



Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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TORIES OUT!



FOR A LABOUR GOVERNMENT WHICH STOPS BREXIT!

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Serbs, Kosova, and Stalinist lies



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

One Liz Payne, of something called the British Peace Assembly, was given an entire page in the 23 March Morning Star in which to propagate a pack of lies about the war in Kosovo and NATO's intervention twenty years ago.

Yes, a pack of lies — not just a biased or one-sided account:

"In Yugoslavia, imperialism saw not only the opportunity of ridding Europe of any last vestiges of socialism, splitting the country into controllable and exploitable statelets and securing access to high quantities of mineral resources, including the valuable lignite deposits of Kosovo, but also of testing the potential strength of the NATO alliance, its strategies, its military hard and software and its potential to win the support of the majority of the population of member countries"

It is difficult to know where to start with such a farrago of lies, distortions and misrepresentations, but let's start with one very obvious fact: this is not, in fact an article but a speech, reproduced in the Morning Star because, presumably the paper agrees with it.

It is a speech to a conference organised by the "Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals" (linked, I've discovered, to something called "the Club of Generals and Admirals of Serbia") and the World Peace Council — a body that has its roots in the Stalinist Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) and the "World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace" which, in November 1950, adopted the new name World Peace Council (WPC).

The guiding principle of the WPC lay in the Cominform's doctrine that the world was divided between "peace-loving" progressive forces led by the Soviet Union and "warmongering" capitalist countries led by the United States. This needs to be born in mind when reading Ms. Payne's account of what happened in Kosovo.

Most obviously, she gives no background to events beyond stating that "imperialism" had deliber-

ately broken up Yugoslavia. Nothing is said about the Bosnian war that immediately proceeded, and directly led to, events in Kosovo.

In fact the breakup of Yugoslavia — as the life imprisonment of Radovan Karadzic reminded us last week — was not the result of Western "imperialist" scheming but, rather, of the machinations of the then president of Serbia, the Serb-nationalist Slobodan Milosevic, and secondarily of his Croatian counterpart, Franjo Tudjman.

Serbian expansionist chauvinism, central to the Belgrade government, disrupted former Yugoslavia and made it into a slaughterhouse for its national component parts. The Serb regime pursued policies akin to primitive dark-ages imperialism in which non-Serbs were massacred or driven out and Serb colonists planted in their place, making the territory organically part of "Greater Serbia". Its objective was genocide and its methods were genocidal.

The Bosnian War was marked by a string of massacres, mainly carried out by Serb forces. In the spring of 1992 a group of Bosnian Serbs calling themselves the White Eagles unleashed hideous violence against the Muslims of Visegrad. Thousands of men, women and children were killed, many driven to the bridge over the Drina and shot, their bodies thrown in the river.

More "exemplary" Serb and Croat massacres of Muslims followed and the international response was... minimal.

Far from rushing to intervene, Western politicians from John Major and Douglas Hurd to the EU leaders and Bill Clinton, were reluctant to do anything that might antagonise the Serbs and maintained an arms embargo that did nothing to restrain the Serbs, but severely hampered the Bosnian Muslims' ability to defend themselves.

The only practical achievement of the "international community" before 1995 was to install a few hundred UN peacekeepers into selected towns in Bosnia (designated as "Safe Areas") to protect (mainly Muslim) refugees, and the establishment of "no-fly zones" suppos-



Bosnians in a prison camp during the 1992-5 war.

edly for the same purpose. Both were ineffective. When limited air strikes in late May 1995 resulted in nearly 400 peacekeepers being taken hostage, a consensus quickly emerged within the UN and among the troop-contributing countries that, however limited, NATO air strikes would do more harm than good.

UN

The UN force would return to "traditional peacekeeping principles".

This sent the not-so-subtle message to the Bosnian Serbs that they were now free to pursue their preferred strategy. That strategy, called "ethnic cleansing," involved using murder, rape, expulsion and imprisonment on a large scale to Muslims (and, to a lesser extent, Croats) from territory the Bosnian Serbs wished to claim.

The Bosnian Serb forces implemented their strategy with horrifying results. In July, Serb forces turned their focus to Srebrenica, a small village, supposedly a "Safe Area" near the eastern border with Serbia, swollen with some 60,000 Muslim refugees. The Serb forces under Ratko Mladic marched in, brushed aside the 400-strong Dutch "peacekeeping" forces (who lay down their arms without resistance) and systematically separated men and boys from the rest of the refugees.

In the course of the next four days nearly all the Muslim males — 7,400 of them — were killed. It was the worst mass murder in Europe since World War two.

That's why, when the US and its allies (including Britain) finally came to the aid of Kosovo in 1999, there was good reason to believe that in their clumsy, unreliable and inconsistent way, they were protecting the Muslims. Slobodan Milosevic had begun a campaign against the Albanian Muslims of Kosovo that had all the signs of a prelude to genocide.

In one of the earlier moves in Milosevic's Serb chauvinist offensive, the limited autonomous status that Kosovo had in the later years of Yugoslavia was revoked. Ninety

per cent of its population are ethnic Albanian. Ruled from Belgrade, it had been in effect, for most of the time since 1913, a colony of Serbia.

With the shameful memory of what had just happened in Bosnia, no principled socialist could simply oppose the NATO intervention (as distinct from maintaining political independence and refusing to give political endorsement, as we did) — let alone denounce it in the preposterous terms that Liz Payne uses.

"The day before the first bomb fell, prime minister Tony Blair told Parliament that Britain was ready to take military action 'primarily to avert what would otherwise be a humanitarian disaster in Kosovo'. The military objective of weakening the (Serb) army and so increasing its costs that it would be forced out of the province altogether, leaving it prey to Kosovan big business [sic] and its Western backers, was never mentioned."

By every principle of democracy and socialism, the ethnic Albanians were entitled to self-determination. By every principle of democracy and socialism they were entitled to the backing and support of consistent democrats and socialists.

Yet we had at the time the strange phenomenon of many socialists backing the Serbs against the ethnic Albanians! The Morning Star at the time reported events from the point of view of Milosevic and uncritically reproduced and echoed the Serb government's denunciations of the Kosovan resistance, the KLA.

The fact that the same Morning Star now publishes the transcript of a lying, Serb-chauvinist speech that makes no mention of Milosevic's genocidal record and no mention of the rights of the Albanian Muslim majority in Kosovo, shows that it remains, when it comes to its international coverage, as mired in a crude and thoroughly dishonest view of the world as it ever was.

During the conflict, roughly a million ethnic Albanians fled or were forcefully driven from Kosovo. As of 2010, some 3,000 people were still missing, of whom 2,500 are Albanian, 400 Serbs and 100 Roma: none of this is even

hinted at in Liz Payne's speech.

The forerunner of Solidarity denounced those, like the Morning Star, who supported Milosevic at the time:

"Where a 'good' 'socialist' imperialism counterposed to our own imperialism does not exist, they invent one, and plump for — the nearest thing to Hitler's Germany in contemporary Europe! They long for a socialist or anti-imperialist Fatherland — and settle for Milosevic's genocidal imperialism!"

"Victims of the long ingrained habit of believing what they need to believe, they draw conclusions not from analysis and exploration of the world as it is but out of the fantasy and imagination of minds from which both the facts of the real world and all remnant of democratic or socialist principle were long ago banished!"

"They are the reductio ad absurdum of a once powerful current, the obscene last kick of a degenerate line".

• Throughout this piece, for the sake of consistency, I have used the spelling "Kosovo", but in the 1990s the forerunner of Solidarity used the spelling favoured by the Albanian Muslims: Kosova.

Over 90% of £15,000 target

This week we got £136.29 towards our fund appeal, mostly from our "Death of Stalin anniversary" social and quiz night in London on 22 March, plus 20p from under the carpet in the office last month.

From previous weeks' income, we've now been able to buy a portable PA system. It had its first outing on the big anti-Brexit protest on 23 March.

A bit swamped by the size of the crowds there, but it worked well, and looks likely to be very useful on smaller protests in future.

Bad news: we haven't got an accurate total of our sales of literature on the 23 March protest. Good news: that's basically because we sold too much stuff to keep count. Probably the better part of a thousand copies of Solidarity, plus books and pamphlets.

As on 20 October, we were the only socialist group — in fact, probably, the only organised political group of any sort — with stalls, banners, placards, and systematic literature sales on the huge demonstration.

Now it's down to us to build on those new contacts over the next few weeks, likely to be frantic with Brexit crises. For that, we need energy and stamina, but we also need money.

• workersliberty.org/donate



Our new pamphlet, "The German Revolution", has Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9.

They span from when the 1918-9 German revolution began, and her release from jail, through to her murder by a Social Democratic government protected right-wing militia.

Paul Vernadsky's introduction tells the story of the German revolution and discusses findings of recent scholarship on it.

56 pages A4. Cover price £5. With postage — non-UK £7, UK £6. Cheap rates for bulk orders. Buy online at bit.ly/r1-gr



Schools: we'll strike each month



By Eleanor Buffery

I found out about the strikes in the local and national news and I thought it was really important. I read more about it, talked to my friends and we decided to take action!

I got in touch with Youth Strike for Climate nationally, set up a social media page and got started organising our own strike.

In my school we spent lots of time making posters and adverts. We spoke to the Head of Year, who helped spread the word by sending out an email to students letting them know she supported the strike, and the Head Teacher gave us a sign-out sheet on the day. That made it much easier for us to walk out.

We also went round different form groups at tutor time to talk to others about the strike and why they should join us.

One other school tried to walk out, but teachers wouldn't let them out. They'd just done an assembly about the suffragettes, but locked the gates when students themselves tried to protest!

On the day of the strike we all walked out together and waited in town for others to arrive. My friend Amy gave her speech and I read out the international open letter from Greta Thunberg [Swedish school student who started the Youth Strike for Climate movement] to people in power and adults. Others school strikers spoke too about why others should get involved.

We did some chalking and wrote slogans on the pavement and then we marched through town. At its height there were 130 of us. Most

were from my school but there were at least three other schools too, plus primary school kids with their parents.

We walked into the local council building to speak to them about our demands. We want to know why the waste incinerator was built, talk about creating low emission zones, improving recycling centres, improving awareness and education in schools...

Our placards and chants were things like "Theresa May hear us say, fossil fuels aren't here to stay" and "the oceans are rising and so are we."

The four key demands of the international strikes are for the government to declare a climate emergency, for education in schools on climate change, for them to communicate the severity to the public and incorporate young people in politics — we need votes at 16!

I think votes at 16 are so important. It's not just about the climate — young people need to be engaged in loads more issues. Brexit will affect us more!

EDUCATION

The education system too when the curriculum and exams are changed, these are youth issues. Children and young people need to be involved more. And there needs to be better education on this so we know how to have a say.

Going forward we want the government to at least recognise what we're doing. They need to respond to our demands. The Green New Deal will be a big project and could mean new changes. If you're an adult, you should speak up and use your platform — don't just say "the youth strikes are great!"

Adults need to know that we aren't going to be scared by threats of detentions. The only thing you

can do to stop us is help us instead of working against us!

We're going to keep striking every month and work with school strikers in other local cities too next time.

I think my generation are going to keep protesting. The school strikes have been so big because my generation have really recognised our power.

There's been a big rise in natural disasters and we know the impact of climate change. We know more about debates and issues because of the internet and social media.

We are underrepresented in politics, but I think we are educated as a generation.

We're stressed. Being young is really stressful. But seeing people do things inspires you to do things yourself and make changes. If you're thinking, "why isn't anyone doing anything about this" — you should be the person who does!

The advice I'd give to school students in other cities is to make posters! Don't just use social media we put up posters in cafes, on noticeboards, in the library.

Speak to your teachers. Get in touch with national organisers like Youth Strike for Climate. They will help you be seen by more people and make links. We had media training online and joined bigger national meetings.

Organising a strike is lots of work on top of homework. Lots of teachers aren't supportive.

But it's important to remember how important it is. It's not a choice — we have to do this because it's so serious.

Eleanor Buffery is a year 8 school student in Gloucester who organised the local youth strike for climate. She spoke to Maisie Sanders.

NUS left plans for 9-11 April

By Maisie Sanders

Full details have been released of the cuts to democracy in the National Union of Students (NUS), which look set to block almost all remaining opportunities for ordinary students to control or influence what the union does.

NUS will be stripped back into a "lean campaigning machine" that scraps the majority of its committees to "ease the burden of participation" on members and lifts all the democracy from its conference to solve the problem of a lack of engagement.

There will be fewer, shorter, less-political conferences. The five Liberation conferences (Women's, LGBT+, Trans, Black, and Disabled) will be merged into a single "Liberation Conference". All full time liberation officers, committees and sections will be cut.

Students union will no longer be required to hold cross-campus elections to decide their delegates to National Conference. Instead SU executive teams can simply appoint "suitable" delegates.

Consensus-based decision-making in workshops will take precedence over debates on motions and democratic votes. There will also be online votes for student unions pre, during and post conference.

NUS staff will be able to add details into motions explaining their financial and operational impact, making it easier for management to veto motions on bureaucratic technical grounds.

Full-time officer posts will be two years long. Their campaign priorities will be limited to a single "NUS manifesto" adopted by the whole officer team. The National Executive Committee which is supposed to hold them to account will be scrapped.

NUS UK will be split into two

separate arms: "Student Voice", which works as described above, and "Student Union Development". All control of SU Development will be given to student union executives (in most cases this means SU CEOs). Students will no longer be able to amend NUS's articles of association [its constitution], nor vote to approve members of the Trustee Board.

The leadership's motion claims that there is a "clear mandate" for these reforms. But they have been drawn up, without the vast majority of NUS members knowing about them, by a "Turnaround Board" made up of select (right-wing) full time officers, NUS's CEO and other student union CEOs, plus a "consultation process" of student unions with no mandate from general assemblies.

Delegates to National Conference on 9-11 April will vote on a motion presenting the reforms, but in the spirit of the undemocratic way the whole process has been handled, they won't be able to actually amend the proposed new articles of association.

The Student Left Network will be campaigning at conference against the reforms and for a fighting, democratic NUS that leads mass campaigns in defence of students rights, controlled and decided by its seven million members, not its 600 student union CEOs.

• Follow Workers' Liberty supporter Justine Canady's NUS President campaign: facebook.com/JCforPres/@Sign

• Share the left unity statement on NUS democracy: tinyurl.com/nusdemocracy

• Soft-left fails to fight shutting-down of democracy in National Union of Students: read more at bit.ly/s-l-nus



A new pamphlet from Workers' Liberty summarises our arguments on Brexit, Europe, international solidarity, free movement, immigration, and how to build socialist politics cross-borders.

40 pages A4. Cover price £4. With postage — non-UK £6, UK £5. Cheap rates for bulk orders: four for £15, ten for £35, twenty for £60.

• Buy online at bit.ly/r-rebel

Audio and e-reader versions

Many thanks to the volunteers who have enabled us to produce an audio version of the paper! Links to the audio version on SoundCloud are at www.workersliberty.org/audio.

To be sent our e-reader version of Solidarity, email awl@workersliberty.org.

This may be helpful for dyslexic readers. E-readers enable you to choose the font, type size, and line-spacing you prefer, in a completely uncluttered layout.

Please give feedback so that we can find out whether these efforts are worthwhile, and, if they are, improve them.

Green New Deal and workers' control



Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

Many environmental groups and much of the environmental and Labour left has talked enthusiastically about a Green New Deal, including for example Alan Simpson (*Solidarity* 499) and Clive Lewis.

The idea is inspired by similar proposals in the USA. But neither there nor here is there a single unified proposal. Instead, "Green New Deal" refers to the general idea of the USA government organising economic activity on the scale of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" of the 1930s.

In the UK, to the extent that "Green New Deal" refers to a particular proposal, it's the one from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Democratic Party Representative — and member of the Democratic Socialists of America — and the associated "Sunrise Movement".

The 14 page document (bit.ly/aoc-gnd) advocates a set of government investments and economic stimuli aiming to tackle climate change, economic inequality, and other "sys-

temic injustices".

The document recognises the seriousness of anthropogenic climate change, decreasing life expectancy, wage stagnation, and gendered and racial inequalities. It describes those injustices as linked to each other and to anti-working-class and anti-union policies.

Noting that Roosevelt's New Deals had limitations, in nonetheless advocates "a new national, social, industrial, and economic mobilisation on [its] scale", aiming to create millions of jobs and prosperity, and to tackle systemic injustices, including climate change.

The document calls for investments in infrastructure aiming for zero net carbon emissions in ten years, and for resilience to the effects of climate change. This would involve building or upgrading green energy sources, buildings, manufacturing, transport, and agriculture; smart power grids; and biodiversity supporting programs.

The document is close to as vague as you could conceivably get for any such document, with not much more detail than the paragraph above. Partly, that is because it proposed as a starting point to spur on the Democrats as a whole.

The document advocates "transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and

partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities, labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society groups, academia, and businesses". This sounds nice, but the complete lack of detail empties it of serious democratic content.

Consultations can, and often in practice are, little more than PR exercises. Results get interpreted and ignored or highlighted in line with a preconceived agendas. What is necessary is *democratic control*. And by whom?

How can you seriously work in partnership with such divergent interests as trade unions and businesses?

This contradiction underlines the emptiness of the quoted statement, and the importance of calling for *workers' democratic control*.

The question of who *shapes* a new deal is linked to the question of who *drives* it. Roosevelt's New Deal was introduced in response to the Great Depression, aiming to save capitalism from the backlash of its worst excesses. Much bolder programs should have been pushed for, but even the limited gains actually made came through pressure from the labour movement.

The document does recognise the impor-

ance of strengthening workers' rights at work, and also when organising: "strengthening and protecting the right of all workers to organise, unionise, and collectively bargain free of coercion, intimidation, and harassment".

The document aims for zero net carbon emissions within ten years, and calls for "providing and leveraging... adequate capital [for] the Green New Deal". That compares well with Labour's meagre commitments in the "Green Transformation" document.

On the other hand, the document makes no reference to expropriation or even taking industries into public control *with compensation*. Public ownership is necessary to bring about the urgently needed changes at the pace necessary. "Ensuring a commercial environment where every business person is free from unfair competition and domination by domestic or international monopolies", presumably rules out widespread nationalisations.

In terms of raising the labour movement's horizons, the Green New Deal is a step forward. As a proposal in its own right, it falls far short of the kind of socialist environmental policy that is needed.

Omar has challenged left common sense



Letters

The response of the US left to Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's recent comments about the influence in American politics of pro-Israel lobby groups have been debated by US leftists Barry Finger and David Finkel in these pages in recent weeks.

I write this letter not to respond directly to

either of their comments, but to bring to *Solidarity* readers' notice two subsequent statements of Omar's.

Those statements deserve attention and, I believe, praise from socialists concerned to articulate a broadly "third camp" perspective.

First, on 16 March, the anniversary of the start of the pro-democracy uprising against the Assad regime in Syria, Omar tweeted a statement of support for the uprising, which condemned "Assad's repressive dictator-

ship".

Then, on 17 March, the *Washington Post* published an article by Omar setting out her general international and foreign policy perspective, which she explained in the following terms:

"Valuing human rights also means applying the same standards to our friends and our enemies. We do not have the credibility to support those fighting for human rights in Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua if we do not also support those fighting for human rights

in Honduras, Guatemala and Brazil.

"Our criticisms of oppression and regional instability caused by Iran are not legitimate if we do not hold Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to the same standards."

On Israel/Palestine, Omar sharply and clearly articulates a principled position, based on upholding equal rights for both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs:

"The founding of Israel 70 years ago was built on the Jewish people's connection to their historical homeland, as well as the urgency of establishing a nation in the wake of the horror of the Holocaust and the centuries of antisemitic oppression leading up to it.

"We must acknowledge that this is also the historical homeland of Palestinians. And without a state, the Palestinian people live in a state of permanent refugeehood and displacement. This, too, is a refugee crisis, and they, too, deserve freedom and dignity.

"I support a two-state solution, with internationally recognized borders, which allows for both Israelis and Palestinians to have their own sanctuaries and self-determination."

The policy Omar spells out here should be the policy of the entire international left!

Some on the left argued that to mount any criticism whatsoever of the way Omar formulated her comments about AIPAC would be to "chime in" with a reactionary campaign against her, which was and is a real phenomenon and includes substantial anti-Muslim bigotry. How will such people now respond?

Whether the left wishes to acknowledge it or not, Omar's comments on Syria, and particularly on Israel/Palestine, are as much an affront to the common sense of much the far left as they are to the foreign policy consensus of American bourgeois politics.

It is an affront that is timely, and should be welcomed.

Daniel Randall, London

Liberals and anti-liberals

Many people on the left around the Corbyn surge talk derisively about liberals with a small L.

Some memes or articles don't seem to make a distinction between neoliberalism and liberalism. You get people saying that the politics of the majority in the anti-Brexit movement in the UK are neo-liberals.

Of course many of the high-profile leaders are neoliberals, but I didn't see many people on the 23 March demonstration with placards supporting the neoliberal elements of the EU like the Viking and Laval judgements or the state aid rules.

I did see many people whose support of the EU is based on liberal principles of peace and human rights. We got no hostility from them for slogans like "build unions not borders".

There are people on the left with abhorrent and reactionary views on issues like migrant rights or women's rights who denounce anyone who raises those issues as infected with "liberalism". You hear terms from the far right of American politics, like "radlib" or "sjw" used as put-downs by some who profess to be socialists.

The socialist critique of liberalism is not

that it's bothered about minority rights. Our critique is that liberalism cannot achieve its professed aims of freedom and equality because it fails to tackle a capitalist system that is by its nature coercive and unequal.

Revolutionary socialism welcomes and builds on the most radical elements of the liberal bourgeois revolutions of the 18th, 19th, and 20th century. It understands that these revolutions were doomed to be incomplete, as they were led by bourgeoisies who would never allow the more radical elements within liberal-democratic ideas gain a foothold.

Only the working class that has an interest in carrying through revolutions that give true content to the slogans "liberty, equality, fraternity".

Neoliberal political economy — dismantling social democratic protections and regulations, bringing private business and marketisation deep into all elements of previously public services, and removing workers' rights — was pioneered by the Pinochet regime in Chile. It was then pushed through by Thatcher and Reagan, who combined their market economics with reactionary views on a whole range of social questions. That neoliberalism is not inherently social-

liberal. The socially liberal elements in the New Labour or Democrat programs of the 1990s had their roots in the struggle of the left to force the leadership to take these issues seriously.

Also, let's not forget that whilst millions vote for neoliberal parties, the economic policy of privatisation or deregulation has never been popular. Only when neoliberals have combined those economic policies with ideologies of conservatism, social liberalism or social democracy have they connected with voters.

To put it crassly, and in terms Red London might understand, a "blue haired rad-lib" who campaigns on single issues like trans rights but does not see the wider picture, is probably more likely to be convinced to be a decent revolutionary socialist than someone who agrees with you about nationalised railways, Bill Shankly, and ale, but also thinks there are "too many foreigners".

Socialism is about human emancipation. Those who already fight for elements of this are less of an enemy than the anti-liberals.

Luke Hardy, Leeds

For a Labour government which stops Brexit

As we write, it's three days since the huge anti-Brexit protest on 23 March, the biggest demonstration in Britain since the 2003 march against the invasion of Iraq.

It is the day after Parliament rebelled against the government (Monday 25th) to mandate, 329 to 302, "indicative" votes on different Brexit formulas.

It's the day before those "indicative" votes are held, on Wednesday 27th. And 17 days before Britain "automatically" crashes out of the EU with "no deal", unless before 12 April Parliament approves the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by the Tories with the EU.

The Tory government cannot govern. Prime Minister Theresa May is likely to resign soon.

Maybe very soon, in the coming days, to give a new "caretaker" Tory prime minister a better chance of getting a Brexit deal through.

To a degree scarcely seen in Britain for centuries, the upper classes are unable to manage affairs in their usual ways.

They will get through their crisis — even if only by doing a makeshift series of "deals" after a "no-deal" crash-out — unless the labour movement seizes the time.

Unless the labour movement proposes a new way.

Yet Jeremy Corbyn, in Parliament on 25 March, proposed only an unlikely search for consensus among "old ways".

"It's time for this parliament to work together and agree on a Plan B... There is support in this House for a deal based on... a customs union and full single market access..."

There is nothing "Lexit-y" about this Plan B! It's a soft-Tory formula.

In a world which needs lower borders, not higher, Brexit was always a step backwards.



We now know that the Brexit leaders cannot find an actual Brexit formula which looks good to a majority even of Brexit supporters. Of the Brexit formulas discussed in Parliament, the least unpopular is the crash-out "no deal" one!

Labour should again take up the fight for a general election. It should commit itself without mumbling to a new public vote with an option to Remain.

It should commit itself to a "Remain and Transform" stance in a general election, and in a new public vote.

The job of the active socialists is to organise and mobilise the pro-free-movement, pro-low-borders constituency in the working class — especially the younger segment of it, still underrepresented on 23 March — to push Labour that way.

Why we joined the anti-Brexit march

I'm Labour's NEC youth rep – and I won't be at the People's Vote march tomorrow



Lara McNeill



In the run-up to the huge anti-Brexit protest on 23 March Young Labour member Alex Fernandes replied to NEC youth rep Lara McNeill's article "I'm Labour's NEC [National Executive] youth rep – and I won't be at the People's Vote march". From the Labour for a Socialist Europe website, bit.ly/14se-a.

By Alex Fernandes

In her latest article on LabourList, Lara McNeill recycles the rightwing lie that Remain sentiment belongs to the "liberal middle classes".

I'm sure that will come as news to the working-class residents of Merseyside, Manchester, Glasgow, London and other Remain-voting areas.

I'm a member of Young Labour, and as such McNeill claims to speak for me, at least on Labour's NEC [National Executive]. As a low-waged Portuguese migrant committed to international socialism, I can tell you categorically that she does not.

McNeill talks about the campaign to stop Brexit being "tired". I'm tired too. I'm tired of articles which refer to the working class as a (white) monolith that voted for Brexit, ignoring the millions of working-class migrants here on EU passports, many of them poor and BAME.

I'm tired of an irresponsible minority of Lexit theorists ignoring the fundamental socialist notion that the working class is inter-

national and has no borders.

I'm tired of articles that dismiss the deeply racist and reactionary undercurrent of the Leave campaign with a shrug, and platitudes about "kicking the establishment in the teeth", when the people most likely to be kicked in the teeth are people with a foreign accent.

McNeill seems to believe that denying the "will of the people" from three years ago will hasten the rise of the far right; but also that if we give into their demands on migration they'll pipe down and go away. Spoiler: they won't.

She accepts in her article that "the politics of xenophobia was central to the Leave campaign, and was a significant mobilising factor in bringing unprecedented numbers of voters out". But her conclusion is that this nationalist swing in UK politics is "an opportunity" for Labour rather than something to be resisted.

We migrants do not have the luxury of ignoring the coming assault on our rights, our family life, our physical safety as we walk down the street. When the Coram charity warns that thousands of migrant children in

care could be rendered illegal and undocumented, forgive us for not hailing this as a wonderful "opportunity".

Brexit, especially the closed-borders migrants-under-the-bus Brexit being advocated for by both the Tories and sections of the Labour party, will be a disaster for workers. The path to a socialist Europe (not "social", come on), and world, that McNeill claims to be fighting for involves the building of a mass trade union movement that can challenge the bosses and link up internationally.

This task becomes significantly more difficult when employment is linked to migration status – "managed migration" means handing the bosses much greater powers to threaten workers with deportation. Those powers are already being used to break the unions of low-paid migrant workers in the UK. And the expansion of those powers is an "opportunity"?

Those of us on the "remain and rebel" left, unlike the Anna Soubry and the Chuka Umunnas McNeill rightly attacks in her piece, understand that stopping Brexit will not solve society's ills. Just to start with, we need a massive expansion of public ownership and public investment, the trade unions to be unshackled and to build a mass grassroots movement that takes on the bosses in Britain and in the neoliberal EU, to change both for the better.

Clamping down on the rights of migrants, scapegoating people like me, and framing Britain's problems as though they're being imposed upon it by the evil EU are not the solution.

Lara McNeill won't be on the anti-Brexit march, and that's up to her. But hundreds of thousands of people will be, and many of them (more, I suspect, than she imagines) will be people she purports to represent on Labour's NEC, young people worried about their future, members of that vast majority of Labour activists who oppose Brexit – oppose it because they are socialists.

I'll be on the march – I'll be marching on the Left Bloc, which will be large and full of trade union and Labour banners, as well as slogans and chants calling for open borders and international solidarity.

Brexit: the bad Plan Bs

The Withdrawal Agreement which the Tory government got with the EU, but can't get through Parliament, provides for a "transition period" until December 2020.

During that "transition period" the UK will remain within EU rules and pay into the EU budget.

Under the "backstop" clause in that Agreement the UK commits to keeping Northern Ireland within the EU customs union and the Single Market for goods, unless and until the UK can come up with a new scheme for avoiding a "hard" border within Ireland.

The Tory right and the DUP object to the "backstop", though none of them says they want a "hard" border, and none of them has proposed an alternative scheme to avoid it.

The Withdrawal Agreement comes with a vague "declaration" about relations after 2020: according to the Tories, free movement and remaining in a customs union with the EU, or in the Single Market, are definitely excluded.

The "Common Market 2.0" or "Norway Plus" scheme would mean the whole UK staying in the EU customs union and Single Market, and keeping freedom of movement (more or less).

In short, it means the UK staying within all EU rules, but losing UK input into the making of those rules.

Perhaps because it is a poor deal from both Leave and Remain points of view, it has gained credibility, but on 13 June 2018, it was defeated in the Commons 126 to 327.

Labour officially abstained. 75 Labour MPs voted for and 15 against.

The "official" Labour alternative to the Tory formula is to add to it a permanent customs union with the EU and a permanent commitment to match EU provisions on workers' rights and the environment.

That would not include free movement. The Labour leadership talks about "full Single Market access", and something like that would be necessary to avoid a "hard" border in Ireland; but it also says it is against free movement and actual Single Market membership.

It doesn't explain how "full Single Market access" could be got without full Single Market commitments, which would include free movement.

No "Lexit" ("left exit") formula has been proposed by any Labour MP.

"Self-enhancement bias" or "illusory superiority" is the tendency for people to over exaggerate their desirable qualities relative to others. A well known example is that almost

ally ill

everyone believes they are a better-than-average driver. "Narcissism is the sharp end of the struggle for social survival against self-doubt and a sense of inferiority."

Wilkinson and Pickett have many fascinating insights into the history of privacy and etiquette which develop with capitalism. The public self is adorned with status symbols and conveys class rank by a subtle and elaborate repertoire of gesture, accent, vocabulary, and behaviour. The private self is a mysterious entity which we obsessively guard from the public gaze.

The obsessive self-love of the public persona that is at the root of narcissism. The tendency to attempt to present a successful front is a driving force of conspicuous consumption, where people go without basics or become indebted in order to drive a flash car or wear a designer label.

Widespread anxiety is good for business, not only because it drives up conspicuous consumption, but also because depressed and anxious people tend to seek out what small pleasures they can get.

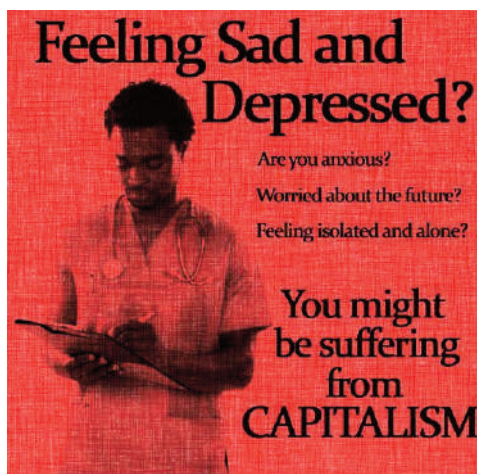
The third response to status anxiety is addiction. Addiction broadly defined is compulsive pleasure-seeking, which could involve drugs and alcohol but also might involve anything that triggers our dopamine-based pleasure reward centres.

Nowadays addiction services consider that we might become addicted to gambling, shopping, video games, even cupcakes. Wilkinson and Pickett describe the Rat Park experiments, where opioid-addicted rats were released into a purpose built rat paradise where rats were free to associate with other rats in a high stimulus environment.

Within weeks of this experiment most of the rats had kicked their opioid habit. Psychotherapist Craig Nakken argues, in words that will be familiar to Marxists, that addictive and compulsive behaviours involve "replacing people with things." The scientist behind the Rat Park experiments, Bruce Alexander, argues: "free market society can no more be free of addiction than it can be free of intense competition."

Having outlined the mechanisms whereby income inequality promotes mental illness and addiction, Wilkinson and Pickett begin to explore other trends.

Perversely the more unequal the society, the more strongly people believe that they live in a "meritocracy" and that class status reflects innate ability. In fact the complete opposite is the case. Social mobility declines with increased income inequality. There is also less social mixing and real obstacles to cross-class communication.



ANTISOCIALITY

This belief in meritocracy also translates into more antisocial attitudes. Wilkinson and Pickett point to a variety of studies that show the best paid individuals usually harbour the most antisocial attitudes.

People in posher cars are more likely to cut up other road users. Top bosses score highly on the psychopathy scale.

They argue that this tendency is rooted in the disregard that primitive animals show their subordinates. They point to research that proves antisocial tendencies are a product of rank and social position (rather than the other way round, where being antisocial would be the key to success and social climbing).

In more equal societies, where there is greater social mobility and thus greater competition for the top jobs, the rich tend to be more pro-social. "It is inequality itself that creates the climate in which richer, high-status people behave badly, rather than some in-built characteristic".

It is not just the rich who are antisocial. More unequal societies experience the highest rates of antisocial behaviour across all sections of society.

WORKING-CLASS ORGANISATION

Living in an unequal society means you are more likely to be a victim of violence (as measured by homicide rates) and childhood bullying.

Conversely civic involvement and traditional labour movement values such as solidarity are more common in more equal societies.

There are also other tendencies they uncover which militate against the development of strong working-class movements within unequal societies. Inequality makes communication across social rank fraught with social awkwardness. Wilkinson and Pickett point to data that shows cross-class marriages decline with increased income inequality.

As rivalries tend to be greatest among people of similar rank, this obstacle to communication could be a real difficulty in building working-class organisation. Across history, left activists have usually been better-off workers and young people from posher backgrounds. Socialist agitation and education may be more difficult in more unequal societies due to this increase in social awkwardness.

Solidarity within the working-class movement may also be more difficult. An example of this might be how the wider working class responded to the recent junior doctors' strike.

The tendency of income inequality to promote individualistic attitudes and differentiation and social awkwardness within the

working-class goes some way to explain the explosiveness and unevenness of class struggle. The relatively equal times of the 1970s generated much more trade union struggle and labour movement militancy than today.

The difficulty for today's leftists is that we are fighting not only against a background of defeats and setbacks for the labour movement but also against a culture, generated by inequality, that is highly individualistic and antisocial where people slightly higher up (or lower down) the pecking order are treated with a degree of suspicion that would be absent in a more equal society.

Socialist transformation is not simply a matter of getting a political party to power with the right programme. Rather it is a process of transformation in working-class attitudes and culture.

Against the hegemony of capitalist values of individualism, passive consumerism, nihilism and philistinism we pose the values of solidarity, militancy, democracy and critical thought. Equality begets a stronger movement to win more equality. Inequality makes the raising of such a movement much more difficult.

SOCIALIST POTENTIAL

Towards the end of the book, the authors begin to sound a little like Marx and Engels: "The complexity of modern industrial production has... returned us to an inherently interdependent, and so potentially co-operative, way of life."

"We now make almost nothing for our own use but work instead in highly co-ordinated groups to produce goods and services almost entirely for the benefit of others. When such highly integrated and co-ordinated behaviour is essential, building it on systematic inequality looks like an irrational hangover from a past era".

In the final chapter, however, we get a kind of left social reformism from above. The authors are far more radical than any mainstream politician in advocating "economic democracy" and ideas to make irreversible structural changes in economic life, but they end up positioning themselves as mere helpful advisers to government and promoting some NGOs.

The great power of their book is that it shows how class society is deeply ingrained in how we think and feel about the world. It shows how status anxiety pervades every aspect of social life within modern capitalism.

The science that they present points not to deus ex machina left social democratic reform but to bottom-up, revolutionary class struggle.

Socialists reading this book will get a sense of how Marx and Engels must have felt when they read Darwin's *Origin of Species*. It is a work of natural science that confirms our view of the historic class struggle.

It is the first convincing theory of mental illness in the 21st century and provides us with a powerful ideological weapon against psychologically toxic capitalism. It not only speaks directly to our lived experience but the book is peppered with suggestions of how our lives might be radically different if we won the equality that it advocates.

It allows us to imagine the immense human potential that could be unleashed by winning equality. It shows how much of today's depression, social awkwardness, compulsive pleasure-seeking, conspicuous consumption and narcissism could be consigned to the dustbin of history.



Gambling addiction is increasingly recognised

How not to give solidarity

By Marieme Helie Lucas

In response to massacres perpetrated by extreme-right white supremacists in two mosques in New Zealand on 15 March 2019, several symbolic actions took place that aimed at conveying to Muslims — who were attacked as such, since they were praying in the mosque when it happened — that they could count on their fellow citizens' solidarity.

New Zealand's Prime Minister was praised the world over for her humane response to the massacres.

While being moved by the generous intentions which motivated these symbolic actions, we nevertheless take distance from some of these which, in fact, will further increase the already prevalent confusion between personal religious faith and communal identity politics. Here are two examples.

New Zealand Prime Minister Ms Jacinda Ardern, followed by other officials (and then by ordinary citizens as well), saw it fit to wear a so-called Islamic head covering during their public functions.

We believe that there were many other symbols that could have been chosen in order to comfort Muslim believers, than one which is contested the world over by women of Muslim heritage — believers and unbelievers alike.

Rather, it comforts fundamentalists in their efforts to gain political visibility through their wide spread promotion of the veil, thus also asserting their grip over Muslims and over Islam itself.

Iranian women — who, for the past few months, have been thrown into prison, flogged, and tortured, for removing publicly that very veil which, for decades, has been imposed on them by law, and who have been holding it on a stick in public places in silent peaceful individual protests — may not actually feel very much comforted by these well-meaning top official women of New Zealand.

Alas, it does not seem they, the Iranian women, enjoy the same degree of support



Marieme Helie Lucas, an Algerian socialist feminist, has written this open letter: to people of good will, solidarising with victims of the Christchurch massacre; to the New Zealand Prime Minister; and to the management of Mount Royal University, Calgary, Canada

from the authorities and the people of New Zealand.

Nor do Algerian women who a few days ago commemorated in street demonstrations the numerous women and girls who were murdered in the nineties by fundamentalist armed groups for not covering their heads.

Nor do the women everywhere in Muslim contexts, from Mali to Afghanistan, from Sudan to Aceh, Indonesia, or throughout the Middle East, who have been repressed or killed for the same reason, whether by fundamentalist states or by fundamentalist non-state actors.

No doubt, neither the New Zealand PM nor those who followed her are aware of having made an unholy political choice by selecting the wrong symbol for expressing solidarity with victims.

But isn't it problematic, at such a high level in politics? At the times of Al Qaeda and Daesh — i.e. when no one in the world can pretend to ignore what happens to women who do not conform — isn't donning the veil somehow short-sighted?

Could they not find another symbol — less

contested, less charged with women's oppression — for Islamic identity, if that is the identity they wanted to emphasise?

Any progressive scholar of Islam could have suggested more progressive and less anti-women alternatives. (What about zakat [charity] for instance? It is one of the pillars of Islam, while the veil is definitely not one)

And they could also have reflected on more secular symbols to re-assure the affected Muslims on their citizens' rights to protection and equality of treatment.

Meanwhile — under the same pretext of respect for Christchurch victims, — the authorities of Mount Royal University in Calgary, Canada, have just de-invited Mr Armin Navabi, an Iranian-Canadian ex-Muslim atheist, who was scheduled to deliver a talk a couple of days ago.

PERSECUTION

Mr Navabi had been invited by the Atheist Society of Calgary. He was persecuted in his country of origin for being an atheist; he is the founder of Atheist Republic, an online news and information site designed to provide support to "non-believers around the world."

Said Navabi after being disinvented: "What do they want? Do you want to have less conversation? Isn't less conversation exactly what leads to people having extreme radical positions? I mean the less words exchanged between us, the more fists and bullets are going to exchange between people."

"Having more conversations is exactly what you need in the face of some tragedy like this". That seems a pretty reasonable and dispassionate view, certainly not one which should be censored.

Disinventing Mr Navabi is clearly taking side against those of us who fight for freedom of conscience and freedom of expression, and for Muslim fundamentalists who deny us these rights. The University authorities hinted at the fact that they were pressured by students and staff.

Rather than solidarity with victims, in both



A "White Wednesday" demonstrator in Tehran

these examples we see, alas, government and intellectual authorities taking — wittingly or un-wittingly — a political stand in favour of the Muslim extreme-right; a stand that is also the fundamentalist claim to be the only ones who truly represent Islam, Muslim believers, and all citizens of Muslim descent.

While indeed solidarity is very much needed, we call on well-meaning people to select other symbols when showing solidarity with the Christchurch massacre's victims. Symbols which would not lead to ideological compromise with the Muslim far-right, under the pretext of fighting the anti-Muslim xenophobic far-right.

One extreme right is not any better or worse than the other; both commit crimes against the lives and the fundamental human rights of people, women included.

Both reinforce each other, the crimes committed by one legitimising — in their own eyes — the crimes committed by the other.

It would be a major disaster if the racist homicides perpetrated in Christchurch against Muslim believers would, in the end, benefit the Muslim extreme-right. Let's make sure it does not happen.

Blues Power

By Barrie Hardy

Right wing politicians always have great difficulty trying to get support from anyone with artistic integrity.

In the Thatcher era, when numerous talented musicians sang up for the Labour cause under the banner of Red Wedge, all the Tories could cobble together were talentless tosh like Vince Hill, Jim Davidson and Mrs Mopp.

Similarly, the Trump Presidency from the world of showbiz have been decidedly threadbare. Apart from the odd aged crooner or obscure country artist, the chief White House favourite has been the despicable Ted Nugent — NRA nut and serial slayer of North American wildlife large and small.

The Trump era has however witnessed something of a renaissance within the diverse American music scene with excellent albums from the likes of Rhiannon Giddens and Hurray for the Ruff Raff. Three other artists have also made more recent contributions worthy of note.

First up would be Shemekia Copeland's

album 'America's Child'. The opening track 'Ain't Got no Time for Hate' mentions no one by name, but its pretty clear who the sentiment is aimed at.

Another song, 'Would You Take My Blood?', cuts to the quick of racist hypocrisy by asking ardent racists if they would accept donated blood from a black person if they needed a vital transfusion.

STANDOUT

Arguably the best of several standout tracks is 'Americans' — a celebration of the USA's present cultural diversity.

Here we find Elvis impersonators, slick haired deplorables, sandal wearing holy fools, orthodox Baptist Jews, left wing liberal geeks, red neck freaks and other interesting types "still free to be you and me."

Copeland's singing and the strength of her songwriting team are what makes this album exceptional. She locates herself in the blues tradition, following in the footsteps of her late father Johnny Copeland. An old bluesman who is very much still with us is Otis Taylor, whose brought out a powerful album,

'Fantasizing About Being Black'. With a title like that you've just got to listen!

This is no lounge-lizard easy-listening effort. It's a deeply emotional example of "trance blues", trying to encapsulate various aspects of the Afro-American experience, dealing as it does with slavery, inter-racial relationships and civil rights activism, raw and unflinching stuff.

On a lighter note, but no less worthwhile, comes the latest release from Leyla McCalla, 'Capitalist Blues'. This New Orleans based musician of Haitian parentage has produced a collection of original songs both musically and linguistically diverse, singing in English, French and Creole — the latter regarded by her as a language of resistance.

The title song is an attack on the rat race of capitalist society, whilst 'Money is king' highlights deep social inequalities. The hungry man gets the bulldog set on him whilst the mega rich one "can commit murder and get off free, rise to the seat of the Presidency."

McCalla also has a song here attacking the bombing of civilians in Aleppo — the first time I've come across anyone highlighting

the Syrian conflict in their music.

McCalla also teams up with her old singing partner Rhiannon Giddens in what turns out to be an amazingly ambitious new album 'Songs of our Native Daughters'. Along with fellow musicians Amythyst Kiah and Alison Russell they form a veritable battalion of banjo players performing songs about American history from the perspective of the black female.

There are several extremely powerful songs here. 'Mama's Cryin' Long' deals with rape, murder and lynching. 'Black Myself' tackles inter racial discrimination and the notion that a lighter shade of black is more desirable (the paper bag test). 'Barbados' compares the toiling slaves of the 18th century Caribbean with the plight of modern day wage slaves who produce laptops, tablets and smart phones.

All of these artists deserve much wider attention for the important things they have to say. 'Songs of our Native Daughters' in particular is an outstanding work and definitely the folk/roots album of the year.

Glasgow, Zionists and racism



Debate

The UN anti-racism demonstration in Glasgow this year, as last year (bit.ly/foi-sutr), faced a counter-demonstration by would-be left groups which refused to join it unless the Glasgow Friends of Israel were excluded from the march.

The pro-Israel group was about the same size as last year, 20-odd people. It carried no Israeli flags. It is unclear whether that was unintentional or by design.

One argument last year was: they wave Israeli flags; Israel is a racist state; therefore, they should not be on the demo.

The “anti-Zionist” protest against the anti-racist demonstration was bigger than last year.

It was the Revolutionary Communist Group, and others. They had the Fire Brigades Union Scottish Region banner with them, and a banner calling on people to lobby the Labour Party National Executive to oppose the International Holocaust Remembrance Association definition of antisemitism.

There was no sympathy for the protest from people on the anti-racist demonstration, organised by “Stand Up To Racism”. The “anti-Zionists” chanted while an imam recited prayers for the people killed in Christchurch. That did not go down well. They chanted “shame on you” as the demonstration set off.

Last year the “anti-Zionists” were able to kettle the pro-Israel group and prevent them from physically being part of the demonstration. Glasgow Friends of Israel followed the same route but were never able to catch up

with the demonstration.

This year there were several hundred police, including mounted police. The pro-Israel group went on the demonstration (albeit at the end). The “anti-Zionist” group was blocked off from the demonstration by police.

However, the “anti-Zionists” had decided not to take part in the demonstration anyway.

Ann Field

The Scottish committee of the Communist Party of Britain published a statement saying that it had decided “not to participate for the second year running in this year’s Stand Up To Racism Scotland event.”

“This is due to the involvement of the Glasgow Friends of Israel which is affiliated to the Confederation of Friends of Israel Scotland. No evidence has been supplied that, like the network of Friends of Israel organisations across Britain, Glasgow Friends of Israel is not funded by the Israeli government.

“Glasgow Friends of Israel has made no statement condemning Israel’s illegal occupation of the West Bank, the building of the illegal wall or the establishment of new settlements as condemned by the United Nations... [etc.]

“If the Glasgow Friends of Israel was to make such statements, the Communist Party would have no objection to its presence on an anti-racist march.

Our party supports the position of the United Nations for the resolution of the current conflict whereby a Palestinian state should exist within the pre-1967 boundaries, with its capital in East Jerusalem, beside the state of Israel”.

To me the issue’s pretty simple really.

If the Glasgow Friends of Israel are a left/liberal group which supports an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories and discriminatory laws against Arab Israelis and economic, social and political links and co-operation between the two communities there, there should be no problem with them being on an anti-racism march, and the CPB, SWP and RCG should be opposed in trying to exclude them from it.

But if they’re a right-wing group which doesn’t oppose those things, there should be a problem, even if our reasons are different from some of the others opposing their presence.

I wouldn’t characterise the opposition to them on the part of anyone (including the CPB and RCG) as being because the group is Jewish — I presume that they wouldn’t have a problem with an anti-Zionist Jewish group attending. For most of the left, the problem is obviously that they’re Zionists, but for us it should be that they’re a pro-Israeli government, right-wing and anti-Arab racist outfit.

Tom Matthews

When the issue of the academic boycott first kicked off in the university lecturers’ union, as it then was, the late Norman Geras used the following analogy.

You wander down a street of shops. The shopkeepers are all “at it”. They’re selling damaged goods. They’re selling goods past their sell-by date. They’re artificially inflating prices. They’re short-changing their customers.

Outside one of the shops, and only one of the shops, there is a regular picket protesting about damaged goods, inflated prices, etc., etc. It is the one shop in the street owned by a Jew.

That Jewish shopkeeper is certainly just as guilty as the rest. But why is his shop the only one being targeted for protests? I’m reminded of that analogy here.

Tom Matthews writes: “I wouldn’t characterise the opposition to them on the part of anyone (including the CPB and RCG) as being because the group is Jewish — I presume that they wouldn’t have a problem with an anti-Zionist Jewish group attending”. (The latter criterion would, of course, exclude most Jews from participation in the demonstration: Jews welcome — provided that

you’re not Zionists.)

Another contributor wrote: “Disagreeing with barring them doesn’t mean we wouldn’t politically challenge them on the day, raise slogans at the demo against their reactionary politics, etc., etc.”

No suggestion there about “raising slogans against the reactionary politics” of the various groups who wanted to keep Glasgow Friends of Israel off the march.

Or the groups who physically backed the “anti-Zionist” bloc but had not added their names to its statement. Or groups whose anti-racism manifests itself in saying that the Hebrew-Jewish nation has no right to national self-determination.

Or the STUC and affiliated unions (also represented on the demonstration) who have a policy of boycotting Israel, and, in the case of Unite, even boycott the Histadrut.

The 25 or 30 people on the Glasgow Friends of Israel contingent carried either no placards, or Stand Up To Racism placards, or placards saying “Antisemitism is Racism”, or, in one case, “Antizionism is Racism”. You could quibble or debate with the wording, but not the general point being made.

They did not chant anything. (They did not chant anything last year either.) By contrast, the “anti-Zionist” bloc which demanded the exclusion of Glasgow Friends of Israel from the march, and refused to join the march when they were not excluded, was chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

If they had participated in the demonstration, and they would not have been prevented from doing so if they had chosen to do so, they would have been chanting that on the demonstration itself.

People who carry Stalin banners on demonstrations or chant in support of Hamas and Hizbollah probably genuinely think that they are supporting the oppressed. Glasgow Friends of Israel also probably genuinely think that they are supporting the oppressed (Israel threatened with destruction, boycotts against Israel, growth of antisemitism, etc.)

Using that as a criterion of what is excusable is therefore a non-starter.

When did anyone ever justify their politics on the basis of saying: “I’m here to support the oppressor”?

Ann Field



The “anti-Zionist” counter-protest at the Stand Up to Racism demo in Glasgow on 16 March

More denunciations of AWL

The denunciation of Workers’ Liberty by Alan Davies of Socialist Resistance which we printed in *Solidarity* 499 has been followed by other comments along the same line on the Socialist Resistance website.

There was no state of Israel before 1948 and the backing of Western Imperialism and the [fact that the] state that formed expanded through systematic ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians and this violent expropriation of Palestinian land is more than enough to describe the Israeli state as illegitimate.

Slamming a state is not slamming the vast majority of the people who live there, it is slamming the institutions of the ruling class, and if members of the AWL claim Marxist credentials they know this.

To view the state of Israel or any state from a perspective other than a working-class perspective is to take a bourgeois perspective, and with this letter the AWL are choosing consciously to side with the national chauvinism of the Israeli ruling class by conflating antisemitism and legitimate left opposition to Israeli nationalism and Zionism.

With this bourgeois perspective the AWL is aiding the forces of reaction. But no one on the left with experience of the AWL is surprised. Over many years Marxist observers of the AWL have seen this veering away from a working-class perspective coming.

Gerry Downing

There is an irony in all this, touched on when [Gerry Downing] writes: “The AWL has a proud thirty-year record of supporting Zionism and attacking anti-Zionist

Jews”.

Before then, the AWL (or rather its predecessors) supported the call for a single democratic secular state.

Peter Firmin

As someone who supports the call for two states I repudiate the idea that there is anything intrinsically racist about the demand for a democratic secular state, no matter how wrong I believe it to be.

If I did think that I would not be a member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, which clearly contains many activists who hold that position.

Interestingly however, when the forerunner of the AWL used to call for a democratic secular state, I recall that in at least one article this was accompanied with the call for the Arabs to drive the Jews into the sea.

And clearly the call for two states when made by the likes of [Sean] Matgamna [of AWL] is aimed at the Palestinians and not the Israeli government.

And to be honest the real motivation is expressed not so much in the attack on the democratic secular state formulation but on the right of return.

Evan Pritchard

[Solidarity note: it is true that between about 1969 and 1986 that the forerunners of AWL supported the “secular democratic [single] state” formula. But we emphasised that it meant a state with equal rights for Arabs and Jews. Evan Pritchard’s “recall” that “in at least one article” (unspecified) we called for driving the Jews into the sea is at best false memory...]



US socialist organisation implodes

By Stephen Wood

A crisis which looks terminal is gripping the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the largest would-be Trotskyist organisation in the US.

In a letter to ISO members of 15 March, now published at socialist-worker.org, the Steering Committee elected at the ISO convention in late February to replace the old leadership describe the convention as their "most painful."

"Much of the convention was devoted to reckoning with the damaging impacts of our past practices and internal political culture. As branches have reported back and opened up these discussions, more examples of a damaging political culture have come to light."

Already a large number of the ISO's active branches have disaffiliated. An increasing number of individuals have resigned too. It seems as if the organisation, as such, will dissolve.

All the historic leaders of the organisation have resigned. Or, as the remaining members would put it, resigned in "disgrace".

11 days after the 15 March statement, there have been 28 proposals (many now withdrawn) on the way forward.

Almost all of them call for the dissolution of the ISO, either immediately or over a process of some months. The proposal which has the widest support, with 113 supporters, says they should: "Develop a process for dissolving the ISO. Maintain the website and SW [Socialist Worker] online as a forum for discussion for the time being."

"Branches that wish to remain together should do so and may rename their locals as they see fit. Any working group or caucus (POC [people of colour], trans, survivors, teachers, Latin America, etc.) that wishes to continue working may do so under their own name as we go forward."

"Everyone is encouraged to pursue activism, labor work and outward activities, whatever form that takes in their local situation."

Publishers of *Socialist Worker* and *International Socialist Review*, and until recently having additional influence through the Center for Economic Research and Social Change and the Haymarket Books publishing house, the ISO have had a reach within the US and internationally well beyond their numbers, estimated at about 900.

As with the 2013-4 crisis within the SWP (UK), the spark was the mishandling of an allegation of sexual assault. The case was one in 2012, which had been dealt with by the 2013 Steering Committee (SC).

Then the member against whom charges had been laid in 2012 was elected at the 2019 convention to the SC, and things unravelled very fast.

The SC met with the National Committee (NC) and subsequently

with members of the ISO's National Branch Council (NBC), the newly formed "survivors' caucus" and the "#MeToo commission" and came up with proposals.

The SC member against whom charges had been brought in 2012 was asked to identify themselves, and did. They have now been suspended and subsequently expelled.

Three members of the 2013 SC were then suspended from the ISO pending investigation. An NC member accused of undermining the role of their National Disciplinary Committee (NDC) at the time was also suspended.

The SC now says it will "empower a body independent of the current SC that can investigate the conduct of the 2013 SC and other participants in that 2013 process. Whether that should be the recently formed #MeToo commission, the NDC or some other body still needs to be determined, but will be soon".

The crisis over the 2012 case has evidently fed into long-brewing discontent with what the 15 March statement calls the ISO's "damaging political culture".

The ISO can trace its history back to the Independent Socialist Club formed in Berkeley in 1964 by Hal Draper to regroup people round the politics of the old Independent Socialist League (1949-58) and Workers Party (1940-9) after the dissolution of the ISL into the Socialist Party in 1958 and a drift to the right by the old ISL leadership round Max Shachtman.

The ISO as such was formed as a "Cliffite" sister organisation of the SWP-UK, one of the six or seven fragments created when the International Socialists (successor to the ISC) broke up in the late 1970s.

COPYING SWP

For a quarter-century it pretty much copied the "party-building" tactics and structures of the SWP-UK.

In 2001 the SWP-UK expelled the ISO from its international network, for reasons still obscure. (The SWP said the ISO was sectarian towards the "new anti-capitalist" youth movements then bubbling, but in fact it was hard to see more than nuances of difference there).

Since then the ISO has developed its own international links (with the "Mandelite" Fourth International, and with other "dissident-SWP" groups like Socialist Alternative in Australia and DEA in Greece). It has had nuances of difference with the SWP on issues like Syria and Iran, and allowed a bit more scope for public debate.

But the new ISO steering committee now describes the old leadership as "unaccountable", and especially undemocratic to members of colour, who (so the new SC says) had their commitment to the organisation and to revolutionary socialism questioned as a method to quash suspected turns to identity



politics.

A lot of different critiques of the organisation are being posted on socialistworker.org and on personal blogs from members, both long term and newer. They are keen to emphasise that their first priority is not the organisation but to provide "accountability".

The historic leaders of the ISO have responded by resigning, with a joint statement, but there is little political content in that statement.

The 2013-4 crisis in the SWP-UK has, rightly, led to rethinking on the left about disputes and complaints processes and codes of conduct. The AWL reviewed our own procedures back then; more recently we have overhauled those procedures in light of our investigation into a claim made in early 2018 by a former member that they were sexually assaulted by another former member in 2005.

The ISO seems to have (like the SWP) maybe covered for a member they saw as a valuable asset, and also to have believed that as a small organisation mostly of volunteers they were qualified to investigate such matters adequately on their own. (One of the things we've written into AWL's new procedures is the use of external checks in such matters).

But, it seems, the ISO's political project was so shaky that the shock has sent it into collapse.

On all sides there are promises to uphold the politics of "socialism from below", but that phrase is not sufficient to address what any of those who have left or who have stayed intend to do.

The only response I've found which contains some commitment to keeping an organisation and calls for developing the best traditions of "democratic" as opposed to "bureaucratic" centralism is one by Paul Le Blanc, written for the Australian *Castroite Links: Journal of International Socialist Renewal*. Le Blanc is a veteran Trotskyist who joined the ISO ten years ago. Apparently he is outside the USA at present.

Much of the rest of the published content is hand-wringing about the difficulties those left and around the ISO now face.

People from the now dissolved Canadian New Socialist Group have offered, as their answer, the critique of activist revolutionary socialist organisation which Hal Draper developed when he quit the International Socialists in 1971. (Draper argued that socialists should instead organise loose circles round publications and editorial boards).

"One of the great problems with the dominant model of 'Leninism' on the far-left is the idea that the legacy of Bolshevism involves steadfastly building a small group that eventually wins leadership of the working-class movement. Given that there is no army, no class vanguard, ready to be lead, the small group project becomes the construction of an ostensible leadership-in-waiting."

"This then gets transmuted into the notion that the task is to make sure 'we'll be ready' — with a disciplined cadre and a determined leadership — when the masses look to the left. In the process, a completely undialectical notion of leadership develops — one in which ostensible 'leaders' can be selected and trained outside the process of building a real mass working class movement."

"A hothouse conception of leadership thus comes to the fore, according to which revolutionary cadres can be artificially bred in the atmosphere of the disciplined small group."

"All of this produces a fetish of leadership. Since we are incapable of building a mass organisation, goes the thinking, we'll do the next best thing — maybe even the best thing — and build the leadership without which revolution is impossible. And all of this — the building of a leadership and disciplined membership — comes to comprise the core of a doctrine called 'Leninism'."

Paul Le Blanc reasonably responds:

"Democratic centralism was not quite the hallmark of Leninism that many make of it. Use of the term has been found in the German workers' movement of the 1870s, and it seems to have been introduced in a positive way into the

Russian Social Democratic Labor Party around 1905 by the Menshevik faction, although the Bolsheviks embraced it as well.

"It seems to me to involve a democratic common sense for any serious organisation, and at the same time its implementation necessarily involves a reasonable flexibility."

"If the organisation has a full, democratic discussion regarding actions to be taken and makes a decision (determined by majority vote) — then the organisation carries out the decision that was democratically decided upon. If the decision is to support a strike action, or an anti-war action, or an anti-racist action, then no comrade is to work against the action."

"On the other hand, if a majority of comrades in the organisation have a specific position regarding a philosophical question, or an understanding of history, or a specific political analysis, there is no reason why dissident comrades cannot openly, publicly state their own views, if they have them. Nor are they prohibited from expressing disagreements with the leadership or with majority decisions on other matters as well, even publicly."

An assessment of what is going on is difficult. In what I've seen so far, little has been said about the state of class struggle in the US or what activists should be doing within that struggle to build "socialism from below."

Although questions of electoral intervention, relations to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and attitudes to candidates that seek the Democratic ballot-line like Bernie Sanders have been up for public debate in the pages of *Socialist Worker*, and may be part of the background to the crisis, they have not yet been dealt with in the current flurry of disputation.

Letter to the ISO membership bit.ly/iso1-ltr; Numerous other pieces bit.ly/iso2; Paul Le Blanc bit.ly/iso3-lb; Resignation letter by veteran ISO leader Joel Geier bit.ly/iso4-jg; more contributions bit.ly/iso5-eb; current proposals within the ISO bit.ly/iso6-28.

Bristol couriers discuss risks

By Zack, Bristol Deliveroo Courier

Nottingham Couriers' Network voted to affiliate to the IWGB union on Monday 25 March, another step in increasing our organisation on a national level in the struggle for better pay from Deliveroo.

This follows a significant growth in membership, in Nottingham and elsewhere, and improved co-ordination nationally. Our national structures are progressing and we have a national programme of "rolling strikes". Several places are holding demonstrations, and other types of industrial actions as well as strikes, for example systematically rejecting certain types of order over a given time period.

In Bristol, we have been consolidating our organisation, and building for a large meeting on Wednesday 27, when we will plan future strike action. While many couriers recognise that we have won concessions from Deliveroo, they recognise that they are not enough. There is substantial appetite for more strikes.

Another big topic of conversation, and something we will discuss at Wednesday's meeting, is motorbike theft. Several motorbikes are stolen from couriers every week in Bristol, sometimes while parked, sometimes while riding. Some-

times assailants have knives, and motorcyclists fear for their personal safety as well as their bike.

On Friday, around 55 motorcyclists, overwhelmingly Brazilian, went to the police station to demand action on this. The police gave a response which sounded like saying there is very little they could do about it. We then rode – me on a pedal bike – to two council buildings, where we were also largely fobbed off, again. Finally, we rode to BBC's local offices, where they interviewed some motorcyclists.

INSURANCE

Deliveroo provides free insurance which covers injuries while at work.

This is better than nothing, but is insufficient in itself. It does not cover the cost of equipment, or of money lost when unable to work because of theft or unrelated illness. When a courier has their motorbike stolen while working for Deliveroo, they must therefore cover the cost of a new bike, unless they pay for private insurance themselves. If they cannot buy a new one immediately, they will be unable to work until they do.

Motorbikes are a necessary expense for motorbike couriers, and theft is an unavoidable risk. Deliveroo should cover these costs, not transfer them to individual couriers. More loading bays, and free ac-



cess to them, would also improve the situation.

The inaction on behalf of the police is undoubtedly in large part because the overwhelming majority of victims are Brazilian migrant workers.

If a middle-class English driver had an expensive car stolen, police would not be so blasé. It is important to recognise and call out the racial, national, and class factors behind this neglect.

However, the solution is neither to call for more police and stricter sentencing on the one hand, nor to advocate punitive vigilante action on the other. Fundamentally, the police serve to repress the working class and workers' struggles, and strengthening them in the long run would harm us. In the current situation though, we cannot seriously organise alternatives to the police, with any genuine democratic over-

sight or due process.

Recognising this tension, we must encourage people to have no faith in the police as an institution, and to take a critical perspective towards them.

Beyond calling out the police's discrimination, advocating more extensive covering of costs, and better provision of loading bays, there is more we can say. Motorbike theft does not exist in a vacuum.

Many of the thieves are very young "joy riders": some motorbikes have been set on fire, others thrown in the river. Being in a state of doing such horrible, dangerous and illegal things "for fun", or for money, is often driven by desperation, or a sense of meaninglessness.

Wider social changes, from youth and social centres, to tackling poverty and gaining economic equality, and beyond, would help.

12 April: Building Fighting Unions

The next Workers' Liberty London forum will feature John Moloney, a candidate for Assistant General Secretary of the civil service union PCS.

PCS leaders claim that theirs is "the fighting union". John will argue that rank-and-file democ-

racy, officials on a worker's wage, and a fight to level up to national pay rates, are needed to move from "fighting" talk to effective reality.

Friday 12 April, 7pm at room 828, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

Outsourced rail workers to strike

By Ollie Moore

Two groups of outsourced workers on London Overground will strike on 2 April and 4-6 April. Travel Safe Officers employed by the STM agency will strike on 2 April, demanding decent pay in the face of a pay freeze imposed by the contractor.

Cleaners employed by Vinci will strike on 4-6 April, demanding improvements to pay and conditions. The workers' union, RMT, plans demonstrations outside the headquarters of Arriva Rail London, which runs the London Overground franchise, at 10am on 2 April and 5 April.

On London Underground, fleet maintenance workers are voting in a strike ballot, due to close on 2 April, in response to LU's plans to

extend train preparation schedules. Currently, trains are "prepped" (i.e., have all safety checks performed) on a 24-hourly basis. Under new proposals, schedules would vary across lines, and could see trains prepped every 96 hours, every three months, or after running a certain mileage.

The rank-and-file bulletin *Tube-worker* said: "The union must urgently look to spread the dispute if fleet-only action proves insufficient to force management to back down."

Tube unions have also entered negotiations with LU over pay, terms, and conditions, with the current deal due to expire in April 2019. A key focus for RMT is the demand for a 32-hour week for all full-time staff.



Advanced earlybird tickets for our summer school, Ideas for Freedom, are now available until 21 April: £30 waged, £17 low-waged and students, £7 unwaged.

Prices will increase in steps until the event, around 22-23 June.

The 22-23 June weekend agenda will include presentations and debates on issues around Brexit, antisemitism, climate change, 1919, 1989, and more. We are continuing to add speakers and events in the run up to the event.

There'll be a walking tour on

Thursday 20 June looking at "Queer Brixton" and an evening debate on Friday 21 June between Workers' Liberty and Paul Embury of the Fire Brigades Union on socialists' views on Brexit.

Venue: Camden School for Girls, Sandall Road, London NW5 2DB.

Free creche. Overnight accommodation will also be available free. Contact awl@workersliberty.org for further details.

www.workersliberty.org/ideas

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.

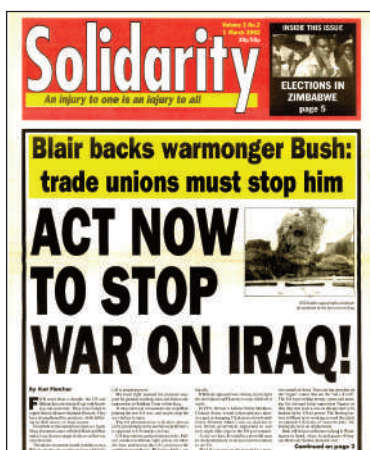
The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

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!



No.2, 1 March 2002



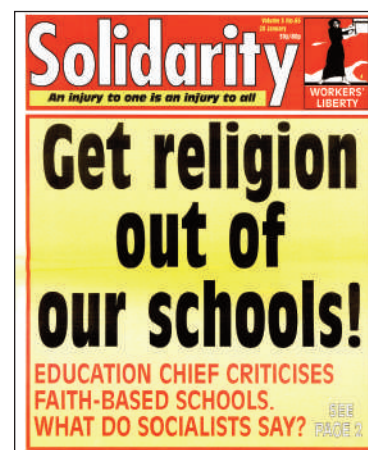
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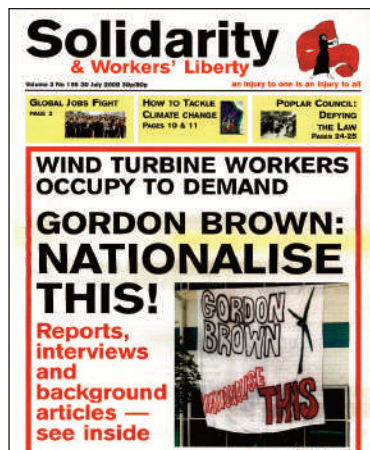
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No.156, 30 July 2009 (Vestas)



No.187, 16 Dec 2010 (fees revolt)



No.188, 12 January 2011



No.194, 23 February 2011



No.214, 24 August 2011



No.226, 23 November 2011



No.228, 14 December 2011



No.248, 6 June 2012



No.287, 29 May 2013



No.290, 21 June 2013



No.303, 29 May 2013



No.332, 28 July 2014



No.376, 16 September 2015



No.434, 29 March 2017

This is the 500th issue of *Solidarity*. We started with our current title in February 2002, developing out of a paper, *Action for Solidarity*, which in turn had come out of the Welfare State Network. 500 issues later, we're still arguing the socialist, internationalist, secularist, and democratic case. The paper went weekly from no.188 in January 2011. (Selection of front pages by Cathy Nugent)

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Solidarity editorial: Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent, Martin Thomas, and Mike Zubrowski

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