



& Workers' Liberty

# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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# TRUMP WIN SHOWS SICK SYSTEM

Donald Trump has won the US Presidential election.

He won by tapping into the reality of and the fear of poverty and failure among millions of working-class Americans.

He won by exploiting the deep racial divisions that have blighted US for centuries. He attacked all Hispanic workers when calling Mexicans criminals and rapists.

He won because millions of Americans wanted to revolt against the political establishment. But this man is not the "blue collar billionaire" that his supporters dubbed him. Just a billionaire and also part, the nastiest part, of the establishment!

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## Inside:

### The fight to save the NHS



With the NHS Bill in Parliament, *Solidarity* looks at the current situation in the NHS.

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### Labour should vote against Article 50



The courts have ruled Parliament must vote on Article 50. Labour should vote for migrant rights and against May.

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### Reason in Revolt



Join Workers' Liberty as we celebrate and learn from 50 years of our tradition.

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### Join Labour!

What sort of labour movement democracy?

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## Mass gathering of European neo-Nazis

By Sebastian Osthoff

**On 15 October more than 5,000 neo-Nazis from all over Europe met in Unterwasser, a small mountain village in eastern Switzerland.**

Even though the Swiss police is supposed to monitor the activities of far right groups, it was only when busloads of Nazi skinheads crossed the border that they became aware of the event. Completely unable to match the far right's forces, they stood idly by and watched whilst hundreds of thousands of Euros were collected to finance neo-Nazi structures in Europe, but mainly in Germany.

The Nazis had rented out a local sports hall under the guise of organising a small live music event. However, the bands were the hard core of neo-Nazi musicians around the Blood and Honour network, such as Stahlgewitter, Frotalkraft, Amok and Confident of Victory.

The lyrics of these bands are a hodgepodge of poorly written rhymes, racism and antisemitism as well as open calls for violence against minorities.

Such hate speech is prohibited by Swiss law. But the onlooking police repeated the neo-Nazis' claim that this was a private event and so the law wasn't applicable in this situation.

Journalists estimate that more than 200,000 euros were made that night. It was at least partly raised to finance 15 neo Nazis in Thuringia who were arrested after an attack on a local fair at which 10 people were injured. One of the organisers of the event, 29 year old Matthias

Melchner, is originally from Thuringia but now lives in Switzerland and has been involved in groups in good contact with the Ballstädt Nazis.

Sources acquainted with the neo-Nazis claim that in fact Steffen Richter was the main force behind the event. He in turn was a very close associate of Ralf Wohlleben, who is suspected to have closely collaborated with the terror group National Socialist Underground, which has murdered at least ten people in Germany and emerged in the late 90s from Thuringia's neo-Nazi scene.

Switzerland seems to have a certain attraction for the European neo-Nazi scene. Compared with Germany or Austria, Switzerland's anti-hate speech laws are relatively tame. Several leading German neo-Nazis have in the last years relocated to Switzerland, and far right concerts and conferences are held in regularly.

Meanwhile the extreme right in Switzerland itself is small and stagnating as its core topics, like immigration, are firmly in the hands of the more "moderate" Swiss People's Party. The massive success of this far right, racist party has helped the extreme right to feel more secure and confident.

It has unfortunately also pushed the parliamentary left to the right, and just this summer the Social Democrats, under the guise of finding a compromise, voted in favour of a law allowing for easier deportations of asylum seekers.

**Unless the Swiss left is able to really push against the racist tide, the far right will continue to feel all too comfortable.**



## Solidarity with water protectors!

**On 27 October police attacked Native American water protectors in Standing Rock, North Dakota after they had moved their encampment to be directly in the path of Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) construction.**

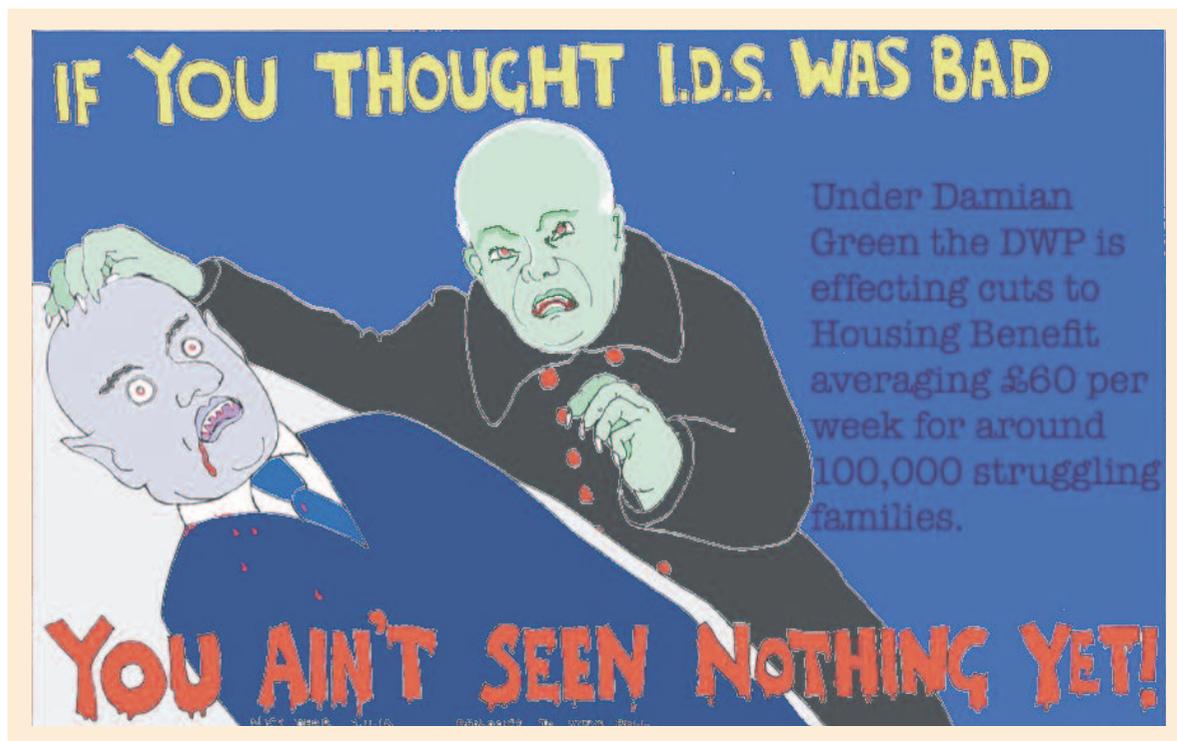
The attack follows arrests of nearly 130 on 22-23 October who were charged with crimes including aggravated assault, participating in a riot and resisting arrest. Protectors set up barricades with cars and old tires to try and stop officials from moving in.

The state's protection of a private pipeline and dismissal of the Lakota people's treaty rights recalls the way officials were more

concerned about the destruction of a gas station than human lives following the death of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

Among those calling for support of the Standing Rock water protectors are Palestinian rights supporters and several trade unions, including the Communications Workers of America and National Nurses United.

**Legally, the pipeline should not be built underneath the Missouri river while an environmental report is still being written, but the pipeline's backers want to do as much construction as they can before winter begins and temperatures become too frigid for building.**



## Daesh stages murderous fightback in Mosul

By Simon Nelson

**With the assault on Mosul advancing quickly, Daesh have mounted a last ditch fightback.**

Seven eastern districts of Mosul have been lost; fighters who remain are hiding amongst the civilian population and launching repeated smaller guerilla style attacks on the approaching troops. 34,000 people have now fled the city.

Daesh leader and supposed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has called unremitting opposition to the army, militias and Kurdish forces that are retaking Mosul. A spokesman for the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service told Reuters: "Sometimes they climb to the rooftops of houses where civilians are still living and they hold them hostage and open fire on our forces, because they know we will not use air strikes against targets that have

civilians." Cars loaded up with bombs and with fighters posing as civilians and waving white flags are regularly driven into troops and buildings that are now occupied by their forces.

It may be that the Sunni Arabs who are fleeing Mosul will not be able to return for a long time, if ever. It may be that the conflict in Iraq is not going to end with any form of power-sharing, as so often recommended by foreign powers. The war on Daesh is producing winners and losers — and the people of Mosul may be among the latter.

A second front against Daesh has been opened by the Syria Democratic Forces (SDF), led by the Kurdish YPG. The campaign, Euphrates Anger, is an attempt to capture the capital of the "caliphate", Raqqa, and will be supported by the US coalition. They are currently just 30 kilome-

tres from Raqqa, with the hope that this action will stop Daesh consolidating its power in Raqqa and using that as a base to launch attacks across Syria, Iraq and the world.

Shia militias and Kurdish groups are also preset in the attack on Raqqa, a predominantly Sunni Arab city. The US has said they will be backing Arab (rather than Kurdish) forces to take the city itself.

The 10-hour ceasefire declared by Russia has come to an end, and has Russia continued its barrage of bombs on the besieged civilian population. Eastern Aleppo, the rebel stronghold, has around 250,000 people who are besieged by government forces backed by Russian jets.

**The Syrian government's tactic has been to issue messages advising them to "stop resisting or die."**

## Nottingham protest against crackdown in Turkey

By Gerry Bates

**Hundreds marched through the centre of Nottingham on Friday 4 November to protest against the arrest of at least 12 MPs from the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP).**

The protestors marched to local BBC offices to try to get Kurds voice heard as political freedoms in Turkey are drastically curtailed including the crackdown on the press and social media. The editors and staff of *Cumhuriyet*, the main opposition newspaper in the country, were also recently arrested.

HDP arrests came after a car bombing killed nine people in Turkey's mainly Kurdish south east — this has been used as an excuse by the Turkish government for the arrests. They see the HDP as the legal arm of the Kurdistan Workers party (PKK).

The crackdown is an attempt by



President Erdoğan to consolidate power before next year's parliamentary vote and referendum to turn Turkey's parliamentary sys-

tem into a more centralised presidential system.

**Kurdish groups are warning Turkey could slip into civil war.**

# Calais refugees: solidarity still vital

By Ruth Willis

About a year ago I went with a small convoy to the "Jungle" camp in Calais. It was a very moving experience; people wanted to talk and the stories they told of what had brought them to the Jungle were hard to hear.

Seeing human beings living in such squalid conditions amidst the wealth of Europe made me very angry. I could see why the volunteers working at the camp were giving their time. It would be easy to become immersed in such work. You would ameliorate conditions for some, but the world of capitalism and border will keep producing refugees and economic migrants. Visiting the camp spurred me on to become more politically active at home, to try to change the world, and not just apply sticking plaster.

That said, helping in the here and now is critical. After the partial demolition of the Calais camp earlier this year I heard that donations

had dried up. There was concern that the refugees would not have enough to eat and were poorly prepared for winter. Myself and a small group of others from west London organised collections and donations of food, clothes and money to take over to Calais.

However, about a month before we were due to go, we heard that the camp was to be completely demolished and all the refugees evicted. This time they didn't mess about. Thousands of refugees were shipped across France, unaccompanied children were herded up and kept in modified containers, with no adult supervision, clean running water or provisions. The French authorities treated these human beings as though they were animals. The camp was left to burn.

Our trip changed. From bringing things directly to those who needed, we ended up working in one of the warehouses run by Care4Calais, sorting items for distribution across France.

The refugees still don't have the things they need, but the job of sup-

porting them is now harder as they are scattered; many are in centres with no decent food, or sleeping in aircraft hangars with one blanket per person.

They have been told they must claim asylum in France or face deportation, but it is unlikely many thousands of them will accept that choice, because they want to come to the UK. Many will return to Calais over the coming months. Many have family in the UK, while others simply choose this country as their new home. Thousands have repeatedly risked their lives or found themselves in brutal conflict with the border police, attempting to get to the UK and they will keep trying.

We must keep up political pressure here for the UK government to accept refugees and migrants.

**We can also do what we can to help keep people warm and fed and safe, while they struggle on our borders to make a better life for themselves and their families.**

• Phone credit for refugees: [www.facebook.com/groups/1709109339334305/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1709109339334305/)



## Refugee deaths hit record

By Hugh Edwards

**According to the latest UNHCR report, 2016 has seen the largest number of refugee deaths in the Mediterranean — almost 3800 so far. Last year the figure was 3771 for the whole year.**

While the walls and barbed wire fences of Europe and the cynical deal with Turkey to "house" refugees have resulted in a significant fall in the numbers attempting the Mediterranean crossing, the numbers of deaths has risen!

It was one death among every 269 people crossing last year. It is now one death for every 88 people. For those heading to Italy, one person dies for every 47 arrivals.

With regard to Italy, underneath the sickeningly hypocritical and pious rhetoric of Matteo Renzi and the Vatican, the situation has effectively returned to that which existed prior to the tragedy of Lampedusa four years ago when 300 perished as the Italian navy effectively stood by. The standard policy then was of forcibly resisting "criminal" attempts to land on Italy's shores.

### LAMPEDUSA

**It was that disaster that forced Europe to adopt, until the economic and financial crisis deepened, a formally more humanitarian posture. But once more those arriving are considered "clandestini", i.e. illegal.**

Under the Dublin accords the country of arrival has to be the agent for processing claims to the right of asylum. In Italy that "agent" is a historically underfunded, ramshackle, sadistic bureaucracy and the process is little more than a exercise in racist cynicism. Of the 20,000 or so of unaccompanied minors who arrived this year, 6,300 have gone missing. They escaped to the cities where they hope to survive long enough to continue the ordeal of getting out of Italy.

Inevitably social tensions have grown as the economy continues to languish.

For Italian workers there has been no relief from the debacle of failed governments of Renzi and his predecessors of centre left and centre right.

Their material conditions have without cease worsened, dramatically underlined by the massive and continuing migration of the country's young, with another 150,000 leaving this year.

The south of the country is little more than a desert. Many young women who remain no longer bother seeking work.

As elsewhere, it is the racist right who have sought to exploit the refugee issue. The Lega Nord and the fascist CasaPound have won some support, especially in the north east.

They have not yet created any permanent and sizeable social base, but this may be changing.

In Gorino, a small town in the Po delta, attempts by the authorities to house a dozen or so refugee women and their children were met by a rebellion of barricaded streets, watched passively by the cops until the Mayor ordered buses ferrying the migrants out of the town. The "victory" was celebrated with a street festival, and presided over by a worthy from the Lega Nord, who called for other such rebellions. Then 200 km south, in Giuliano di Puglia, Molise, hundreds barricaded the streets as a demonstration of what they intend to do when 500 expected immigrants arrived. So too in Bitonto, further south.

Many of the participants deny that they are racist. And millions of Italians have helped with aid in a 20 year-long crisis of the refugees. But the presence and growth of the Lega and CasaPound spells out sharply that if all the terrible social, economic and political conditions of oppression and repression are not addressed and fought consciously as part of the class struggle, then those problems will be seen through the lens of racist propaganda; the victim will make an alliance with her oppressor.

The Italian labour movement has so far done precious little to seriously confront racist views within the refugee crisis. It has not fought against the conditions of work and life imposed by the camerati on the plantations and fields offering seasonal jobs to tens of thousands of immigrant workers.

**That reality remains a shameful blot on the working class movement and the radical left.**



## "Anti-imperialist"? Or just right-wing?

By Colin Foster

**The Philippines' new president, Rodrigo Duterte, announced in Beijing on 21 October: "I announce my separation from the United States, both in military but economics also".**

"America has lost it... I realigned myself in your [China's] ideological flow and maybe I will also go to Russia to talk to Putin and tell him that there are three of us against the world: China, Philippines and Russia".

The Philippines, constituted as a political unit by the Spanish Empire in the 16th century, were ceded to the USA as a colony after the Spanish-American war of 1898, and then won independence in 1946.

The country was ruled by a more-or-less pro-US dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, from the 1960s to 1986. Marcos was overthrown by "People Power" and Cory Aquino

became president in 1986.

Aquino and her successors were broadly pro-US, but also negotiated the removal of the huge US military bases established in the Philippines during the Vietnam war.

By the criteria of many on the left, Duterte's declarations in Beijing qualify him as "anti-imperialist" and "progressive". In fact, however, he is a right-wing populist who prides himself on his support for vigilante groups killing drug users, petty criminals and street children.

In a presidential election speech to business leaders, he said his presidency would be "a bloody one". He would issue "a thousand pardons a day" to police and soldiers accused of human rights abuses, and a presidential pardon to himself for mass murder at the end of his term.

**He threatened trade unions with "annihilation" if they disturbed "industrial peace".**

## Swedish dockers defend union rights

**On 8 November the Dockworkers' Union started industrial action, including a ban on overtime, at the Gothenburg terminal which handles 60% of Sweden's container trade.**

It has also called for a blockade on traffic redirected from Gothenburg.

Problems in Gothenburg have increased over the last five years since APM, the container-terminal offshoot of the giant Maersk group, took over, and especially since, according to the union, about a year and a half ago, the company adopted "an anti-union stance", presumably in response to the continued stagnation and sharper competition in global container shipping.

- The union is demanding:
- No sanctions against elected union representatives
  - No unilateral transfers of dockworkers' job to other parts of the workforce
  - Full compensation for extra shifts
  - Retraining and redeployment for sick or ageing dockers, without conditions
  - Re-established health and safety cooperation
  - Full provision of annual leave and parental leave.

**It had four 24-hour strikes in April and May over those demands, then paused for new talks. APM Terminals has not budged, so the union is re-launching its struggle and asking for solidarity.**

• More info: <http://hamn.nu>

### Next issue of Solidarity.

**Solidarity 424 will out on Wednesday 30 November. We are taking a break for the Alliance for Workers' Liberty conference.**

# A vicious circle in schools

By Gerry Bates

**Between half-term of summer 2016, and Xmas 2016, over half the maths teachers in the London secondary school where I teach will have quit.**

The maths department is more stable than most. Our science department, for example, went through almost a Year Zero in 2015, with almost a complete turnover of staff.

And our school is probably more stable than most in low-income areas of London. The *Guardian* has reported that the Harris Academies in and around London — “one of England’s largest and most successful academy chains” — had “465 teachers leaving in 2014-15, 422 in 2013-14 and 375 in 2012-13”, around 30% of its total each year.

The latest figures show that 11% of teachers quit the sector each year — but more of the turnover is churn, with teachers moving from school to school in search of promotion to a managerial or semi-managerial job, or of more bearable working conditions.

Obviously a bad thing, no? Disruptive for students? Conversations with teachers from schools with high turnover rates tell me that the churn is an integral part of deliberate policy.

Managers in those schools have to reckon that many teachers will last only a few terms. So, instead of giving new teachers leeway, helping them settle in, encouraging autonomous thinking about how to teach, they crack the whip on those new teachers to make them run their classes exactly according to an imposed template.

To make that constant whirl of new teach-

ers, all terrorised into a rigid template, even quarter-workable, the managers also crack the whip on the students. One teacher from a school with high turnover told me that her school, with a bit over 1000 students, had 33,000 detentions last year.

The detentions apparently cow the students sufficiently to make classes fairly quiet even with new teachers, and to get the school rated “outstanding” by Ofsted. Then teachers find a lot of their energy taken up with imposing or chasing detentions for such things as the wrong socks, or an out-of-place giggle, and soon they tire of that.

## CIRCLE

**The high turnover and the ferocious regimes for teachers and students reinforce each other, in a vicious circle.**

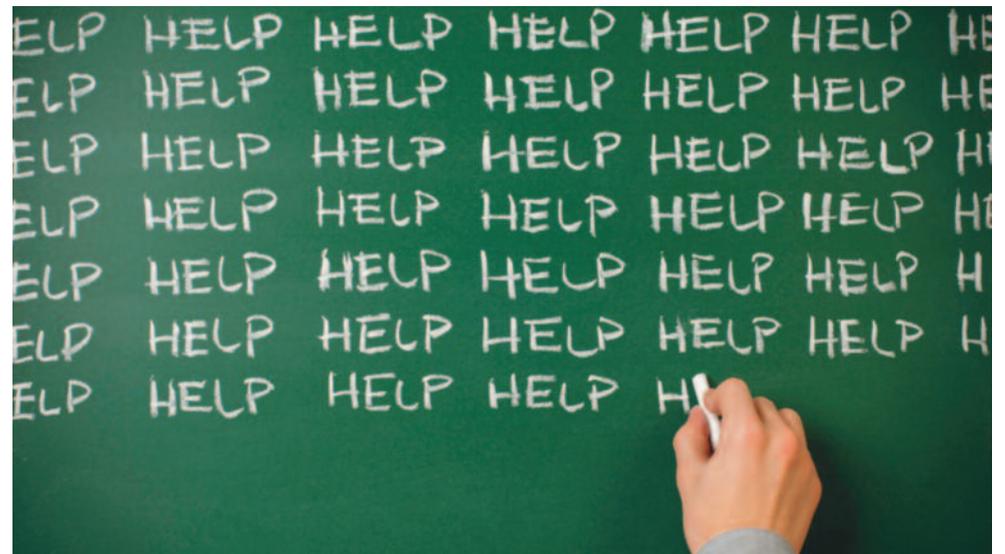
And Ofsted often thinks this is splendid. Outstanding. There is enough rigid drilling to drive students through exams. No matter if the students are going to forget most of what they’ve crammed for those exams.

The other engine of this vicious circle is the exam boards. England is exceptional not just for the intensity of its official exam-obsession, but for its system of competing exam boards.

The exam boards compete, above all, to make their exams predictable and cheap to mark. The result is bad exams.

Our exam board, for example, requires A level maths students to do a particular algorithm (for sorting large sets of data) *wrong* (in a way which contradicts the whole point of the algorithm), and will dock marks if they do it right.

I protested to the exam board. I mobilised



testimony from university professors of computer science that the exam board was wrong. The exam board did not dispute my mathematical arguments. It said only that it had always done the algorithm that way, so would continue.

After a while I realised why. Insisting the algorithm be done in the particular wrong way prescribed by the exam board makes the papers easier and cheaper to mark.

In another dispute, I’m asking the exam board to allow a neat, mathematically-better algorithm for calculating certain geometrical transformations in A level Further Maths, as well as the laborious and mathematically-poor method they prescribe.

I’ve been corresponding with them for nearly 18 months now. No-one from the

exam board has questioned my mathematical arguments.

In fact, no-one from the exam board has expressed an opinion of her or his own. Its emails report decisions from anonymous “senior examiners”, given without justification beyond “status quo”, as if they were divine authority. It looks like the final outcome will be that the better method will be grudgingly allowed only in certain exam questions.

Exams which are mindless drill; school management designed above all to mould teachers and students to that drill; and high teacher turnover — all parts of the same vicious circle.

**And another part is the increasing rates of depression and anxiety among school students.**

## Residents plan Heathrow campaign

By Simon Nelson

**Four Tory Councils are set to take legal action against the expansion of Heathrow Airport.**

Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead will be joined by Greenpeace in seeking a judicial review of the decision to go ahead with a third runway.

Court action is likely to delay any final decision actually being implemented. For the residents of the area and those who will be most directly affected the words of David Cameron, “No ifs, No buts. No third runway” now ring very hollow.

The anger felt by local people as Heathrow Ltd throw their weight around has not dimmed in the years of meetings, legal challenges and direct action that has been so far employed in the fight against airport expansion.

200 people attended a public meeting in Sipson on 31 October to hear from local MP John McDonnell, the Heathrow Campaign Against Noise (HCAN) and some of the figures who may be involved in the legal proceedings. The delay in the decision is a major frustration for residents who want to be able to plan their futures and know if they will still have a home. Whilst some favour expansion at other airports instead of Heathrow,

the room was sympathetic to the shared concerns of those living near Stansted, Gatwick and other regional airports. Contributions in favour of a publicly run and significantly improved integrated transport system got broad support.

The legal challenge itself is no guarantee of a victory. This was put best by a QC in the room who explained: “judges are generally conservative and cautious people who don’t like to upset the Government, whoever it may be when it comes to big infrastructure projects.”

Others in the room were pissed off with the Unite union (who back expansion) in particular. They highlighted the campaigns Unite runs on housing but it is in effect in favour of their homes being destroyed!

Not all unions are in favour of expansion, and workers at Heathrow have an important role to play to fight for a democratic transport policy that puts workers’ control and environmental sustainability at the heart of its campaign. The interest in a working-class environmentalism amongst some of the unions appears to have faded in recent years. This is something that needs to be urgently rediscovered if the fight against Heathrow is to be won once and for all.

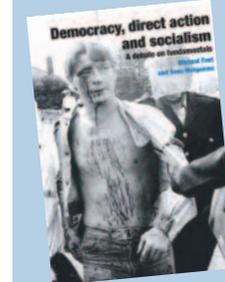
**Existing community campaigns need to reach out to those workers who have the power to grind Heathrow to a halt.**

## Can socialism make sense?

A new book from Workers’ Liberty which makes the case for socialism. In a time when socialism is the most searched word on the Merriam-Webster dictionary website, more and more people call themselves socialists, and a self-confessed socialist is leader of the Labour Party, this book explores what socialism means, whether it can rise again, how, and why.

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

£14.80 including postage



## Democracy, direct action, and socialism

There are decisive turning points in history that shape the future for many years ahead. The British labour movement was brought to such a turning point by the victory of the Thatcherite Tories in the 1979 general election and the events that came after it. The defeat of the labour movement then shaped the social, political, and ethical world we

live in now. Was that defeat unavoidable? The revolutionary left argued then that it wasn’t: that if we mobilised our strength we could defeat Thatcher, as we had defeated her Tory predecessors in 1972-4.

This pamphlet deals with the clash of ideas between the revolutionary left and the traditional Labour left then personified by Michael Foot.

£6.20 including postage

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[www.workersliberty.org/books](http://www.workersliberty.org/books)

# Trump win shows sick system

**Donald Trump has won the US Presidential election.**

He won by tapping into the reality of and the fear of poverty and failure among millions of working-class Americans.

He won by exploiting the deep racial divisions that have blighted US for centuries. He all Hispanic workers when calling Mexicans criminals and rapists. By scapegoating Muslims.

He won because millions of Americans wanted to revolt against the political establishment. But this man is not the “blue collar billionaire” that his supporters dubbed him. Just a billionaire and also part of, the nastiest part, of the establishment!

Donald Trump is an idiot blowhard, but the political functionaries around him are not. This election was probably won by the Trump camp calculating the “demographics” of the USA. By exploiting the different insecurities that many people feel. By understanding and approving of social fragmentation in the USA and working it to Trump’s advantage.

But in short, Trump made his appeal to a white working class which has been excluded by the powerfully destructive forces of US capitalism over the last 30 years as it moved its business to anywhere in the world where labour is cheaper.

Even when Trump made his appeal to African-Americans, in order to soften his image, he could not resist treating those communities as people whose real political views and interests were worthless to him. “What have you got to lose”, he said, “Your life couldn’t get any worse”. Unsurprisingly, the polls said 90% of those African-Americans who were voting, would not vote for Trump.

As shocked as we are by this result, the truth is that Trump always stood a good chance of winning after the exit of Bernie Sanders from the election. With his calls for free college tuition, the removal of student debt, a national health service, Sanders represented a radical break from the status quo, but one which, with sufficient organisation on the ground, the whole of working-class American could have united behind.

## CLINTON

**By nominating a presidential candidate who was always going to continue the Clinton-Bush-Obama programme of complacency, corruption and corporate-interest politics, the Democrats ensured discontent among millions of people would rise.**

It was simply Hillary Clinton’s turn to pursue austerity and warmongering. Donald Trump was there to exploit and hypocritically ridicule this “establishment”.

What happens now? He may not be able to put through a programme of economic nationalism. He may not be able to expel thousands of Hispanic workers. But he will be able to load the Supreme Court front bench with conservatives. Already vulnerable abortion rights and the right of LGBT people to marry are under threat. Trade unions to will be under attack.

Trump’s election will give the green light to the neighbourhood vigilantes who fear young black men so much they are prepared to put a bullet in their back. The reactionaries who stand outside abortion clinics. The virulently anti-immigration Tea Party people. The organised fascists. And some of these people — the alternative right, the libertarians — are already part of Trump’s camp.



**We need socialist politics to continue the anti-Trump campaign**

Not everyone who voted for Trump approve of his violent sexism. But many did. There were people who overlooked the serious charges of sexual assault; that is they do not think this behaviour is wrong. Not everyone who voted for Trump are racist. But many are. US racial divisions run deep.

One of the saddest things about this election is how long-time union members, who in different circumstances would regard themselves as *anti-racist*, voted for Trump.

In places like West Virginia where there virtually no stable jobs Trump won big majorities. Maybe people just hear what they want to hear when Trump uses opportunistic

lies like “I am going to make America great again”. But the coal mines will not reopen. The miners will not get back to work. This is a man who made his fame on the basis of ruthlessly telling people “You’re fired”. If big business is now in fracking, and not coal, that is where state support under Trump will go.

Regular capitalist rule as epitomised by the US two-party system may have lost its legitimacy, but without a socialist alternative to replace it, things can get much worse.

What can the socialist left do now? Passively regarding Trump voters as ignorant rednecks who could never be pulled away from his politics is wrong. Yes, many millions

are poorly educated. But in this vastly wealthy society that is a shocking crime. As are these facts — that 21% of American children live in poverty, that 10% of workers are in low waged jobs, that 30% do not have health insurance and 40% do not have a pension.

Wherever the left is — in the US or in Europe — we all have to argue for class politics, the politics of justice and solidarity and *at the same time* making the strongest challenge we can against racism and xenophobia.

We do have a chance to do these things. Remember Bernie Sanders drew larger crowds than Trump for his attacks on Wall Street and the power and privilege of the “millionaires and billionaires.”

Here in Europe our struggle is against Boris Johnson, Marine Le Pen and Beppe Grillo. But it also against those in the labour movement who think anti-immigration sentiments and mild token opposition to the rule of capitalism is enough. And we also warn against a left which makes semi-populist stances against “the capitalist EU”, against globalisation, but never sets out a positive socialist programme: for equality, for working-class unity across borders, for the expropriation of the banks, for secure jobs and homes for all.

Events are showing us that campaigning for a social-democratic left “getting into power” is not enough. Getting working-class representation is about building a mass political labour movement organised around socialist politics.

**The necessity is not new, but it has now got many times more urgent.**

## Labour should vote against Article 50

**On 5 November Jeremy Corbyn told the *Sunday Mirror* that Labour will vote in Parliament against triggering “Article 50” — the formal procedure for Britain quitting the EU — unless the Tory government agrees to Labour’s “Brexit bottom line”.**

Then Labour’s right-wing deputy leader Tom Watson intervened to say that Labour would push “single-market” amendments, but would vote for “Article 50” regardless. Corbyn seems to have deferred to Watson.

Corbyn’s initial stance was right, and Watson is wrong. When the judges ruled that Parliament must vote on “Article 50”, that was an assertion of democratic norms.

Corbyn posed the “bottom line” mainly as continued UK membership of the “single market”, within which customs duties and checks are abolished and trade regulations are uniform. Better if he had said that the bottom line is freedom of movement in Europe — the freedom of EU-origin workers in Britain to stay here securely, for their friends and compatriots to join them, and for British people to work, live, or study in other EU countries with almost citizens’ rights, including such entitlements as public health care.

Since all sides now more or less concede that Britain cannot stay in the “single market” without also continuing freedom of movement — presumably with European Economic Area membership, or a sort of EU semi-membership, like Norway — it comes to much the same thing.

The Tory government, in its legal dispute with the judges, has taken its stance on

“Royal Prerogative”, the most undemocratic feature of British politics, the residue from the old absolute monarchy, the supposed right of the government to bypass Parliament.

The referendum result of 23 June creates no compelling democratic mandate to abolish freedom of movement, or to remove EU citizen rights from over 50 million people. Or to impose the re-entrenchment of partition in Ireland. Or trigger the erection of a further probable new border between England and Scotland.

Aside from the facts that 16 and 17 year olds were excluded; that EU citizens living here were also excluded (though they can vote in local authority elections); that the referendum was run on poor electoral registers; and that opinion polls now show a Remain majority, the referendum could create no mandate for any *particular form* of Brexit. The Brexit campaigners were definite only on promises which they would scrap on 24 June (£350 million more each week for the NHS) and vague on the hugely different post-Brexit models (Norway? Switzerland? Canada? Albania? Singapore?)

It is more democratic for Parliament to decide the terms of Brexit negotiations than for May’s Cabinet to do it behind closed doors.

May has given secret assurances to the Nissan bosses. Labour should demand she give public assurances to migrant workers, and to workers and students who may want to migrate.

Maybe the combined votes of Labour, Lib-Dems, SNP, and Europe-minded Tories will be able to win terms to “soften” Brexit. That

will be good.

If May refuses to trigger “Article 50” on “softened” terms, insists on “hard” Brexit, and can’t get it, then that’s her problem, and Labour should not help her out of it. It will be good, not bad, if the government cannot pass “Article 50” through Parliament — that is, if Parliament, in one way or another, upholds the rights of migrant workers.

Jeremy Corbyn told the *Sunday Mirror* that he welcomed the prospect of May calling an early general election. Activists should prepare for that possibility.

Under the Fixed Terms Parliament Act, passed by the Cameron government, May can call an early election only by engineering two successive votes of no-confidence in her government — not a good ploy — or by getting a two-thirds majority for it in Parliament, that is, only by getting Labour to vote for it too.

In circumstances like the present, where the Labour right’s relentless sabotage has given the Tories a not-yet-diminishing average 11% lead in polls over the last three months, Labour has an interest in gaining time to sort out the saboteurs, and a right to do so.

We have no interest in helping May to choose a snap election which she’d be fairly sure to win (despite “Remain” now having a majority in opinion polls), and which she could then cite as a “mandate” for hard Brexit.

**Labour should fight every inch of the way to minimise barriers and divisions which the Tories want to raise with Brexit.**

# Democracy is more than clicks

By Gerry Bates

**Q. There's an argument about decision-making procedures going on in the Labour left group Momentum. What is it about?**

A. Whether decisions, on policy or on who gets on committees, should be taken by votes in meetings, following discussion — or online.

**What does Solidarity prefer?**

Votes in meetings, following discussion.

**What's the advantage of that?**

As the American historian Howard Zinn put it: "Democracy is not just a counting up of votes, it is a counting up of actions. Without those on the bottom acting out their desires for justice, as the government acts out its needs, and those with power and privilege act out theirs, the scales of democracy will be off".

When democracy is reduced to counting the votes of a passive electorate, it becomes largely a tool for those already at the top to manipulate consent. They decide what is voted on, in what terms, when, with what information, and how the voters' verdict on a crude yes-no question is translated into detailed policy.

Trotsky condemned the Stalinist regime, not for abolishing votes, but for elevating "plebiscitary" voting above democracy. "As history testifies, Bonapartism [rule by a dictator standing above institutions] gets along admirably with a universal, and even a secret, ballot. The democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the plebiscite. From time to time, the question is presented to the citizens: for or against the leader?"

And the French Trotskyist Daniel Bensaid explained how party democracy, based on a structured system of meetings and debates, is an antidote: "party democracy (as opposed to the media-driven, plebiscitary democracy of so-called 'public opinion') would be, if not an absolute remedy, at least one of the antidotes to the professionalisation of power and the 'democracy of the market'."

These arguments apply at the smaller level of a movement like Momentum, as well as at the grand level of the running of society. No-one in Momentum is Stalin! But a "plebiscitary" democracy in Momentum will mean initiative being monopolised by those who are already in office, those who control the email lists, those who get bourgeois media coverage, and the day-to-day activists being marginalised.

**The advocates of online voting describe it as "one member, one vote". That has to be good, no? You're for everyone getting a vote, surely?**

Democracy is not *just* a counting-up of votes, but it includes counting-up of votes. Everyone should indeed get a vote. But it matters how. It matters whether your casting of a vote is integrated into a structure allowing informed discussion, debate, and collective opinion-forming, or whether it is

atomised.

Parliamentary elections in a country like Britain are made democratic, to the extent that they are democratic, not just or even mainly by formal voting rights, but by such facts as:

- the freedom to operate of rival political parties, large and well-resourced enough to reach almost all voters with their leaflets, their canvassing, and so on;
- the existence of a varied media, to which all voters have access, and which, at least with a careful reading, enables each voter to know what each party says.

They fall short of democracy, mostly, not by denying people votes (though in Britain about seven million people entitled to vote are off the electoral registers because of one bureaucratic obstacle or another). They fall short because:

- the established parties are bureaucratic. They fudge and trim their messages to voters, and act in office differently from what they promise at election-time. In the Blair-Brown era, the completeness of the takeover of the Labour Party by a caste of careerists, wonks, spin-doctors, and think-tankers greatly dimmed not just Labour democracy but parliamentary democracy in Britain.

• the political system makes it hard for new parties to break through, unless they are funded by rich people (like Ukip).

- the media are biased.
- working-class people are often exhausted at the end of a day of wage-work plus housework, have often been intimidated by the exam-stressed educational system, and face bigger obstacles to political participation than the well-off.

**How is that relevant to Momentum?**

A structured system of decision-making by elected and accountable committees and by delegate conferences would make the movement democratic in the sense of giving it channels for the formation (and constant reformation, adjustment, correction, amendment) of a collective majority view. The advantages of those already at the "top" would fade unless they were able to persuade and carry their views in debate.

Decision-making by online voting would mean that such discussion and debate as could still continue would be submerged by an online process between the Momentum office staff and an atomised mass of members uninvolved in debate, and mostly uninvolved in activity too.

The advocates of online voting do not suggest that there should be no committees, no office staff, no public spokespersons. They don't suggest an online plebiscite each week about what Momentum should do that week. With an online voting system, the day-to-day texture of how Momentum responds to events, where it directs energy and where it lets things slide, how the necessarily crude yes-no outcomes of the online votes are converted into living detail, will be decided by the office staff, without the detailed accountability and adjustment which a structured meeting-based democracy affords.



Workers at Ford Dagenham voting at a workplace meeting to strike in 1968. The strike led to the Equal Pay Act.

**What's the experience?**

The historian E P Thompson writes of the early days of the English labour movement that then it seemed that a "half-dozen workers could not sit down together without appointing a Chairman, raising a point-of-order, and Moving the Previous Question".

Structured meeting-based democracy has been integral to the labour movement throughout its history. At least in theory, everyone agrees that the annual conference should be the Labour Party's sovereign body.

The best form of democracy known to date, that of the workers' councils in Russia in 1905 and in 1917 and the years after, or of the similar workers' councils which have emerged in many other countries in revolutionary times from then until now, is one based on meetings, debates, election and recall of delegates, and the continuous formation and revision of collective opinion.

**Isn't there a danger with "tiered" delegate structures?**

In movements or in times with a low level of activism, delegate posts can become monopolised by incumbents who can deflect challenges from not-very-pushy grass roots. You can see that syndrome, to one degree or another, in trade unions.

No-one argues, however, that unions should replace their shop stewards' committees, branches, delegate conferences and so on by a system of their office staff doing online plebiscites of union members, only that the structures should be opened up more. General all-members' votes should be used as a check and balance, for example when committee votes to start or end a strike should be subject to validation or invalidation by general all-members' votes.

There may be a case for that sort of check

and balance in Momentum. It would be very different from an all-covering online-plebiscitary system.

**Isn't online one-member-one-vote what enabled Jeremy Corbyn to win Labour leader?**

The Labour right were not wrong in their broad view when, from 1993, they systematically pressed to extend the domain of online or postal voting, at the expense of structured decision-making.

But they overreached themselves. They underestimated the anger among Labour members against the Blair regime, and the extent to which Labour-left hold-outs like Corbyn had gained credit from their resistance to that regime.

Plebiscites don't produce the result that the "top" wants always. Just usually.

But for Corbyn's victories to have lasting effect requires structured democratic decision-making by meetings and delegates in the Labour Party. At present, and until we get that, Corbyn as leader is hemmed in by the right-wing MPs and the right-wing Labour Party officials. They cannot be replaced just by clicktivism.

**What about new experiences with online-democratic systems?**

The transformation of the Workers' Party in Brazil from a democratic and activist revolutionary-socialist organisation into a hollow run-from-the-top-down left-neoliberal electoral machine was facilitated, according to its historian Wendy Hunter, by decision-making through meetings, committees, and delegates being replaced within it by plebiscitary "one member, one vote".

Or take the movement 38 Degrees. Founded in 2009, it promotes itself as an exemplar of democracy and "people power".

It started with funds from trusts and foun-

# s online



Pay Act.

dations, which enabled it to set up a large and well-resourced office, by the standards of left-ish campaigns: it spends over a million pounds a year on paying its 35 full-time office staff. (Comparison: *Solidarity* and *Workers' Liberty* operates with two full-time staff, paid much less than the 38 Degrees people, and four part-timers who also do outside paid jobs or uni courses).

38 Degrees has a Board of worthies, which, it says, "meets a few times a year" "to make sure that the organisation is... accountable to its members". But neither the Board nor the office staff are elected.

38 Degrees has a sufficient web presence now that it can get £3 million a year in donations, mostly online.

It claims three million members, and says its members decide its campaigns. To become a member means online signing one of its online petitions. From time to time the office staff poll "members" online about campaign priorities (but they don't publish the poll results, and what they do publish suggests very few "members" vote in these polls). The details of campaigning are decided entirely by the office staff.

We had an instructive and comic experience a few years ago. We were building a campaign against the Tories' NHS plans. We knew that 38 Degrees had been active on the NHS, and its network had provided many useful contacts for some local NHS campaign groups.

So one of us went to the 38 Degrees office to ask if they would cooperate. The 38 Degrees staff were shocked at the fact of an actual person, rather than an email, coming to their office! Talk? Discuss? No way.

38 Degrees mostly just promotes online petitions. 38 Degrees sometimes provides a useful channel of communication for real-life protests on the streets. But it doesn't organise any. It certainly doesn't organise in work-

places, or within organisations such as trade unions and the Labour Party. It is clicktivism plus a well-funded office staff.

If Momentum is to be effective, it has to be active daily and weekly on the streets, in the Labour Parties, in the unions, in the workplaces. And that requires a continuous, structured, decision-making process by which the activists form an evolving collective majority view on what to do each day, each week, each month — not from-time-to-time online plebiscites of the members with the results interpreted by the office staff.

The 38 Degrees structure is not suited to an activist organisation.

**Taking decisions at meetings discriminates against those who can't attend meetings. Online voting is better.**

Online voting discriminates against those with poorer internet access. And most of all it discriminates against those with new or unorthodox ideas who need access to discussion to develop those ideas and to convince others. It discriminates in favour of ideas already well-boosted by the media.

New technologies can help people with physical limitations on their participation in meetings, for example by giving them input via video links, or enabling them to read immediate transcripts of what they can't hear. Thus it enables them to take part in the collective formation and revision of a majority opinion. Being able to click "yes" or "no" to the options an office gives them is a much poorer thing.

**You can accompany online voting with online discussion.**

The internet makes it easier to keep members of a movement well-informed. Minutes of meetings, details of decisions, voting records can be circulated fast to everyone.

In Momentum, those most in favour of online voting are generally also the most resistant to circulating that information online.

Online debate and discussion sometimes works well as a supplement to face-to-face discussion. In mathematics, for example, the Polymath Projects, since 2009, have enabled fast progress on research problems through mathematicians across the world battling ideas back and forward online.

In that case, there are solidly-agreed, collectively-evolved criteria for evaluating ideas, and the participants are all also and simultaneously engaged in face-to-face discussions, in their universities and in conferences.

None of those preconditions applies with the idea of running a political movement through online voting. There is no way of ensuring, or even making it likely, that the online voters also participate in the online discussion. Nor is there really a way of getting a single online discussion. Online political discussion is notoriously fragmented into rival networks of Facebook friends and so on.

When it stretches across networks, it is frequently abusive. Sadly but in fact, the internet has revolutionised sectarianism more than any other strand in politics. In the old days, to be a sectarian you had to attend at least some meetings. Now you can be a famed sectarian just by ranting online each night after an evening of solitary drinking, and without feeling any pressure to respond in a human way to the arguments of opponents.

**A reliance on online voting is likely to depress activism, to minimise constructive discussion and debate, and to boost destructive sectarianism.**

## Stumbling to the left

### HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST

By Martin Thomas

**I was broken from the instinctive middle-class Toryism handed down from my parents by reading Marx — *Capital*, and two paperback books of selections — when I was 14.**

My family was well-off — dad a GP, mum a dentist. There were few books in the house other than my dad's medical textbooks, but I became a bookish child (my sister and my brother, not so much). My favourites were Kasner and Newman's four-volume *The World of Mathematics* and the collected works of Dickens, both given to me by the only even quarter-bookish person in my parents' social circle, the head teacher of a secondary modern school.

In my scattershot reading I stumbled across Marx, and was shocked. I damped down thought a little with the idea that since Marx's day class conflicts had softened, and a huge middle class developed.

This was 1963: capitalism was stable and affluent. More social reform was needed, I now thought, but it seemed on track. I'd grown up in the steel town of Port Talbot, where wages were relatively good, employment full, council housing good-quality, and the labour movement un-militant.

The next shock to my middle-class complacency came when, aged 16, I left school and went to work for a while in Montreal. There the class difference translated into a bitter community divide — the impoverished working-class French-speakers on one side of the Boulevard St-Laurent, the smug, well-off, contemptuous English-speakers on the other.

I still knew no active left-wingers. Quebecois nationalism was on the rise, but predominantly Catholic and right-wing.

I went to university in 1966 with a decision to get involved with the left. I discovered that there are social and cultural gulfs *within* the middle and upper classes, too.

Snootiness and intellectual showing-off were (presumably still are) pervasive at Cambridge University. For students of working-class background, it must have been miserable. I was middle-class, but socially awkward, shy, an auto-didact except in maths, and, from being pushed forward

in school, two years younger than my contemporaries.

I avoided feeling crushed, I think, because I concluded that in maths I was the equal of any of those infinitely older, infinitely more cultured, and infinitely more confident students.

But I found the Labour Club, where what got theories reckoned most revolutionary seemed to be that their texts were not yet available in English, overwhelming; and ended up active mostly in the United Nations Student Association, of all things. Oddly, UNSA was being colonised by leftists who had no interest in the UN but wanted refuge from the acrimonies of the Labour Club.

The largest organised group on the campus (though the CP would soon overtake it) was the SWP, then called IS and much looser than today. Their first proposal to me, when I asked about activity, was to join them canvassing for Labour in an upcoming council by-election.

I did occasional factory leafleting, tenant canvassing, and paper-selling with IS, but I was put off partly by snootiness which I had acquired from the milieu, and partly by the tokenism and intellectual vacuity of the activity.

Eventually, on my last day in Cambridge, an IS member told me briskly to stop messing round: either join IS, or, if I could, start a better group, but in no case just drift around. (That IS member became a neoliberal professor of economics at Oxford. Another then-left-wing student with whom I attended maths tutorials weekly, and whom I thought rather a dullard, has just won the Nobel Prize for Economics. Such events help destroy the awe in which we might hold bourgeois expertise).

I moved on to Manchester with a decision to join IS. There, I found two IS branches covering the same geographical area, one "official", the other a pariah branch, against which I'd already been warned, containing members of the reviled Trotskyist Tendency, a forerunner of the AWL. And so another chapter started.

**I regret my stumblings. I also conclude that awkward, shy, "know-all", wrong-headed, stubborn, unprepossessing young people can, despite everything, sometimes be made into useful socialists.**



Port Talbot, once prosperous because of its steel works



**SATURDAY 10 DECEMBER**  
**IOE, LONDON, WCIH OAL**  
**11AM-6PM**

2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the political tendency which developed into AWL. Reason In Revolt is a day of talks and discussions to celebrate our 50 years and work out what they can teach us. We invite all comrades, friends, and curious observers — old and new — to come and take part.

### Where we've come from: what is "Trotskyism"?

For months, the newspapers have been full of scare-stories about "Trots". Workers' Liberty are Trotskyists — and proudly so. For us, the word conveys the democratic, socialist ideas of the Russian revolution of 1917 and the fight against the Stalinist counter-revolution. But what is the history of the "Trotskyists"? Why are they divided today? Read more: [bit.ly/whatistrotskyism](http://bit.ly/whatistrotskyism)

### Israel, Palestine, antisemitism and the left

In 1966 almost all revolutionary socialists advocated a socialist "United States of the Middle East", with self-determination for all peoples, including the Israeli Jews. Over the decades since, much of the left has lurched into denying the rights of the Israeli Jews and by implication, into antisemitism. Read more: [bit.ly/twonats](http://bit.ly/twonats)

### Rethinking imperialism: Learning from Iran, Ireland and Afghanistan

What does it mean to be against imperialism? According to the dogmas of some on the left, it means to support any force that fights 'the West': the Chinese, Russian, or Iranian regimes — or worse. In the 1980s, we learned a more critical approach through the experience of the Iranian revolution and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Marxist policy should be based not just negatively, on anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, but positively on workers' struggle and human liberation. Read more: [bit.ly/stalinafghan](http://bit.ly/stalinafghan)

### Labour, the Miners, and us: the 1980s and the Labour left revolt

The great class struggles of the 1980s — miners' strike, the last great upsurge of the Labour left and the defeats we eventually suffered have shaped our society today. Workers' Liberty was at the heart of the battles in the coalfields and the Labour Party in the 1980s. Veterans of those fights will talk about the lessons we learned, and what they mean for today. Read more: [bit.ly/minersclass](http://bit.ly/minersclass)

### What a revolutionary party is and is not

To overthrow capitalism and make a socialist society, we need a mass revolutionary organisation: and that is what Workers' Liberty aims to build. But what would it look like? What would its role be, and where might it come from? And why should we succeed where so many self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' organisations, like the Socialist Workers' Party, have clearly failed? Read more: [bit.ly/the\\_rev\\_party](http://bit.ly/the_rev_party)

### Socialist feminism and other feminisms

Workers' Liberty has always fought for a socialist feminism — a fight for women's liberation that is rooted in the struggles of working-class women; not in boardrooms. We have done that by refining socialist-feminist ideas in debates with other currents in the feminist movement, and in practical work. This session looks at where our feminist ideas and activism come from — and where they should go next. Read more: [bit.ly/whysocfem](http://bit.ly/whysocfem)

[www.workersliberty.org/revolt](http://www.workersliberty.org/revolt)

# Cutting the NHS to the bone

By Gemma Short

The NHS Bill 16/17 (formerly the NHS reinstatement bill) was due to have its second reading in Parliament on Friday 4 November.

NHS campaigners gathered outside Parliament to support the bill. The bill did not get discussed on that date and the second reading has now been rescheduled to 24 February 2017.

The bill was presented to Parliament on 13 July by Labour MPs Rachel Maskell and Margaret Greenwood. The bill would restore the NHS as an accountable public service by reversing 25 years of privatisation and marketisation.

The bill would: abolish the purchaser-provider split; reinstate the government's duty to provide the key NHS services throughout England; integrate health and social care services; declare the NHS to be a "non-economic service of general interest"; abolish the NHS Commissioning Board; require national terms and conditions under the NHS Staff Council and Agenda for Change system for relevant NHS staff; centralise NHS Private Finance Initiative (PFI)



Momentum NHS, Health Campaigns Together and Keep our NHS Public called a demonstration outside Parliament on 4 November to support the NHS Bill.

debts; abolish the 2014 legal changes which require some immigrants to pay for NHS services.

NHS bosses across the country are quietly drawing up plans for hospital closures, cut-backs and radical reorganisations to cope with a projected £20bn shortfall by 2020. NHS England has asked local trusts to draw up so-called "Sustainability and Transforma-

tion Plans (STP)" for how they will operate within the budget shortfall. Almost certainly most of these plans will include the restriction of non-life saving treatments, closures and amalgamations of A&Es, and increased involvement of private providers.

At Labour Party conference Momentum launched a national campaign around the NHS. If it is to grow this campaign needs

to be taken up by local groups and taken into the Labour Party.

- NHS bill campaign: [www.nhsbill2015.org/](http://www.nhsbill2015.org/)
- Momentum NHS: [www.peoplesmomentum.com/momentum-nhs](http://www.peoplesmomentum.com/momentum-nhs)
- Stop the STPs campaign: [www.stopthestps.org.uk](http://www.stopthestps.org.uk)

## NHS workers need a payrise

By a paramedic

Unison's annual survey of health workers has found that in the last year two out of every three have sought financial help or made major changes to their lives due to erosion in pay levels.

63% say they are worse off than last year, 10% have resorted to pay day loans to get by.

This is the reality of government pay freezes in the public sector. Health workers pay has fallen by an average of 12.3% in the last six years and if the trend continues Agenda for Change rates are set to drop below the minimum wage.

This is the background to the current NHS pay review body consultation on pay for 17/18. Within their submission employers argue the current 1% pay restraint is appropriate to allow trusts to make the "efficiency savings" required by the NHS plan. They also argue that Agenda for Change needs re-

form to remain "sustainable", signalling a continuation of the current picture where cuts have fallen squarely on the shoulders of health workers.

The health unions firmly and loudly oppose any cuts in unsocial hours pay, in line with the junior doctors dispute. Their proposals on Agenda for Change reform — including abolition of the lowest pay points to achieve the living wage as minimum pay, less increments within pay scales for faster pay progression — are also good.

However they couch the Agenda for Change negotiations as if the desire for "reform" from employers mirrors that of workers, when in fact it is directly counter posed. The financial hardship of health workers cannot be solved through partnership with employers who are implementing government cuts.

**There needs to be an active campaign amongst members for a £10 a hour minimum wage and to break the pay freeze.**

## Junior doctors fight not over

By Charlie Bell

Last month the Junior Doctors' Committee of the BMA voted to suspend its planned industrial action in the face of mounting pressure.

Concerns about patient safety, combined with reluctance from junior doctors to take the financial and training hit of recurrent prolonged strike action, led to the JDC decision.

This has been met with a significant backlash from some junior doctors. A poll on Facebook suggests strong continuing support for a reduced three day strike, with about 2,500 voting for this option. It is clear that since the referendum and the decision taken by junior doctors to reject this contract the BMA has been unable to develop a convinc-

ing or coherent narrative about the way forward.

With the contract being introduced in stages and the first obstetrics and gynaecology trainees already now on the contract, focus from the BMA has shifted towards fighting the way the contract is implemented.

With concern mounting about the ability for NHS Trusts to impose this contract in a suitable manner, this is likely to inflame tensions further and an already demoralised workforce will take further hits.

**How this contract dispute will continue to play out is yet to be seen, and how it will interact with the restarted consultant contract negotiations and the first steps towards Agenda for Change negotiations will have a lasting impact on the legacy of the dispute.**

## Social care cuts put more pressure on NHS



By Romesh Amaradeva

**"The NHS is going into its toughest winter yet with the odds stacked against it."**

"Demand for healthcare is on the rise, funding for both health and social care is being squeezed and A&E departments are missing their targets." That was the warning from Nigel Edwards, the Nuffield Trust's chief executive.

The full effect of the latest tranche of cuts to local social care will be felt by the most vulnerable this winter. This at a time of unprecedented demographic change and financial austerity and privatisation in the NHS.

Delays in discharging medically fit patients, due to the lack of social care (add to this an understaffed hospital transport system) means patients are at risk of developing further complications, such as hospital acquired infections, and due to prolonged bed rest are less likely to make a complete recovery once they are home.

To relieve pressure on hospitals, local NHS community teams are often diverted from seeing patients who would otherwise benefit from more intensive or specialised

input, to plug the gap in capacity created by local cuts to social care.

Savings made by local councils go beyond efficiency. They have already impacted on the provision of services; people with social care needs may no longer qualify for it.

The hallowed sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) are likely to be implemented in the same way for primary services. When local NHS bosses talk about "demand reduction" and "prevention", this will really mean reducing access to patients and service users.

This will certainly lead to more pressure on A&E departments, as carers and patients feel they have nowhere else to turn. Stephen Dorrell, the NHS Confederation Chair, admits "As a result, we are increasingly using our acute hospitals as unbelievably expensive care homes."

In a report on social care he proposes a move away from micromanaging local health initiatives and vague support for Devo Manc.

**These ideas fall well short of what is needed, and do nothing to address the costly and poor quality private social care provider market.**

# Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



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

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

# Momentum members call for democratic structures

## LABOUR

By Gerry Bates

**After the 5 November meeting of Momentum's National Committee was cancelled by Momentum's Steering Committee (SC), a number of delegates and members decided to meet informally on the same day.**

The discussion at this meeting in Birmingham was focussed on proposals to improve Momentum democracy and functioning. Eighteen NC members attended, along with a number of observers. Three members of Momentum Youth and Students also attended, after being mandated to do so by their Steering Committee.

Momentum's Steering Committee was elected by the National Committee earlier this year. But it was always meant to be an interim arrangement, and was certainly never meant to substitute for the National Committee elected by Regions and Liberation groups of Momentum. But the National Committee has now not met for six months, a situation compounded by the cancelling of the 5 November meeting.

That's the background to four regional meetings — all of which hoped to be sending delegates to a properly convened National Committee meeting in November — passed motions of censure in the Steering Committee.

## UNANIMOUS

**On 2 November the Steering Committee unanimously agreed a joint statement of the in which some of the failings of the Committee and the Momentum office were acknowledged.**

Some important concessions on issues of democracy were made.

However most the Steering Committee and Momentum's office still oppose the idea that Momentum's forthcoming conference will be sovereign and constituted on a delegate basis. This and a proposed alternative arrangement for decision-making are still being debated.

Alternatives to delegate-based decision-making are some variant of online One Member One Vote (OMOV). But who gets to decide what members can and cannot vote on? Will voting be based on yes/no alternatives? Most variants are likely to leave large areas of control over policy-making and organisational direction in the hands of the Momentum office. OMOV reduces, not improves accountability (see discussion on pages 6-7).

This issue of how Momentum conducts its internal democracy is the most important one facing the organisation and will determine whether or not it can shape itself

into a serious rank-and-file group oriented to transforming Labour.

The Birmingham meeting was comradely and extremely productive. A number of proposals were agreed at the meeting.

1. The need to restate that the National Committee is the highest [standing] body in Momentum, not the Steering Committee.

2. A new Steering Committee should be elected at the next National Committee (which is on 3 December).

3. The main officers of the Steering Committee should be elected by the National Committee.

## GROUPS

**4. Local groups should be the basis of Momentum.**

5. Every member should be encouraged by the national office to join a local group.

6. The national office should assist in setting up new local branches where they do not currently exist (the recent mapping exercise carried out by the office to see where the members live shows that 33% of members are not in a local group).

7. We need to complete the mapping exercise.

8. It should be made easier to establish a local group. There are too many hurdles to jump over before a group can be "verified".

9. There should be a page on the national website to set out the various proposals about structures.

10. We should have a conference based on local group delegates.

11. There should be clearer "routes of communication" between the office and the members.

12. We need to take a serious look at the Momentum companies' structures and consider ways to democratise them. There was a concern about who controls the data

about members and supporters.

13. There should be a Momentum Rule Book.

14. We need clear lines of accountability. Who is responsible for what?

15. The role of the staff and volunteers should be better defined, with the elected leadership responsible for decisions taken and directing the staff on the basis of decisions taken by the Steering Committee and National Committee.

16. The Steering Committee and National Committee must produce and circulate minutes. There should be an identified member of staff responsible for administering the running of the Steering Committee. Every decision should have identified the person who will implement the agreed action.

17. Decisions about money and resources have to be taken democratically by the relevant officer/committee and those responsible must be accountable.

There are likely to be a number of different proposals on the running of the national conference at the meeting on 3 December.

**AWL will support proposals that argue for a delegate conference where motions are debated and voted on the day. Agreed decisions from the conference should be implemented.**

- A model motion on building Momentum groups and democracy is available on [jillsmomentumblog.wordpress.com](http://jillsmomentumblog.wordpress.com)
- Reports of the meeting are available on: [edsunionblog.wordpress.com](http://edsunionblog.wordpress.com) [jillsmomentumblog.wordpress.com](http://jillsmomentumblog.wordpress.com) [socialistnetwork.org.uk/category/momentum/](http://socialistnetwork.org.uk/category/momentum/)

# Events

## Friday 11 November

'Every cook can govern' film showing  
7.30pm, Brixton Library, London, SW2 1JQ  
[bit.ly/2eNu7ql](http://bit.ly/2eNu7ql)

## Thursday 17 November

NUT demonstration: Invest — don't cut  
5pm, outside Downing Street, Whitehall, London  
[bit.ly/2dFtxPk](http://bit.ly/2dFtxPk)

## Friday 18 November

Lewisham Young Labour 'Pride' film showing  
6pm, 283 — 285 New Cross Rd, London, SE14 6AS  
[bit.ly/2ehWUY5](http://bit.ly/2ehWUY5)

Got an event you want listing?  
[solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

## Saturday 19 November

United for education national demonstration  
12pm, Park Lane, London  
[bit.ly/2fWTavQ](http://bit.ly/2fWTavQ)

## Tuesday 21 November

Merseyside Momentum Youth read *Parliamentary Socialism*  
6pm, Liverpool central library, 31 Ranelagh Street, City Centre, L3 8EW  
[bit.ly/2fjPbpe](http://bit.ly/2fjPbpe)

## Saturday 3 December

We Are The Lions — The Grunwick Strike 40 years on  
1pm, Working Class Movement Library, 51 The Crescent, Salford, M5 4WX  
[bit.ly/2fjO0WU](http://bit.ly/2fjO0WU)



**Stop the Labour Purge!**

**National Conference**

**Saturday 26 November**

**Queens Walk**

**Community Centre**

**Nottingham**

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stop the labour purge

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[bit.ly/2fjT55j](http://bit.ly/2fjT55j)

[stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com](http://stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com)

Backed by:

Broxtowe CLP  
Momentum Broxtowe  
Momentum Nottinghamshire  
Momentum Harrow  
Momentum Rotherham  
Stop the Labour Purge

# Durham TAs strike

Teaching assistants in Durham struck on 7 and 8 November.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, teaching assistants are fighting the imposition of a new contract which will cut their pay by up to 25%.

Durham county council is planning on sacking all the teaching assistants and reemploying them on the new contract to force through the changes, Durham council's proposed "solution" in negotiations would mean some workers only losing 10% of their pay — but working more hours for the privilege!

Durham teaching assistants have



received huge support from across the labour movement both locally and nationally.

**Further strike dates are yet to be set but there are as yet no signs of the council backing down.**

# Support Picturehouse workers

Picturehouse cinema workers at the Ritzy cinema in Brixton and Hackney Picturehouse are planning to strike again before the end of November.

On Tuesday 8 November workers at the Ritzy confronted Mooky Greidinger, CEO of Cineworld, and Renana Teperberg, new Managing Director of Picturehouse, who were visiting the cinema. They presented them with a letter calling on Cineworld and Picturehouse to negotiate.

**Support the strike fund bit.ly/2fmmJmF**

# Southern guards fight on

Guards on Southern Rail struck again on 4-5 November. A guard and union activist spoke to *Solidarity* about the dispute.

The strikes on 4-5 November were solid.

There are almost no scabs at my depot. People are still very much up for the fight; the 4 November deadline to sign the new contracts has passed, but the will to fight is still there. People are still angry. Management has treated us with no respect, and even people who feel like we might be going down want to drag the bosses down with us!

We don't care whether our job title is "guard" or "supervisor": what matters is retaining our

safety-critical status. That's crucial.

The strength of feeling at the demonstration and rally the union held at Parliament, and the demonstration in Brighton, show the will to continue fighting. More of these demos are needed. We can mobilise passengers, many of whom are already on our side. At my workplace, passengers have joined our picket line.

Industrially, things are deadlocked. Aslef coming into the dispute would have a very positive impact, but we can't rely on them. The administrative problems with their ballot [which was sent out, then withdrawn and redistributed, setting the process back] seem very poor.

Workers on other train companies are watching our dispute; they know that rail bosses want to ex-

tend Driver Only Operation, and if we lose, they're next. We've had workers from Northern rail and elsewhere come down to our picket lines to support us. Ultimately this is about breaking union power and organisation in the railway industry.

**The government is handing taxpayers' money to Southern bosses. That's money that should be invested in a publicly-owned railway. We all know the case for public ownership is clear.**

• Southern guards are due to strike again on 22-23 November and 6-8 December. Donations to their strike fund can be sent c/o RMT, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD.

# Barnet librarians strike

Hugh Jordan, Barnet Unison Libraries Convenor, spoke to *Solidarity* at the National Demonstration for Libraries, Museums and Galleries.

We are on strike today, 5 November, to tie in with the national demonstration.

We will be on strike again on Saturday 12 November and then we will have a five-day strike from Monday 28 November to Friday 2 December. We aim to give as much publicity as we can to our campaign, leading up to a final decision by Barnet Council.

Barnet Council is seeking to restructure and cut back Barnet's library service. They want to impose 46% redundancies on libraries staff as part of their plan to move to a more volunteer-run and staffless service, as well as reducing the physical space at all of the libraries. Four of Barnet's libraries are to be handed over to voluntary sector or-

ganisations (i.e. to be privatised) — these libraries are to be run without any of Barnet's current libraries staff involved, almost certainly without any paid staff at all. The local libraries campaign, Save Barnet Libraries, has been pointing out the risks and problems with this service model. Barnet UNISON has been working with the libraries campaign as well as pursuing our own campaign in defence of our library workers. So far we have already achieved important success — postponing the cuts for two years and forcing the council to backtrack from its initial plans for even bigger cuts to staffing and library space. It shows that industrial action combined with working with local communities can make a real difference. We are now reaching the endgame and are putting pressure on Barnet Council to reconsider the decision ahead of its General Functions Committee on 6 December where the final decision will be taken.

Eight out of 14 libraries were

closed today. This is a success for our action, especially considering the employment of agency staff who have been difficult to recruit to the union and organise — although we've made some progress with recruiting agency workers.

We are asking Barnet Council to reconsider its plan which is completely unnecessary, indeed costly. As well as being utterly destructive, it is costing more than £7 million to restructure the library service in order to save little over £2 million. Instead, Barnet should maintain at least the current staffing levels, staffed opening hours and library space.

**We have issued a detailed response to the planned restructure, outlining an alternative plan — see bit.ly/2ePA5XT**

• Send messages of support to [contactus@barnetunison.org.uk](mailto:contactus@barnetunison.org.uk)  
• Latest campaign details: [barnetunison.me.uk](http://barnetunison.me.uk)  
[savebarnetlibraries.org](http://savebarnetlibraries.org)

# New education union

By a delegate

A National Education Union (NEU) is likely to be formed by a merger of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). This merger is a step forwards for school workers organising.

Both the NUT and ATL held special conferences on Saturday 5 November to decide whether or not to ballot their members on the proposal to create a new union. The merger would create the largest school workers' union in the country, organising 450,000 members. Although the majority will be teachers, the ATL also organises a number of support workers who would be included in the NEU.

The process towards this new union has been going on for some time. However, the rule book and the sole motion which could be put to the conference only came out on the 10 October. Given schools have a half-term break at the end of October and a deadline for amendments and delegates on 26 October, this gave members a bare fortnight to discuss the shape of the potential new union. Unsurprisingly, this led to concerns about being bounced into a decision.

The NUT special conference was noticeably smaller than annual conference. The level of debate was low, with a general "bigger is better" line dominating. An amendment to give more time to discuss the details of the new union was heavily defeated. Had the amendment been passed it would have allowed more discussion over issues which are major areas of concern from the new rule book. These include the continuation of both unions' policy of independence from political parties, stopping us from affiliating to Labour and joining the fight for the transformation of the Party in to one that better serves workers' needs.

We also did not get to discuss concerns about a perceived slippage from a conception of the NUT as a trade union struggling alongside other unions to a view of the new union as an education campaigning body and professional organisation. Nor did we get to discuss that the new union will have one of its deputy general secretaries appointed rather than elected, in line with existing ATL practice but against current NUT practice.

Fortunately, an amendment to guard against potential witch-hunts under general "bringing the union in to disrepute" rules was passed with Executive support. An amendment to ensure supply teacher representation was lost. In keeping with recent annual conferences there was a successful push to have the "main question put" without further discussion. The anti-democratic use of this tactic was supported by the right

of the union and shamefully some on the "left". It stopped the conference discussing a further, softer, amendment to try to push for supply teacher representation and more crucially an amendment initiated by Workers' Liberty supporters to argue that the new union should actively organise support workers in schools and build towards a school workers' union.

The amendment had been endorsed by the Executive despite the opposition of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and the SWP. They argued that they didn't want to "step on the toes" of Unison, GMB and Unite who currently organise (some) support workers. How people who believe themselves to be socialists can put the bureaucratic needs of the existing union movement ahead of the industrial logic of one school workers' union is hard to understand. Besides, the majority of support workers remain unorganised and the new union could build itself here without the need to poach members from other unions.

An united school workers' union would be a powerful education campaigner and have increased industrial clout, being able to threaten and deliver more effective strike action. The only possible alternative was to keep the support workers currently in ATL in the new union but to do little with them or for them. The SWP and STA were so convinced of their arguments over this issue that they felt it better to not let conference hear the discussion at all!

An indication of the level of "debate" at the conference was shown when, towards the end of conference, Kiri Tunks, Junior Vice-President of the NUT, summing up on the main motion, cited the Cuban teachers' union, "one union and with a veto over government education policy", as a model to aspire to. She is either unaware that the Cuban teachers' union is a Stalinist, state-run union and is nothing to aspire to, or too cynical to care.

Despite all of this we should be in favour of members voting to create the NEU. It does create a larger and therefore stronger teachers' union. It will put more pressure on the remaining teaching unions to discuss unity. It does afford us the opportunity to organise and work with support workers and push towards a genuine school workers' union. We will need to fight to ensure that democracy remains and is improved within that union, that the union continues to see itself as an integral part of the labour movement in Britain and not a professional body or education lobby.

**We will also need to push for the union to affiliate to the Labour Party so that we can be an active part of creating effective working-class political representation.**



# Solidarity

For a workers' government

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## Fight the HE Bill!

By Ruairidh Anderson

The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, a free education activist network, writes that the HE reforms “are forcing marketisation on the university sector”, which will lead to universities “raising tuition fees, and allowing private providers further access to education provision.”

In brief “(the reforms) constitute a wide-ranging assault on the principles of free, liberated, critical education.”

The main mechanism through which this will be achieved is through a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). This will be similar to the Research Excellence Framework, a way of ranking universities based on certain criteria or — to use the jargon — “metrics”. In this case, the criteria are not based on research output but on a new list which will enhance the role business and the market have in higher education.

The arrangement of the TEF means that private providers and business will gain an increased role in education regardless of how universities rank.

Universities that rank highly in the TEF will be allowed to raise fees, while those who rank poorly will not, and this has many far-reaching implications for the sector. One of the confirmed TEF criteria is “average graduate salary after six months”: the higher the better.

Universities, looking to increase their TEF score and get more funding through increased fees, will develop their existing business relationships so that graduates in

specific courses are being taught the skills that businesses want, making it more likely, so it is said, that those businesses will directly employ a university’s existing students after graduation.

Control over content by businesses and university vice-chancellors will increase and potentially, so too will restrictions on academic and teaching freedom, if what is being taught is undermining, rather than helping foster these business relations. At the very least freedom in academic research would not be helpful for a university’s TEF ranking and so is at major risk of being deemed unnecessary by many vice-chancellors, whose main aims are often the expansion of a university’s surplus wealth over other aspects of the institution.

Meanwhile, universities that do not reach “teaching excellence” in the initial assessment may find themselves consistently ranking poorly in the TEF because they will never be able to unlock the extra funding that “leading” universities will gain in increased fees. With less, increasingly inadequate funding, they will find it very difficult to correct many of the funding problems that put them in that position in the first place.

These institutions will lay off or underpay staff to cut costs, increase rent in halls, and outsource courses to private companies which would naturally orientate the courses away from the needs and interests of students. Many private providers including Google and Pearson already run education courses.

Over years, a stratification of higher education institutions



could occur. Imagine a situation in which Oxbridge charge £50,000 per year, while others are still charging £9,000 a year but with even more extortionate rents, underfunded health care services and poorly paid staff. It could happen. (Harvard’s fees are \$63,025 per year).

These reforms need to be opposed as a whole — their overall impact, not just the raising of fees, is the problem! The National Union of Students voted to oppose these reforms and at its 2016 national conference agreed two key actions, both backed by UCU, the largest union for university academic staff.

One of the ranking criteria for TEF will be a universities score in

the National Student Survey (NSS) and NUS agreed to organise a mass boycott of this survey, to make it unusable in the TEF and so giving us leverage of the government.

Another major tactic is a demonstration under the banner “United for Education: no fees, no cuts, no debt” on Saturday, 19 November. This slogan is politically good in an abstract sense, but does not make it clear that this demo is a protest against the specific HE reforms of this government.

It is important that we all build this demonstration and opposition to the reforms, and raise focussed and radical slogans about combating the reforms and transforming our education system into one that

is free, liberated and accessible to all. What that transformation might look like is a hugely important topic for the left to discuss.

Under Corbyn, Labour has announced the policy of a National Education Service (NES), which means something like education “from the cradle to the grave”. But Labour is yet to fully develop the policy. We urgently need to do that.

Groups like the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts have created a space for these crucial discussions. Over many years, NCAFC has popularised the idea of free education in the National Union of Students.

It is also important that we take this discussion into the Labour Party and Momentum.

**United for Education Demo  
19 November**

12 noon, from Park Lane (Speakers' Corner), London, to Millbank.

[bit.ly/2fWTavQ](http://bit.ly/2fWTavQ)

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