansion, scrapping the anti-union laws and nationalisation of energy and finance. It is important not to shy away from such policies, even if they prove to be inconvenient to the Labour leadership.

Conference is an opportunity for delegates to force the leadership to take a bold stance on internationalism, migrant rights and climate change.

And through the discussions at The World Transformed and around the conference centre, we will work for a new Labour left can emerge which is not afraid to challenge the leadership on these issues.

• All the main official documents for the conference: bit.ly/1pconf-19

John Mann becomes a Tsar

By Jim Denham

Labour MP John Mann is standing down as an MP to become a Tory adviser. He will take up a full-time role as the government's "antisemitism tsar".

Mann's record on other issues is so bad that his elevation is likely to do more harm than good to the fight against antisemitism.

A Bassetlaw constituent of John Mann's got it right back in 2016, writing on an internet chat forum: "[Mann] could probably be mistaken for UKIP most of the time. He's pretty awful, though I did enjoy him shouting and swearing at Ken Livingstone a few weeks ago."

Theresa May appointed Mann as her adviser on tackling antisemitism in one of her last acts as prime minister. Boris Johnson has now "upgraded" the role (to "antisemitism tsar" — a most unfortunate title given Russian history) and offered Mann a seat in the Lords.

Mann told Sky News that he was going to retain his Labour membership, but sit in the Lords as an independent peer:

When Frank Field resigned the Labour

whip last year to sit as an independent MP, he also expected to keep his Labour membership in spite of his decision, but was told that resigning the whip had immediately terminated his personal membership of the party as well.

Mann first came to prominence as a leader of the National Organisation of Labour Students in the mid and early 1980s. He figured then as a "Bennite" left-winger and an organiser behind Labour Students in 1982 taking the National Union of Students leadership from the Communist Party/ Liberal "Broad Left". That was a shift to the left, made on the back of a well-organised wave of campus occupations.

Activists from the forerunner of Workers' Liberty disputed with Mann and his co-thinkers week by week in Manchester University Labour Club back then. From those debates of that time, it seems, he learned about antisemitism, but little else.

He was always a careerist, and long ago became a vicious right-winger and Brexiteer. He was the only Labour MP to react positively to May's offer to northern Labour MPs of extra money for their constituencies in return for support for her Brexit deal – widely

denounced even by many Labour Brexiteers as a "bribe".

Many on the left hate him because of the one issue where he has taken a principled stance: antisemitism. He has been accused of using the issue to attack Corbyn, and he has certainly done that.

But his record shows him raising concerns about antisemitism for years before Corbyn became leader. There is no reason to doubt that Mann's strong views on antisemitism are entirely genuine. His much-publicised public denunciation of Ken Livingstone was not just a stunt: Mann was clearly outraged by Livingstone's crass comments about Hitler (supposedly) supporting Zionism and was quite right to confront Livingstone, even if his – Mann's — rant was pretty incoherent.

Mann's opposition to prejudice and racism does not seem to be consistent.

In October 2016 details of an "offensive" legal advice booklet emerged — produced and distributed by John Mann.

The Bassetlaw anti-social behaviour handbook was written by John Mann and contains sections of advice for his constituents on how to deal with "loitering by youths", "graffiti", "neighbours from hell", "alcohol"... and

"travellers". In the section on "Travellers", which mainly deals with the civil offence of trespass, there is a big, bold strapline saying "the Police have powers to remove any gypsies and travellers".

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are legally recognised ethnic minorities in the UK and are protected by Equalities laws from discrimination.

A Romany Gypsy constituent of John Mann, who sent a copy of the booklet to *The Travellers' Times*, said: "It's outrageous from a man that likes to give the public the impression that he's against race hate and prejudice."

A legal expert in Traveller law and police powers around trespass, contacted by *The Travellers' Times*, has described the legal advice in the section on Travellers as "wrong."

Mann's move will also be seen (rightly) as an act of betrayal towards the Labour party. That will give ammunition to those who seek to dismiss all talk of antisemitism as a right wing conspiracy, probably organised by the Israeli embassy.

Sanders, socialists



Interview

By Dan La Botz

How do you think the socialist left should orient to the Bernie Sanders campaign?

In 2016, after years as a proponent of independent political action to the left of the Democrats, I made the decision to work on the Sanders campaign. I had been a lifelong opponent of the Democratic Party, but I thought something was happening that was very important. I did not register as a Democrat, as many did, but rather I maintained my Green Party registration. I went to work on the Sanders' campaign, in a very ordinary way: I attended local campaign meetings and distributed leaflets on the street in my neighbourhood.

Sanders was calling himself a "democratic socialist". I don't think he was a socialist then, and I don't now. I think he is a New Deal liberal. But I felt this was an important thing, because we've seldom had in the United States open discussions about the question of socialism. Secondly, he put forward the most progressive platform since Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960s Democratic Party, and many people were very excited by things like "Medicare for All". I also felt, by the end of the primary campaign, that many of Sanders' supporters had come to loath the Democratic Party National Committee and hated the politics of Hilary Clinton. I was interested in being amongst those folks. At that moment, the Sanders' supporters represented a leftward-moving phenomenon, which is why I supported it. People looked up the term "democratic socialist" on Google, they found the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and joined in their tens of thousands. That was aided by many talented DSA organisers who used social media very effectively to recruit. Those who wanted to join found no obstacles in their way. One could go online and join, paying a very modest dues.

So at that time, that was a very significant development. It has created the biggest surge in leftism in this country since the 1960s, and incorporated many people who had participated in and been inspired by the Occupy movement and #BlackLivesMatter, and it later picked up people who were excited by things like the #MeToo movement. It was a thrilling development.

But there are some problems. One is DSA's historical legacy and orientation towards work in the Democratic Party. The DSA for decades saw campaigns in the Democratic Party as a vehicle for fighting for a socialism not too different from that of Bernie Sanders, albeit perhaps a little more "Scandinavian". And now DSA support Sanders who says, for example, that he would never be for the nationalisation of any industry. I don't think the nationalisation of industry is an essential



Dan La Botz is a longstanding socialist activist, based in Brooklyn. He is a member of the socialist group Solidarity and of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and a co-editor of the independent socialist journal New Politics (newpol.org). He spoke to Daniel Randall of Solidarity earlier in 2019 about prospects for the socialist left in the USA.

hallmark of socialism, but nationalisation is one form under which working people could collectivise the ownership of industry, combined with many other things that would bring the government into the hands of working people.

So, the DSA had this tradition of work in the Democratic Party. There were many people in the pre-Sanders-campaign DSA who had this approach, and many of the new, younger leaders had come to share the notion that the Democratic Party can be a vehicle. They had a slightly different interpretation, in that they didn't aspire to take over the Democratic Party, or even imagine they could influence it strongly, but rather their notion was that in running candidates for Democratic nominations, the DSA could build up its own political machine with its own organisers, control of databases, etc. This view has been strengthened as recently, DSA members like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have run for Democratic nominations and won impressive victories. The DSA wasn't the dominant force in her campaign, but it was one of the forces. There have been other similar electoral successes, such as DSA member Julia Salazar, who was elected to the New York State Senate.

From a distance, it seems meaningless to talk about AOC and Salazar as "DSA candidates", because there doesn't appear to be any mechanism for rank-and-file DSA members to hold them directly to account or exert any control over their policies or activity.

AOC and Salazar are two different cases. AOC won a seat in Congress, displacing, a mainline Democrat, Joe Crowley, who was going to become a dominant figure in the House of Representatives. That made her a very big deal. Sanders then said, take my hand, let's go to Kansas and campaign for Democrats. So she was immediately swept up into the whole national mainstream of the

Democratic Party. She is a brilliant young woman.

She has seized on the environmental issue and has seized on the "Green New Deal" idea and packaged it in a way that made it significant. No, she is not a "DSA candidate", although she makes some remarkably positive statements against capitalism, for example recently saying it's "an irredeemable system." The DSA is unlikely to exert much influence over her.

The case of Julia Salazar is quite different. She is a person who was a local activist in DSA, and something like 2,000 DSA members participated in her campaign. She has been very much in touch with DSA, and the New York DSA branch leadership works closely with her. She tries to be accountable and report to DSA. DSA has some ideas about developing grassroots work in her district, using the experience of her electoral campaign to develop a local organization.

So, AOC and Salazar are different cases in terms of their relationship to the DSA and whether the DSA can have any influence on them. The bigger question is whether either one of them can have any influence on the Democratic Party in national politics.

You wrote, ahead of DSA's endorsement of Sanders, that you were opposed to the DSA doing that. How would you summarise your alternative strategy for how DSA should intervene on the terrain of national politics?

In 2016 it seemed to me that Sanders and his followers were moving to the left; today it seems that they are moving into the Democratic Party, that is moving to the right.

Working out an alternative strategy is not

easy. The old strategy of Max Shachtman and Michael Harrington, which was called "re-alignment", was intended to create a socialist-inspired labour, black, and anti-war coalition that could take over the Democratic Party. It failed absolutely, for a whole series of reasons, having to do with both strategy and changing conditions. And, if it had been successful, it would have been very problematic. On the other hand, the only thing to have failed worse than "re-alignment" is the alternative strategy of independent political action on the left! The left has never won more than an infinitesimally small percentage of the vote, and when it did it was blamed for contributing to the election of Republicans.

Thirty years ago, I would've said, simply, that we need an independent political party to the left of the Democrats. I still believe we need that, but I'm not so convinced that we can get one simply by announcing it. The Green Party has been around for a long time now, and has made many efforts to establish itself. It was on the ballot in every state, with a national presidential candidate, Jill Stein, who was in many ways an appealing candidate who could talk in ordinary language about important issues. So why couldn't the Green Party be successful?

Partially, it's because, as many people have pointed out for decades, that the rules of the game in America make it very hard for left parties to even get on the ballot. Once they're on the ballot, of course, since it's a first-past-the-post system, if you run a candidate you'll be accused of being a spoiler. So the Republicans and Democrats continue to dominate the system and the Green Party and others are pushed to the margins.

The example we have always given from the history of the United States — because as Marxists who try to look at the big historical picture — was the origin of the Republican Party. In the late 1850s, the issue of slavery divided the nation and the rise of anti-slavery movements created a new situation in the North. As a result the Whig party broke up and some former Whigs and a few Democrats joined with the Abolitionist Party, to create a new party, a party determined to limit slavery to the South. The election of Abraham Lincoln on that platform, led to the Civil War. The Republicans became a revolutionary party, carrying out a capitalist revolution that obliterated slavery in the South.

Today, do I go out and say to working people that, "we need to form a revolutionary party to carry out a revolutionary civil war in America"? Yet still I think we will need a very powerful social movements in order to create some new political party. We will need movements of the oppressed, of black and Latinos, of women and LGBT people, as well as movement against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. We need a convergence of all of these.

And above all we need to build rank-and-file working-class power within labour unions. In West Virginia, we recently saw a

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and US politics

successful teachers strike that was driven by a rank-and-file movement. Rank-and-file workers movement from below are the key to building a powerful labor movement, but one has to watch out for two problems. One, the movement can become syndicalist, that is offering not political alternative. Or, two, the rank-and-file leaders can become linked to the Democratic Party and subordinate workers' interests to the party's.

I think the DSA's local strategy, of being willing to support radical local candidates, including those running for Democratic nominations, especially those who are willing to identify themselves as socialists, is still viable. We had two cases of this in Brooklyn; one was Jabari Brisport, who ran as a Green, and the other was Khader El-Yateem, a Palestinian Lutheran minister, running in a working-class neighbourhood, running for the Democrat ticket. So DSA was able to be involved in these two campaigns, where you could go out and talk about politics and socialism and attempt to build the DSA as an organisation. I still like that strategy.

On the national level, who could not be thrilled to see Bernie at his recent rallies, opening them with union activists talking about the importance of their strikes and black activists talking about anti-racism movements? But, to my mind, the danger is that the DSA will simply flow into the Sanders campaign.

In all probability I think Sanders will not win the nomination, and if that happens, the leftwards energy will in all likelihood continue to flow to the Democratic candidate,

who is almost certain to be a progressive, but who will almost inevitably have to govern as a liberal, even as a neoliberal because we do not yet have a level of class struggle and social upheaval that could force government very much to the left.

There seems to be a clear objective case for an organised, publicly-declared tendency within DSA, at local and national level, that intervenes to argue for the things you've mentioned: an orientation to workplaces and rank-and-file organisation in unions; a particular policy in terms of intervention in national politics; and, I would suggest, a third camp policy on international questions, confronting what appears to be a significant element of "two camps"-type anti-imperialist politics within DSA. It seems that New Politics as a journal could provide some of the intellectual and literary infrastructure for such a tendency. Do you think such a tendency is required and, if so, how do you see it developing?

I think it would be great if we had an organised tendency within DSA that has the perspectives we've been discussing — a rank-and-file labour orientation, an attentive orientation to struggles around race and gender, an international position that rejected "my enemy's enemy is my friend", instead supporting the fight against lesser-power imperialism as well as greater-power imperialism. And, of course, a current that also had a much stronger drive towards political independence from the Democratic Party.

There are discussions about this amongst some DSA members. But it's important to be remember that this is a very young organisa-

tion, most of whose activists are between 25-35 years of age, whose previous political experience, if they had any, was in broadly "progressive" politics rather than the organised socialist left. I believe there is a strong desire amongst these people to talk this all out for themselves, and go through this process. That's an enormous part of this.

Could I find a few people throughout the US who might co-sign a manifesto? Yes, probably. I and others do participate in the debates advocating Marxist positions. But we shouldn't get ahead of, or attempt to find shortcuts around, the discussions happening amongst DSA activists, who are trying to find a way to work all this out. They haven't yet been through the experiences that might convince them to be more critical of the labour union leaderships, of the black political establishment, or of Bernie Sanders.

I think there's a very healthy debate and discussion going on inside the organisation, which will become clearer and sharper, but it might take two more years.

What potential do you see in recent school workers' strikes for the reinvigoration and reactivation of the labour movement?

The West Virginia strike was the most exciting thing we've seen in the labour movement since the Chicago teachers' strike of 2012. Labor Notes, as well as a few people in DSA and some in other socialist groups like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), played key roles in helping connect up striking workers and helping them form caucuses in their unions. Some of this work has been

taking place at Labor Notes' "Troublemakers' Schools". That's been great.

We've had many school workers' strikes in several cities now, which is wonderful and will hopefully continue to develop. We don't see much in the private sector, and that's by far larger, in number of workers. Trade union representation in the United States is extremely low, about 6.4% in the private sector. We see very few strikes in the private sector; strikes like the Verizon strike in New York a couple of years ago are very rare.

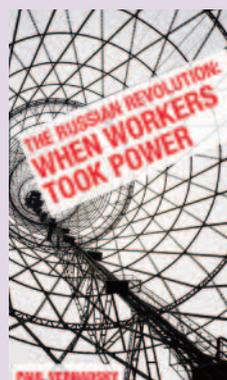
I've seen articles claiming we're seeing a national strike wave. It's too early to say that. The last great strike wave was 1970, where you saw hundreds of thousands of workers going out week after week, paralysing the post office, the trucking industry, walkouts in auto plants, and so on. We don't have that yet. The fact that people are calling the current movement a strike wave shows they haven't seen a real strike wave. But we may well get one! There are developments in other sectors, some with strong political activity, such as the nurses' union in California.

We also now have people in DSA looking to get jobs in workplaces and industries where they can be effective rank-and-file militants. DSA has published arguments for doing this on its website. That's very important. It's not quite what we used to call "industrialisation", but it is people making a real commitment.

These young people with a socialist outlook entering the unions in order to build rank-and-file movements are a tremendously hopeful sign.



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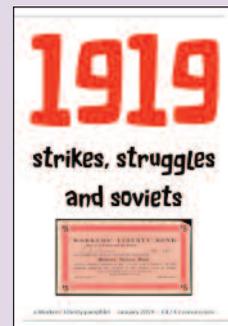
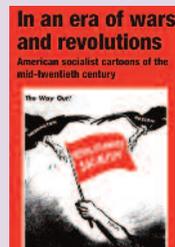
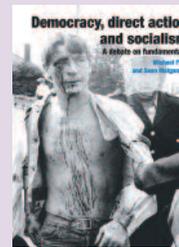
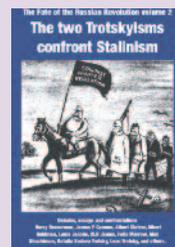
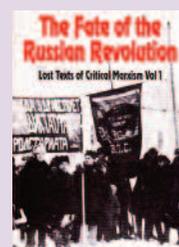


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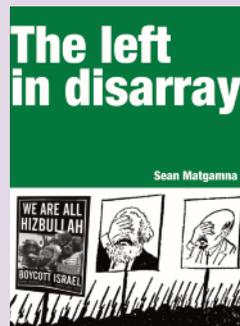
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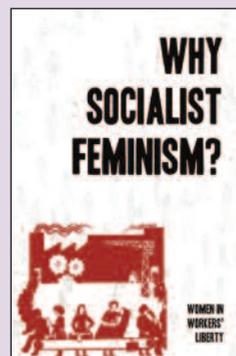
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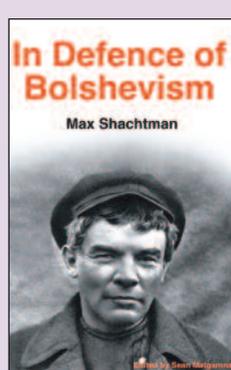


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Peronism: not a model

By Eduardo Tovar

In an interview featured in Tim Alberta's new book *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the Rise of President Trump*, President Donald Trump compared Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to Eva Perón.

Specifically, Trump remarked that Ocasio-Cortez has "talent", but "doesn't know anything". This alludes to how Eva Perón went from popular radio and film actress to powerful symbol for the political movement spearheaded by her husband, Juan Perón. The latter was President of Argentina from June 1946 to September 1955, and again from October 1973 until his death in July 1974.

In response to a *New York Post* report on Trump's remarks, on 7 July 2019 Ocasio-Cortez turned the comparison into flattering one by quoting Eva Perón approvingly on Twitter:

"I know that, like every woman of the people, I have more strength than I appear to have."

"I had watched for many years and seen how a few rich families held much of Argentina's wealth and power in their hands. So the government brought in an eight hour working day, sickness pay and fair wages to give poor workers a fair go."

Although it is easy to see why these statements and other aspects of Eva Perón's life would make a positive impression on Ocasio-Cortez, approvingly quoting a prominent figurehead of Peronism is not only misguided: it is actively harmful to building genuine socialist politics.

This is because, whatever the material gains of the impoverished descamisados ("shirtless ones") under Perón, Peronism was a thoroughly nationalist and Bonapartist movement that consciously inhibited class struggle. Juan Perón himself sympathised with fascism at least until 1942, even going so far as to describe Nazi Germany as "an organized state for a perfectly structured community, for a perfectly structured population: a community where the state was the tool of the people, whose representation was, under my view, effective".¹

In other words, Peronism is precisely the kind of movement that socialists should avoid presenting uncritically.

Admittedly, Ocasio-Cortez is far from the first socialist to say or imply that Peronism is worthy of left-wing admiration or support: even revolutionary socialists have done so. Moreover, Peronism spent decades as the dominant ideology in the Argentine labour movement. This gives us ample reason to undertake a critical examination of Peronism.

In Marxist terminology, "Bonapartism" denotes a situation where there is a stalemate in the class struggle and the state gains an unprecedented level of political autonomy from the ruling class. This typically takes the form of a military regime headed by a strongman: what Marx in 1858 evocatively called "The Rule of the Praetorians". This temporary placement of a militaristic state "above" the ruling and working classes is to keep the class struggle suspended. That is, it inhibits class war bringing together sections of the military, the national bourgeoisie, and the labour movement, often drawing on nationalist ideology. In Trotsky's words:

"[P]recisely this is the function of Bonapartism: raising itself over the two struggling

camps in order to preserve property and order. It suppresses civil war, or precedes it, or does not allow it to rekindle."²

Although the capitalists lose much of their political power under Bonapartism, they retain their social power and the Bonapartist regime still works to protect their interests in the long run. As Trotsky put it:

"The sabre by itself has no independent program. It is the instrument of 'order.' It is summoned to safeguard what exists. Raising itself politically above the classes, Bonapartism, like its predecessor Caesarism, for that matter, represents in the social sense, always and at all epochs, the government of the strongest and firmest part of the exploiters."³

MILITARY

It should be easy to see why I describe Peronism as "Bonapartist". Juan Perón had a long career as an Argentine military officer and participated in General Arturo Rawson's 1943 coup against President Ramón Castillo.⁴

This is how Perón came to serve in the 1943-46 military government as head of the Labour Department.

From this position, Perón began to form the political links with sections of the labour movement that would become key to his electoral victory in 1946 and the 'Judicialist' state he would establish. In Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano's words, "[i]n the political sphere the major change was the formation of the new, benevolently authoritarian or paternalist state, based on an alliance of the army (half of the new government's first two budgets was devoted to it), the new labour unions and an emerging 'bureaucratic' industrial and commercial bourgeoisie ('bureaucratic' because of its structural dependence on state subvention and protection)".⁵ As Luis Velasco summarised it in 1947, "the totalitarian dictatorships of [Getúlio] Vargas and Perón [...] confront the tempestuous awakening of the working masses, absorbing and channelizing it, sometimes with a policy of social reforms and fascist demagoguery".⁶

Although Velasco overstates matters by describing the Peronist regime as "totalitarian", Perón still replaced the older, more militant, and historically anarchist trade union movement with one substantially under his control.⁷

Moreover, the suspension of class struggle central to Bonapartism was a prominent feature of Peronist ideology. In his 1944 May Day speech, Perón said he aimed to "abolish struggle between classes, and get a just agreement between employers and employees." That same year, he gave the following assurances to Argentine employers:

"[Having trade unions] is the best way to avoid the boss having to fight with his workers [...] It is the means to reach an agreement, not a struggle. Thus strikes and stoppages are suppressed, though, undoubtedly, the working masses obtain the right to discuss their own interests at the same level as the employers' organisations, which, on analysing it, is absolutely just [...] We do not want unions which are divided in political fractions, because the dangerous thing is, incidentally, a political trade unionism."⁸

This is not to say that workers made no gains under Perón or that they were merely his dupes. Real wages rose by 22% between 1945 and 1949, and — in proportional terms



A festival organised by the Montoneros, a would-be Peronist urban guerilla group in the 1970s

— wages went up from 41% of the national income in 1946-48 to 49% in 1952-55.⁹ Trade union membership increased from 500,000 in 1946 to 2.5 million in 1955. Perón introduced a minimum wage, paid holidays, medical insurance, and other significant welfare measures.

Moreover, as Daniel James notes, Argentine workers found political motivations for supporting Perón that went beyond immediate economic benefits: "Peronism was, perhaps, most enduringly for them a vision of a more decent society in which they recognised for themselves a vital role, a vision couched in a language with which they could identify".¹⁰

In other words, many working-class Peronists saw themselves as participating in a larger project to create a juster society and appreciated Perón's acknowledgement of their importance to this project.

CORPORATIST

Nevertheless, as Ronaldo Munck and his collaborators acknowledge in their historical study of the Argentine labour movement, "Perón never deviated from [his] essentially corporatist vision of social affairs and his 'revolutionary' image in a later period [...] was never reflected in practice".¹¹

The Peronist government established an employers' organisation called the Confederación General Económica (CGE) in 1952 so that industrialists and businessmen could collectively bargain with both the government and the unions. Strikes began to fall in the early 1950s, and the unions were brought under the state's wing in a manner that strengthened their bureaucracies and purged their most militant activists.

Perón's handling of the 1948 strike by the Tucumán Worker Federation of the Sugar Industry ("Federación Obrera Tucumana de la Industria del Azúcar" / "FOTIA") further illustrates his corporatist labour strategy. He allowed the strike to drag on and conceded a few demands, only to have the strike leaders accused of communism and sacked. This allowed him to present himself as on the workers' side and, at the same time, rid the unions of their most effective organisers.

Eva Perón played a key role in sustaining

this corporatist strategy. She addressed workers over the radio and in the factories, union headquarters, and dockyards to convince them that her husband was a friend of the working class. The Eva Perón Foundation, established in 1948, became a cornerstone of the regime's popular appeal, generously funding welfare projects like the construction of schools and the distribution of medicine.

The central purpose of such charitable acts was public relations. The Foundation raised much of the money for such grandiose displays of benevolence via a compulsory levy on union members and Eva is believed to have diverted as much as \$700 million into overseas accounts. In addition, Eva nepotistically used her central role in the Perón regime to put numerous relatives in positions of power, with her brother becoming Juan's private secretary.

In light of all this, why did so many socialists, including several Trotskyist tendencies, still support Peronism? The short answer is that it stems from a poorly founded view of the Peronist regime as "anti-imperialist" and of Argentina as "semi-colonial". As Velasco observed in 1947, many Trotskyists in Argentina, including those organised around the periodical *Octubre*, proclaimed Peronism as "the realization of the democratic bourgeois revolution, not only in Argentina, but in the whole of Latin America".¹²

In a manner that strongly echoes the later "dependency theory" perspective on former colonies in the "Third World", this characterisation of Argentina rested on the view that the extent of foreign investment was such that the country was still not genuinely independent.¹³ Indeed, the British still owned large parts of Argentina's infrastructure before Perón's nationalisation projects. Although one can question how representative *Octubre* was of the contemporary anti-Stalinist left, after Peronism became hegemonic and marginalised the socialist organisations, more Trotskyists turned from describing Peronism as fascist (as leftists often did in the 1940s) to viewing it as "anti-imperialist".

Argentina was a key exporter of agricultural products to Britain, and importer of British investments, until the First World War. In 1916, Lenin described Argentina as

for socialists

politically independent but a British "trade colony". "Economic dependence upon British banks, indebtedness to Britain, British acquisition of [its] railways, mines, land, etc., enable Britain to 'annex' [Argentina] economically without violating [its] political independence".¹⁴

Nevertheless, to follow *Octubre's* example and describe Argentina in the late 1940s as still a "feudal semi-colony" is to see "feudalism" where there was capitalist landlordism, and greatly to underestimate the extent to which the World Wars had allowed Argentina to create its own reserves of capital. In other words, Argentina had not only established political independence via its 1810-18 war against Spanish colonial rule: it had come to establish significant economic leeway as well. Indeed, Argentina's economic dependence on Britain had drastically weakened in the 1930s before Perón's rise to power.

Moreover, by the time of Perón's first term as President, the Argentine bourgeoisie was already beginning to expand its regional power in Latin America. As Velasco observes:

"The Argentine-Chile treaty [signed by Perón and intended to establish an eventual customs union] gives enormous advantages to Argentina, reducing Chile to a dependency. Peron pays \$13 Argentine for 100 kilograms of wheat, selling it to Chile for \$35 Argentine and bringing about a Chilean selling price of 100 to 500 Chilean pesos. The Chilean producer receives from the state only 195 to 205 Chilean pesos for the same product. This same relationship obtains for all products."¹⁵

This strongly suggests that "Peron's expansionism [was] not a struggle of the Argentinians against imperialism, but an expansion of the Argentine bourgeoisie which [strove] to dominate the continent and establish a local "sub-imperialism".¹⁶

SUB-IMPERIALIST

By failing to grasp the sub-imperialist character of the Argentine state, the international left risks putting an "anti-imperialist" or even "socialist" gloss on the nationalist-autarkic manoeuvres of a regional power seeking to expand its own sphere of influence.

As Dabat and Lorenzano put it: "The theory of 'neo-colonies' [...] seeks to equate the financial and diplomatic dependence of politically independent countries and of semi-colonies by giving overwhelming priority to certain economic features, in particular the role of direct foreign investment by transnational companies. Direct foreign investment, associated with other forms of 'penetration', is supposed to turn the different countries into semi-colonies, although it is never clear which are to be included in this definition. [...] According to this line of reasoning, bourgeois nation states would be progressive and anti-imperialist merely by opposing foreign investment, increasing customs duties and reducing the balance of external trade, or by linking themselves economically to the 'Socialist Bloc'. Marxism, however, regards such 'anti-imperialism' and such 'defence' of the principle of national self-determination as nothing more than an attempt to cover up competitive manoeuvres by capitals of different national bases, particularly by "weak" monopoly capitals."¹⁷

Instead of painting Peronism as the com-



A Peronist demonstration in the 1950s

pletion of an anti-colonial bourgeois revolution worthy of socialist support, one should take the view that Juan Rey put forward in 1948:

"Revolutionary working class socialism in South America combatting Peronism and Stalinism must oppose the arrogance and domination of Yankee Imperialism, forming a third front of authentic national and social emancipation in Latin America."¹⁸

Lastly, one should be cautious not to read too much into the material gains of Argentine workers under the Perón regime. Prior to the First World War, Argentina was, by GDP per head measures, one of the richest countries in the world. Many workers migrated from Italy to Argentina then because wages were higher in Argentina than in Europe.

Argentina continued to be a relatively rich country until it slumped in the Great Depression. It experienced a small boom during the Second World War, followed by a long period of stagnation. By the end of the Peronist era, Argentina was already significantly behind most Western European countries and Australia.

This is in large part because of the major long-term change in Argentina's economic orientation under Perón. Before 1930, Argentina had an economy based on agrarian exports and dominated by the landed oligarchy. The landed oligarchy was ruined by the Great Depression and by Perón's deliberate shift towards a domestically-oriented and industrialised economy.

According to Angus Maddison's figures, Argentina's exports were scarcely bigger in 1950 than in 1913, and much smaller than they had been in 1929. Both in 1913 and in 1929, Argentina's exports were significantly bigger than Brazil's; by 1950 they were only

60% of Brazil's, by 1973 only 42% of Brazil's.¹⁹

As in Ireland under Éamon De Valera, the nationalist, protectionist economic course had wide support, but was economically regressive. There were meaningful social reforms in Argentina under Perón, but then were also meaningful social reforms in boom years in Spain under Francisco Franco and in Eastern European countries under Stalinism. We would not accept these reforms as reasons to treat these regimes as deserving of political support.

Overall, much like Cárdenas' Mexico before it and Chávez's Venezuela after it, socialists should treat Perón's Argentina as a stark lesson in what happens when we take at face value the nationalisation projects, social-welfare measures, and pro-worker rhetoric of a regime founded upon a civic-military alliance that actively suppresses the militancy and independence of organised labour.

More to the point, Peronism illustrates the danger of conceptualising socialism primarily in terms of economic redistribution rather than the self-emancipation of the working class: a danger of which Ocasio-Cortez and her supporters should take heed.

[1] Felipe Pigna, *Los Mitos de la Historia Argentina 4: La Argentina Peronista (1943-1955)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta, 2008), p. 28.

[2] Leon Trotsky, "German Bonapartism" (1932) bit.ly/2Z01ssB

[3] Leon Trotsky, "Bonapartism and Fascism" (1934) bit.ly/31vH93S

[4] At the risk of sounding as though I am excusing a military coup, I feel obliged to note that Castillo obtained his presidency via electoral fraud.

[5] Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule*

(London: Verso, 1984) p.21.

[6] Luis Velasco, *A Latin American Manifesto: A Path of the Colonial Revolution* (1947) <http://bit.ly/33Huxsr>

[7] For a historical overview of this transformation of the Argentine labour movement, see: Ronaldo Munck with Ricardo Falcon and Bernardo Galitelli, *From Anarchism to Peronism: Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985* (London: Zed Books, 1987),

[8] *ibid*, p. 132.

[9] James W. McGuire, *Peronism Without Perón: Unions, Parties and Democracy in Argentina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 53.

[10] Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 40.

[11] Munck et al (1987), p. 132.

[12] Velasco (1947).

[13] Dependency theory dates back to Paul A. Baran's book "The Political Economy of Growth" (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957). It argues that "Third World" nations are underdeveloped because of a parasitic drain of surplus to the economically and industrially advanced countries. A full critical analysis of dependency theory is beyond the scope of the present article.

[14] V.I. Lenin, "What is Economic Analysis?" in *A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism* (1916) bit.ly/2kpQr1s

[15] Luis Velasco, "Peron: Argentine Sub-Imperialist — Structural Changes in Latin America" (1948) <http://bit.ly/2KQFyPy>

[16] *ibid*.

[17] Dabat and Lorenzano (1984), p. 8-9.

[18] Juan Rey, "The Totalitarian Reaction in South America" (1948) bit.ly/30qIFeg

[19] Angus Maddison, *The World Economy* (2006), OECD, p.360

Not the “people’s daily”

By Sean Matgamna

Some of the best people I have ever encountered in the labour movement — or anywhere else, for that matter — were CPers, that is, Stalinists, in one degree or another.

These were people who had dedicated themselves mind and limb to a cause which in its broad points of reference and ultimate goals is our own cause, the cause of socialism, and who had given everything they had to it.

They were not “selfless” in any narrow ascetic sense, but people who rejected the values and concerns of the bourgeois world around them with disdain, and who had organised their own lives around the working-class struggle for socialism. Or so they thought.

In fact they were people — they, and millions like them throughout the world — who had been utterly fooled and misled, whose work and dedication, whose very lives, did not at all serve the goals they wanted to serve. Served, in fact, other goals, opposite goals.

They were people so miseducated and corrupted by Stalinism that they would in certain circumstances — because of their ideas, the model of “socialism” they took as their guide from Stalin’s Soviet Union, and because of the military discipline of their organisation — have played the role their counter parts played in Eastern Europe, that is, help set up and staff an anti working-class Stalinist tyranny.

Erich Honecker, the East German dictator, was also once a “good militant”, an activist from early youth who spent 12 years in Hitler’s jails and camps; so were most of the others who staffed the East European tyrannies at various levels for 40 years.

It is a tragic story — the British chapter of “The Great Betrayal” of the hopes and sacrifices of God knows how many millions of would-be revolutionary socialists by the agents of the rulers of the Soviet Union.

It is also the story of the self betrayal, the semi-religious self hypnosis, of people who should have known better, and who with some part of their minds, at least some of the time, must have known better. It changed, corrupted, and destroyed them, in almost all cases, completely.

People who set out to fight for socialism found themselves instead serving Russian foreign policy. People who set out to be revolutionaries found themselves instead far to the right of the right wing of the Labour Party.

In the 1930s, the Communist Party’s Popular Front meant Liberal-Labour coalition, and, as Trotsky pointed out, even the Labour Party right wing were not as right wing as that. In the ‘40s the Popular Front was broadened to include “Progressive Tories”.

People ignited by injustice to fight capitalism at home and abroad found themselves defending injustice all across the world wherever Stalinists ruled.

People who were propelled to fight capitalism because they could see the grotesque capitalist social authoritarianism at the core of formal parliamentary democracy were trained to call black white, totalitarian dictatorship democracy, and the fight for democracy in the Soviet Union a “petty bourgeois deviation” or “Trotsky-fascism”.

As We Were Saying

People who revolted against the hypocrisy and mental compartmentalisation which is so prominent a part of capitalism learned to

live by an all-pervading set of double standards which allowed them to condemn wholeheartedly and sincerely in Chile or South Africa what they justified and endorsed wholeheartedly and sincerely wherever the CP ruled.

In Britain for 60 years their “central organ” in this work has been the daily paper started on 1 January 1930, known as the *Daily Worker* until 1966, and as the *Morning Star* since. It is a paper that has always depended on Russian subsidies, open or disguised. And it has usually been the voice of those who paid the subsidies.

Even when it condemned the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and later, in 1979-80, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan (which is more than most Trotskyists did, come to think of it), the *Morning Star* has always, in a thousand ways, day in and day out, promoted the interests of the rulers of the Soviet Union, lying and misrepresenting things to the labour movement, doing public relations work for those who savagely exploited and oppressed the working class in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

But now the Russians have pulled the plug on the *Morning Star*. In the ‘70s and ‘80s it used to sell more copies to East European governments than to people in Britain. Today, there are different governments in Eastern Europe, and the Russians have cancelled most of their quota of *Morning Stars*.

Gorbachev has all the friendly press coverage he needs, thank you, Mr Chater [then *MS* editor], from the *Sun* to the *Financial Times*; he doesn’t need your wretched little paper any more.

RESCUE

A surprisingly large number of respectable labour movement people have given their support to the *Morning Star*’s appeal for money to put itself on a new and independent basis. Are they right? Should socialists try to rescue the *Morning Star*?

Arena (BBC2) surveyed the *Morning Star*’s 60 year history. The reporter was Beatrix Campbell of the *Marxism Today* faction, which split with the *Morning Star* some years ago and is venomously hostile to it.

Campbell — whose politics are more SDP than anything else — presented a sloppily dishonest and ignorant survey of the last 60 years. It included a characteristically dishonest, but surprisingly romanticised, account of the CP of the 30s, and a tendentious and one sided account of the faction fight — in which she was prominent — which split the CP in the ‘80s.

The worst of *Arena*’s account of the CP and the *Daily Worker* was the selectiveness and fuzziness of the general history. Campbell talked about the Bolsheviks establishing “People’s Power” in 1917. And then they formed the Communist International under that grand old slogan, “People of the World Unite!”, didn’t they, Ms Campbell?

The left wing mobilisation to stop the fascists marching into the East End that led to



The article on this page was our comment by our forerunner, *Socialist Organiser*, in 1990, when the *Morning Star* lost its bulk sales in the USSR and Eastern Europe, nearly went under, and appealed frantically for funding from the trade unions in order to survive

the Battle of Cable Street in 1936 was presented as the CP’s work. In fact the decisive role was played by the local Independent Labour Party and others, and the *Daily Worker* initially called on its readers not to try to stop the fascist march!

You’d think that the ‘30s was all “anti-fascist”. Not only was the fact omitted that the German CP, in its ultra-left period of the early ‘30s, sometimes collaborated with the Hitlerites against the Social Democrats (the “social fascists”), but also the fact that the CPs, and the British among them, made pro Hitler propaganda during the Hitler-Stalin pact (1939-41), presenting Hitler as the peace-loving victim of Anglo-French imperialism.

Both Tony Chater (*Morning Star* editor/CPB) and *Arena*’s “reporter” Campbell (*Marxism Today*) called each other Stalinist when it came to discussing the split in the early 80s. Both are right.

You could see it in Campbell perhaps most clearly, despite her SDP politics. There was a great deal of sloppy ignorance, but also a pervasive desire to prettify the awful history. One reason why so many of these people all over the world — have become liberals, or worse, is that they can’t confront the real past of their own movement and critically re-evaluate it.

Stalinism was, to them, something working-class, a sort of party sectarianism, a “class-ist” narrowness. Campbell defined the 1980s debates and split in the CP as a matter of devotees of class struggle versus people who wanted to base themselves on “all human life”! Like millions in Eastern Europe, but with no comparable good reason, they see liberalism as the alternative to Stalinism — to themselves.

Stalinism was socialism. They were “socialists”, now socialism is utopian nonsense! They move away from their history, rejecting it, while continuing to prettify it.

So should socialists help, and maybe rescue, the *Morning Star*? Tempting as it may be

to side with the *Morning Star* faction, which has at least a pretence of some sort of working-class concerns, it would be a mistake.

There was a Russian revolutionary called Helphand, known as Parvus, who worked with the Bolsheviks, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky before 1914. Then he became a shameless war profiteer, accumulating vast wealth.

After 1917 he wanted to help the Russian Revolution, and approached Lenin and his one-time close friend Trotsky. Hard-pressed, they still refused to accept his “help”. “Clean hands are necessary”, they told him.

The British labour movement needs a daily paper — but a clean paper, not a paper that has swum in filth and, yes, blood, for over half a century. There is no way to wash the *Daily Worker* / *Morning Star* clean.

The best contribution the *Morning Star* can make to the renewal of socialism is to stop publishing and disappear.

- Socialist Organiser 450, 31 May 1990

Banning hijab in schools

By David Pendleton

I will be moving a motion for a ban on the hijab in schools up to Key Stage 3 at the Workers' Liberty conference in December. I want to explain why.

The hijab isn't just a piece of clothing, or even just a piece of religious clothing. It has strong political connotations with religious conservatism. It is closely associated with the notion of modesty, a sexist modesty which means women have to cover up to avoid arousing men. Martin Thomas correctly wrote in 2003, during a previous discussion within Workers' Liberty:

NORM

"Whatever it is in an individual's mind, socially and historically the hijab is not just a token of religious ideas.

"It represents and embodies women's oppression. It defines the woman or girl who wears it as the property of the men (father, brothers, husband) to whom the right to see her unveiled is reserved. Wherever it becomes the norm, it is inseparable from the

segregation and subordination of women."

And this representation and embodiment of women's oppression, defining women and girls as the property of men, is increasingly being worn by girls in primary school. The notion that girls under 11 must dress modestly or else risk arousing men is particularly abhorrent. The notion that any problem here is the woman or girl's fault is a version of "she was asking for it" argument.

The hijab is not equivalent to a mini-skirt (no matter what the sexist societal pressures that maybe on women to bare their legs), let alone a hoodie. It is a political symbol. We cannot accept the hijab becoming the norm in our schools and thus allowing within them 'the segregation and subordination of women' (and girls).

As socialists we recognise there is much wrong with the education system and schools as they exist. However, we also recognise the immense potentially liberating power of schools. We fight for them to allow the pupils and students within them to find other potentials than the ones that their family and their communities see as the only possibilities for them.

We also fight to make schools spaces free from oppression. We recognise that often this means pressurising the government to intervene into schools. Recently we have seen this in the partial victory of the long running campaign to improve Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in schools and to include LGBT+ education as part of this.

HIJAB

In terms of the hijab, we should make propaganda and campaign for the government to ban it in schools up to Key Stage 3 (up to age 14).

We should not campaign for individual school workers or individual schools to pursue a ban on the hijab. That would open doors to abuse and reaction. We are for governments, even bourgeois governments, acting to protect children against oppression and in favour of allowing them to be fully able to partake in education.

The argument has been made that some radical young women from Muslim backgrounds choose to wear the hijab as an act of rebellion/solidarity. This is exaggerated. It

does happen, but normally it is women over 14. Young people who choose to align themselves with reaction in the misguided belief it is rebellion must be dissuaded. Where their decision has an effect on others, as the wearing of the hijab clearly does, they must be stopped.

Another argument made is that the effect of the ban would be that these girls and women would leave non-faith schools and go to Muslim schools where they can wear the hijab. Many of the reforms we fight for require additional actions to ensure they are effective. For instance, tax the rich will not work without capital controls and increased attempts to stop the bosses avoiding tax.

More tellingly, if we accepted this argument we would face the same argument when reactionaries opposed their children doing sport, Religious Education, science or RSE. When we now consider this argument in the light of the protests over the new RSE curriculum it clearly falls apart.

I hope no-one would suggest sacrificing RSE to avoid school withdrawals.

The Internationale

The Internationale, written by Eugene Pottier after the crushing of the world's first workers' government, the Paris Commune of 1871, has been the song of the world workers' movement since about 1900.

Used alternately for a while as a revolutionary hymn with the Marseillaise, a song of the 1789-94 French revolution, it has been sung across the world. It was officially adopted by the world socialist movement (the Second International) at its Copenhagen congress in 1910.

It was the anthem both of the Bolshevik soviet state, and of the Communist International when it was a revolutionary movement. It was sung by demonstrators against Stalinism in Tienanmen Square in China in 1989.

There are many English-language versions. This one, by Charles H Kerr, publisher of the *International Socialist Review*, was printed in the *ISR* of June 1917. It seems originally to have been made around 1900.

The Industrial Workers of the World, the great revolutionary syndicalist movement of the early 20th century, used this translation with slight amendments.

Arise ye prisoners of starvation
Arise ye wretched of the earth
For justice thunders condemnation
A better world's in birth!
No more tradition's chains shall bind us
Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall;
The earth shall rise on new foundations
We have been naught we shall be all.

Chorus:
'Tis the final conflict
Let each stand in his place
The Internationale
Shall be the human race.

We want no condescending saviours
To rule us from their judgement hall
We workers ask not for their favours
Let us consult for all.
To make the thief disgorge his booty
To free the spirit from its cell
We must ourselves decide our duty
We must decide and do it well.

Chorus...

The law oppresses us and tricks us,
Wage systems drains our blood;
The rich are free from obligations,
The laws the poor delude.
Too long we've languished in subjection,
Equality has other laws;
"No rights", says she "without their duties,
No claims on equals without cause."

Chorus...

Behold them seated in their glory
The kings of mine and rail and soil!
What have you read in all their story,
But how they plundered toil?
Fruits of the workers' toil are buried
In the strong coffers of the idle few
In working for their restitution
The men will only ask their due.

Chorus...

Toilers from shops and fields united
The union we of all who work;
The earth belongs to us, the workers,
No room here for the shirk.
How many on our flesh have fattened!
But if the noisome birds of prey
Shall vanish from the sky some morning
The blessed sunlight still will stay.

**For workers' climate action:
climate change, capitalism
and working-class struggle**



A collection of articles
and reviews, produced
by Workers' Liberty (£3)

Climate Pamphlet

The urgency of tackling climate change makes serious strategy to halt it only more important.

The third edition of our pamphlet, "For workers' climate action: climate change, capitalism and working class struggle", December 2018, offers such strategy.

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AWL conference

By Cathy Nugent

Workers' Liberty's annual conference, where we debate and decide on our policies and plans, will take place on 7-8 December.

Published documents so far include one entitled, "Leading the fight for a new re-grouped internationalist left". This argues, "This left needs to clarify the political lessons of the last 10 years of austerity, and the mis-steps of the Corbyn movement. Bigger political questions underpin those debates: the limitations of social democracy, the renewed influence of Stalinism, the fight to make Labour an independent workers' party (which should oppose 'progressive alliances' with the Liberal Democrats), consistent democracy on international questions, and the importance of democratic culture."

The background to this debate — the shift to the right in the wake of the Brexit crisis and industrial struggles at a low ebb — are not propitious. Nonetheless the left is beginning to sober up and address the problems we collectively face.

Documents are commissioned by our National Committee or are brought to conference by any member. Other documents up for debate will be "Perspectives on Israel-Palestine", "Marxists and climate change", "Feminism Today", "How to assess Universal Credit" and "Secular Education and the Hijab".

We will be publishing these documents and debate in *Solidarity* and on our website in due course.

All members are expected to attend the conference and have their say and vote on the policies. We also invite supportive comrades, friends and international delegates to observe and speak in the debates.

Please email office@workersliberty.org to find out more.

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.

• 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

See you next year!

By Vicki Morris

Janine Booth has written about her experience in her new book *The Big J vs The Big C: Issues, Experiences and Poems in the Battle Against Breast Cancer*, charting her diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer.

One in two people will develop cancer during their lives. The increasing incidence is mainly a result of more people living longer.

Cancer was something that people were ashamed to mention, endured by a silent minority in private, but now is more openly talked about.

There are many different cancers, some eminently survivable, taking different treatments to cure them or keep them at bay. Yet some cancers are untreatable, some incurable. I was diagnosed five years ago with an "indolent" (slow-growing) lymphoma, a type of blood cancer. (Indolent? It can take as long as it sodding well likes as far as I'm concerned.)

It's incurable, but chemo can put it back in its box when it gets too lively. Until chemo doesn't work any more... Still, as cancers go, I got lucky with mine. Not like the poor bastard working in the local shop, who got diagnosed with throat can-



cer in February and was dead by April. Yes, it does make you shudder.

Whatever cancer you might get, however lucky or unlucky you are, you cannot evade the stress and sadness involved in a diagnosis.

And any treatment is gruelling, and fraught with the possibility of complications and side effects.

Janine tells her story through fast-paced narrative, puns (lots of puns), poems, and informative, highly relevant digressions on topics such as the workplace rights of the cancer patient and the unwelcome roles played by private medicine and Big Pharma.

You will laugh and cheer as Janine successfully confronts and overcomes each obstacle in the way of being cured. (To be honest, it's a wonder she's still standing.) You probably won't cry because, well, it's just not that kind of book, although you can tell that Janine probably did at points on her journey, not least when she remembers friends and comrades whom cancer did take.

Whatever cancer you or your loved ones face, you will doubtless come to appreciate the NHS more than you ever did before, at the same time as not being able to overlook the strain it is under: stressed nurses, delayed appointments, lost blood tests, etc. Janine Booth's tour to promote her book is, rightly, titled "The Big J (and the NHS) vs The Big C".

Also deserving an explicit hat-tip is science per se — Janine has scathing passages on its enemies: quackery and religion. Another to civil society in the form of the innumerable charities, support groups, etc, that work in tandem with the NHS to humanise the medical experience of cancer and empower the patient and their families and friends.

Interwoven throughout her book, Janine describes the most im-

portant fronts in the fight against cancer:

- Prevention, through ending poverty, improving education including around self-care, extending checks and scans.

- Nationalising the pharmaceutical industry, rebuilding the NHS, including primary care.

- Strengthening trade unions, to ensure workers can exercise their rights, and uphold health and safety at work.

Janine relegates fund-raising charity fun runs and the like to a minor, supporting role, even though they are probably the first thing people think of in the war on cancer.

One in four people survived cancer in the 1970s, two in four survive today, current projections say three in four will survive by 2034. As socialists we aim to liberate human society and inventiveness to prevent and cure more illness, distress and disease. Let's aim to decrease the incidence of cancer, and improve that survival rate for those who are unlucky enough to get it.

The ideas in Janine's book can provide a great basis and inspiration for our campaign.

• More info: janinebooth.com

Schools dispute shows effect of anti-union laws

By Duncan Morrison, Assistant District Secretary, Lewisham NEU

What effect have the anti-union laws had on the campaign to boycott high-stakes testing in primary schools?

As the mover of the successful motion at National Education Union (NEU) conference which called for the union to ballot for a boycott of high-stakes testing in primary schools, I was invited to the national working group on the indicative ballot.

At the first meeting of the working group, we had a session addressed by the union lawyer. She pointed out that we could not ballot our members to boycott the tests on the grounds that they do harm to children. That would make the action political and thus illegal.

Fortunately, there were issues over workload and professionalism around the tests which meant that we could get a legal ballot. But it is astonishing that we are not allowed as a union to get our members to collectively stop inflicting harm on

children. We know the tests harm children but that is not, according to the law, a legitimate reason to boycott!

The anti-union laws have cut across and hindered our campaign in other ways. Before even thinking of an actual legally-valid ballot on whether to boycott, the union organised an "indicative" ballot on the issue. The motivation was to ensure that we can get through the thresholds introduced by the last tranche of anti-union laws in 2016 in any formal ballot.

Those thresholds are as follows. A majority of the members you are balloting must vote. In schools, because we are considered an important public service, we have to get "yes" votes not just from a majority of those voting, but also from 40% of members balloted to vote "yes".

To call action we need more of a mandate than any government in recent history has achieved.

In addition, because of the time frames imposed by the 2016 anti-union laws, the union felt that to ensure we could boycott the most significant tests in May we had to ballot in December and early Jan-



uary to give us a live ballot at the right time.

All those factors added up to hamstringing school workers who wanted to stop doing something about what was causing a huge amount of suffering and distress to many of our children.

We must insist that a Labour Government scrap not only the SATs, but also all high stakes testing in primary schools, and all the anti-union laws.



Our pamphlet, *The German Revolution*, has Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9. They span from when the 1918-9 German revolution began, and her release from jail, through to her murder by a Social Democratic government protected right-wing militia. Paul Vernadsky's introduction tells the story of the German revolution and discusses findings of recent scholarship on it.

56 pages A4. Cover price £5. With postage — non-UK £7, UK £6. Cheap rates for bulk orders. Buy online at bit.ly/rl-gr

PCS strikers and climate strike



John Moloney

PCS Assistant General Secretary (personal capacity)

PCS is supporting the 20 September climate strike.

Our members on strike at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy in London and in HMRC on Merseyside will use their picket lines on that day to raise issues around climate change, and will march from their pickets to city centre mobilisations in support of the climate strike.

We've encouraging branches to undertake as much activity as possible on the day and there is a wide range of activities planned across the country.

We want to organise around climate change as a workplace issue, and are supporting our negotiating reps to bargain with civil service departments and other employers over climate change issues, whether that's issues of emissions and other environmental questions in the workplace itself, or the employer's wider role in terms of the issue of climate change. We don't



want to just have a policy that says we oppose climate change; we need to organise around it as a class issue.

The other initiative we're pursuing is a cross-union discussion aimed at properly developing the meaning of a "just transition". There's still a lot of confusion about this idea, with some in unions like Unite and GMB believing radical action to combat climate change will lead to their members in the energy industry, for example, being put out of work.

We want to develop a piece of legislative policy that maps out how the transition to a zero-carbon economy would take place in practical terms, including a guarantee that all affected workers will be offered a new job with equivalent

terms and conditions. We want to discuss this with other unions and, once it's complete, we hope to propose it collectively to the Labour Party as something we'd want them to implement in government.

One of my election pledges was to develop a culture in the union where groups of members were encouraged and facilitated in taking industrial action, and I'm pleased to see there's a growing fight back across the union with around 16 live disputes, and more to come. There's a steadily growing mood to confront workplace issues head on and take action. The union needs to encourage that reflex at rank-and-file level. No submission from any branch to the union's National Disputes Committee has been turned down. I hope this continues.

As the political situation develops, our National Executive Committee meets on Tuesday 17 September to discuss our response. We already have a policy supporting the election of a Jeremy Corbyn led government, but the NEC will discuss exactly what this will mean in practise, in terms of how we engage with Labour's election campaign. That NEC meeting hopefully will also discuss Brexit.

With Boris Johnson lurching towards authoritarianism and intimidating he may defy the law to ram through no-deal, we need to be clear with our members in the civil service that they must obey the law, and resist any pressure from senior managers or ministers to defy it in order to facilitate a no-deal Brexit.

"Worker status" for couriers!

By Zack, Deliveroo courier activist, Bristol Couriers' Network — IWGB

The California state legislature has passed a landmark "AB5" bill to tighten legislation in the so-called "gig economy", extending basic workers' rights to many who had been deprived them.

In the USA, as in the UK, companies such as Uber or Deliveroo falsely categorise most of their workers as "independent contractors". This deprives us of basic workers' rights such as minimum wage, holiday pay, a pension, and collective bargaining rights. The number of workers with such jobs has more than doubled in the last three years, to around one in ten working-age adults.

Companies, when attempting to justify this miscategorisation, spout hackneyed phrases about allowing our "flexibility". This flexibility is seriously exaggerated, plus, flexibility would be fully compatible with correct categorisation and workers' rights.

Flexibility counts for little for a Deliveroo motorcyclist having to work 70 hour weeks, week-in week-out, to cover costs and make a living, because of low pay and high costs. We are paid, not per hour, but per delivery, sometimes earning as little as £3 to travel to a



restaurant, wait, collect the food, travel to the customer, and deliver it. There have been whole afternoons where I have earned well under the minimum wage.

Many gig-economy employers use complex incentives systems, performance-management style usage of stats, and the ever-present threat of having your contract "terminated" to behave every-bit like an employer and boss.

IWGB and other unions in the gig economy in the UK have consistently fought — including in the courts — that we should have "worker status". A legal case against Uber was successful. Days before the court-case against them, Deliveroo added a bogus clause giving us the right to "substitution", to hire others to perform the work on our behalf. Management have won, for now.

The AB5 bill places tighter conditions on what classifies as an independent contractor, places the burden of proof on the "employer", and strengthens the ability to sue companies for infringement. Unions and workers there are rightly celebrating at the shrinking of this loophole.

Uber and other similar companies have already stated their intentions to both fight the bill and argue that their drivers fulfil the criteria to count as independent. The battle against denial of these basic workers' rights is far from won in California, even further in most other places.

A lot of waffle is chatted about the "gig economy" as something supposedly very new and different. In the not-so-distant past, most work was very precarious, not dissimilar in the important respects from today's gig economy. Workers organised against that, won improved working conditions, pay, and security, and won legislation to protect them.

The "gig economy" is simply another implement in the bosses' toolkit to bypass those hard-won rights. We fight them within those terms of reference, as with our strikes for higher pay, and we fight to close that loophole and break that tool.

The rest of the labour movement and Labour party can and must help us win this basic struggle.

Tube vote for action on noise

By Ollie Moore

Driver members of the RMT union on London Underground's Victoria, Central, Jubilee, and Northern Lines have voted to take industrial action short of strikes over excessive noise.

Drivers are demanding a permanent engineering solution to the problem of excessive noise in trains. The issue is caused by noise cancelling technology fitted to tracks to avoid excessive noise at street level, which has the effect of forcing the noise into the cabs, where it becomes unbearably loud

for both drivers and passengers.

The action, which has yet to be formally named by the RMT, could see drivers run at slower speeds over the affected areas of track.

Station staff in RMT at the east end of the District Line have also voted for industrial action, returning a 94% majority on a 68% turnout. There, the dispute focuses on a spike in staff assaults which the union says is caused by lone working and short staffing.

As part of the action, workers will refuse to attend incidents alone and only work from a place of safety.

Ready meal workers ballot

By Will Sefton

Workers at Bakkavor, an international manufacturer of ready meals, dips and other products for supermarkets, are taking part in an indicative ballot over the derisory pay offer from management.

The GMB has been running a campaign for an additional £1 per hour with workers rejecting the companies offer which falls well below that twice.

Workers in Scotland have previously taken action earlier this year after rejecting a pay rise that

worked out as just 6p an hour more and was still below the national living wage.

Now the sites in Park Royal, West London, are set to ballot. Workers there are mainly from Gujarat, Sri Lanka and Goa, and mostly women. Around 4000 workers are employed across three factories and one warehouse.

Bakkavor is not well known, but its products are in every supermarket. The company was at the centre of the "hummus crisis" (bit.ly/hum-cris) of 2017, when large amounts of hummus were recalled and shelves were left empty.

Workers' Liberty

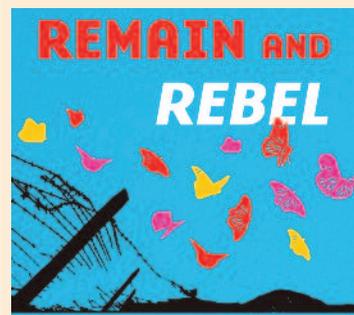
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Change the politics to socialism**

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Standing Together protests against Netanyahu

Netanyahu renews

West Bank grab threat

By Ira Berkovic

In advance of new elections due to take place on 17 September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced new plans for the annexation of Palestinian territory, pledging to annex a big chunk of the West Bank to Israel.

Prior to elections in April, he announced plans to formally annex 60% of the land area of "Area C" of the West Bank. The new proposal would cut off the Palestinian Territories' border with Jordan, and leave cities like Jericho as enclaves entirely surrounded by Israeli territory.

Some, including Netanyahu's main political rival, Benny Gantz, who heads the centre-right Blue and White coalition, have dismissed the announcement, made in theatrical fashion by Netanyahu unveiling a map showing the new proposal, as an election stunt.

In other statements, Gantz and other "opposition" figures such as Ehud Barak, the former Prime Minister who now heads the would-be leftist Democratic Union coalition, have indicated they could accept some form of annexation.

Should he win the elections and succeed in forming a government, Netanyahu may be held back from acting on his plans by the opposition of Vladimir Putin's Russia, a key international ally and after whose political style Netanyahu clearly models himself.

However, there is no doubt that Netanyahu's Likud party and its potential far-right governing partners have the ideological will to carry out such a move.

Netanyahu has stated that "not a single Palestinian" will be granted Israeli citizenship, meaning that Palestinian subjects of direct Israeli rule will be condemned to a perpetual second-class status.

In the immediate aftermath of

the announcement, Islamist groups launched rocket attacks against Israeli targets. Many believe annexation will lead to an upsurge in violence.

TWO STATES

Much has been written about whether the announcement renders a two state settlement — an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — an "impossibility".

Certainly it is true that, should annexation take place and be consolidated over a period of years, the material basis for an independent Palestinian state could be so completely atomised as to be unviable. But, on the basis of current trends, any remotely progressive "one state solution" is equally "impossible": the only "one state solution" conceivable now is the version Netanyahu is working towards, an expansionist "Greater Israel" with privileges for Jewish

citizens and dispossession and disenfranchisement for Palestinian subjects.

A two-states programme — the demand for a genuinely independent, viable Palestinian state in contiguous territory — in fact acquires a renewed radicalism in the face of Netanyahu's ultra-nationalist intransigence, as the only immediately practicable rupture with the status quo around which a social consensus could be built. Alternative "solutions" only become possible after a lengthy period of peace and security, such as a unitary binational federation; or would require a bloody war (the Israeli state being overthrown by external force), the only conceivable prosecutors of which, such as the Iranian and Syrian states, are no guarantors at all of freedom for the Palestinians.

Progress is only possible via a radical transformation of the balance of forces. This necessitates international diplomatic pressure on

Israel, including sanctions in the forms of arms embargoes and the withholding of aid.

But what it fundamentally requires is social upheaval within Israel itself, and a breaking of the Israeli-Jewish working class from ideological commitment to the Israeli state's colonial project. Jewish-Arab groups like Standing Together, with its commitment to anti-racism and equality of national rights combined with a focus on working-class social struggle, while as yet embryonic, are key to affecting such an upheaval.

Socialists internationally can contribute best by protesting directly against Netanyahu's plans. We should do that on a direct and concrete basis, not on the basis of a reactionary maximalism that imply no progress is possible until Israel as such is "smashed".

We will promote direct links and solidarity with Standing Together and others.

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