



Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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WHY WE MARCHED AGAINST TRUMP



For workers' unity, peace, green economics, open borders, socialism

On 3 and 4 June, Workers' Liberty and Solidarity people joined thousands in London protesting against Donald Trump's state visit.

On 4 June we were part of an "against Trump, against Brexit" contingent, with Labour for a Socialist Europe and Another Europe is Possible.

Trump has stridently backed Brexit and boosted pro-Brexit right-wingers like Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson. Trump represents Brexit-type politics in the USA; Brexit represents Trump-type politics in Britain.

It's the same broad trend also

represented (with important variations) by Modi in India, Erdoğan in Turkey, Salvini in Italy, Putin in Russia, Orban in Hungary, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, Netanyahu in Israel, Bolsonaro in Brazil, and others.

The neo-liberal consensus which seemed overwhelming from the 1980s through to 2008 still has considerable grip in ruling-class circles. But it has fragmented and frayed since the 2008 crash and the subsequent economic turmoil and depression.

Despite some rhetoric, none of the new-right figures has de-

parted seriously from the neoliberal model of economics within their own terrains: marketisation, privatisation, contracting-out, social cuts, whittling-down of trade union rights and individual workers' rights. Some, like Modi in India, Netanyahu in Israel, and some of the Brexiters in Britain, are in fact strongly pro-free-market in that sphere.

Mostly, though far from invariably, the new right dissents from the "rules-based order" of global trade which was instituted by the World Trade Organisation from 1995 and by the European Union from the early 1990s, and which has been pivotal in neoliberalism.

The bourgeois consensus was for a world of relatively free flows of trade, investment, and finance (much less free flows of people, except within the European Union), regulated primarily not by bilateral deals but by international institutions and rules, with international tribunals and courts to adjudicate disputes.

Trump's USA has stretched WTO procedures to breaking point, and threatens to sabotage the WTO's whole dispute-resolution process by blocking the nomination of new judges.

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**Morality,
revolution, the
Bolsheviks,
and us**

Pull-out



Open letter to Ken Livingstone

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Labour and Brexit: call a Special Conference!

The Willsman affair

A VICTIM OF PANIC

By Sean Matgamna

The new Pete Willsman affair shows yet again that you cannot effectively fight antisemitism unless you have a working definition of what it is.

In my opinion, the definition should be advocacy of the destruction of Israel and the hounding of Jewish people who support Israel (however critically) and its right to exist. And, of course, any of the traditional antisemitisms, which seem to be reviving and gaining new life.

Criticism of Israel is not necessarily antisemitic. In any case, the right to criticise Israel, as the right to criticise any other state, must be preserved.

Pete Willsman has been suspended from the Labour Party because he was recorded voicing the opinion that the Israeli embassy is “behind” the outcry against antisemitism in the Labour Party.

What does that tell you about him? He doesn’t understand or accept that there is a problem of antisemitism on the left. He needs to explain the outcry as a result of outside intervention.

He is at least a little bit paranoid. He thinks the Israeli embassy in London would not have a right to concern itself with the spread of anti-Jewish feeling and thinking in Britain. And possibly he gives credence to some variant of “Jewish conspiracy” theory.

What he said must of course be taken in the context of the militant “absolute anti-Zionist” antisemitism surrounding us on the left. Denouncing all or almost all complaints of antisemitism as manufactured is an implicit defence of actual antisemitism.

But is Willsman’s comment, in itself, directly antisemitic? To the extent that he should be expelled for it from a party whose leaders identify with a daily paper which actively foments antisemitism, the *Morning Star*?

And should he be expelled for an off-hand, casual remark, even one following similar off-hand remarks a while back? Shouldn’t expulsion

On 31 May Pete Willsman, a veteran of the Labour left and a current member of Labour’s National Executive Committee (NEC), was suspended by the Labour Party on charges of antisemitism.

The suspension followed publication of comments made by Willsman at a chance meeting with a journalist. How should the left respond? Simon Nelson and Sean Matgamna present different views.



be reserved for clear-cut, public, persistent violations?

Isn’t the culture in the Labour Party (and more widely in the left), borrowed from the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* — “off with his head” as the answer to all disputes — a hindrance rather than a help in clearing up this mess? Scapegoating the odd individual for the odd comment, and chucking him out without explanation or argument, is a poor substitute for a clear line from the leadership against the whole “absolute anti-Zionist”, Israel-hating, ideological stream.

Pete Willsman is being unfairly singled out — a victim of panic among people who do not intend to fight the serious antisemitism in the labour movement.

CONSPIRACY TALK UNTENABLE

By Simon Nelson

The comments made by Pete Willsman to American-Israeli journalist Tuvia Tenenbom and now revealed publicly are antisemitic conspiracy talk from a member of Labour’s NEC [National Executive Committee].

If Pete Willsman now faces expulsion, we should accept that outcome.

This is not the first transgression by Willsman. I wrote at the time of the NEC elections in *Solidarity* 476 (bit.ly/nec-s), “Willsman’s apology... and his commitment to refer himself to equalities training is a start, but it’s a long way from him, or others understanding the root of

the problem... The problem is rooted in a lack of common understanding of the specificities of left antisemitism...

“It sees Jews, or Zionism, or Zionists, or Israel as more powerful than other groups, nationalisms or states, as organised conspiratorially or with the potential to exert a hidden power.”

It is therefore unsurprising that Willsman claims that accusations of antisemitism are being fostered by the Israeli embassy, who have agents in the Labour party to stir up trouble for Jeremy Corbyn and have coordinated 68 rabbis to “attack” Labour over antisemitism.

So far there has been no statement from Willsman. We still have no details of the training he referred himself to last time. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), of which he remains secretary, has managed to avoid publicly backing Chris Williamson or Jackie Walker. Whether this will stretch to avoiding mention of Willsman remains to be seen.

CLPD has become much closer to the left-antisemitic wing of the Labour left in recent times. JVL (Jewish Voice for Labour) speakers have been at recent AGMs and their conference Yellow Pages has advertised their fringe events.

If Sean Matgamna is right in *Solidarity* 497 that membership of the Labour Party should be incompatible with advocacy for the destruction of Israel, then surely Sean must accept that the peddling of antisemitic conspiracy theories, not once but twice with apparently no contrition, may disqualify Willsman from remaining a Labour member.



Against “special needs” cuts

By Janine Booth

On Thursday 30 May, campaigners protested at twenty-eight locations around the country, demanding the reversal of cuts to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding.

Organised mainly by parents and SEND kids, protests ranged from a handful of people with a banner to hundreds on town hall steps. The centrepiece saw several thousand campaigners gather outside 10 Downing Street to hand in a petition.

The National Education Union supported and promoted the protests, and its members turned out with banners in several locations. RMT also supported the protests.

In some areas, Labour councillors joined the demonstrations, even though they had voted to pass on government funding cuts by reduc-

ing SEND spending. Hopefully, a growing mobilisation will provide the pressure and confidence for them to refuse to do so again.

Funding for high-needs SEND fell short by £287m last year and will fall short by £1.6bn within two years. Half of all local area SEND services have failed their Ofsted or Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. Parents are also pursuing legal challenges: while these may win in some cases, they are unlikely to succeed in overturning the overall funding cuts.

Speaking outside Hackney Town Hall, teenage autistic activist Joe Booth explained the negative impact on autistic students of these cuts and said, “It is not enough to complain: we have to fight back”.

We can be sure that this group of campaigners will continue to do so, and that if the labour movement throws its weight behind them, then they can win.

Solidarity for Sudan and Algeria

Left-wingers mostly around the SWP have launched a statement for solidarity with the popular revolts in Sudan and Algeria.

The statement has been posted on the website of the Sudanese Professionals’ Association, a grouping of trade unions in Sudan based among “professional” workers (teachers, doctors, lawyers, vets, pharmacists, journalists, accountants...) which has been leading the mobilisations there.

It calls for “greetings to trade unionists in Algeria and Sudan who are mobilising support for the popular uprisings’ demands through strikes, protests and sit-ins, and fighting to create democratic, independent unions and break the control of regime supporters over workers’ and professional associations”.

It asks “the trade union movement around the world to mobilise solidarity with the sit-ins, strikes

and protests in Sudan and Algeria”.

It pledges to oppose “military or security co-operation with the old regimes” and declares “solidarity with the struggle to establish genuine democracy in Sudan and Algeria, and opposition to all forms of military rule”.

• bit.ly/su-al

The case for “two states”



“The actual inhabitants of Palestine were ignored by practically everybody. The philosophy prevailing in the European world at the time was without any doubt responsible for this. Every territory situated outside that world was considered empty” (Maxime Rodinson)



“If the consequences of pressing a just claim are liable to be calamitous and unjust, and too fraught with practical difficulties, there may be grounds for suggesting that it be renounced. The wrong done to the Arabs by the Israelis is very real. However, it is only too common throughout history... Colonists and colonizers are not monsters with human faces whose behaviour defies rational explanation. They are people who think from a racialist and nationalist point of view.”

New in the growing collection of videos on the Workers’ Liberty website, www.workersliberty.org, is a short clip by Camila Bassi explaining our case for a democratic “two states” settlement in Israel-Palestine. • bit.ly/2n2s-vid

Open letter to Livingstone

Ken: it's a shame you have bottled out of our scheduled debate.

I'm bitterly disappointed. I was looking forward to kicking your butt. It's been quite a while since I had a chance to do that.

We will keep an empty chair on the platform for you in that session, and give extended speaking time to anyone ready and willing to come and argue your case.

You have been an active anti-semitite since at least the early 1980s! You let Gerry Healy finance a newspaper for you — *Labour Herald* — even though you knew for a certainty that Healy himself was being financed by Colonel Gaddafi of Libya and other such tyrants, murderers, and aspirant butchers of the Israeli Jewish people as Saddam Hussein.

I documented that recently in my introduction to *In Defence of Bolshevism*.

You told us in conversations about this planned debate that you are now "not interested" in Zionism, and do not disagree with us



Ken Livingstone, billed since January as debating with us at the Ideas for Freedom summer school on 22-23 June, has now withdrawn, pleading family commitments. Sean Matgamna responds with an open letter.

about the case for a "two states" settlement in Israel-Palestine.

I don't know about that. Back in 1985, when you were re-positioning yourself as a "soft left", you

told a student conference that you had realised that Zionism was not "racism" but only a form of "nationalism" (see our pamphlet *Arabs, Jews, and Socialism*, p.62).

Yet since then you have gone a long way to establishing that the issue with you here is not a matter of a horrible political logic growing out of comprehensive hostility to Israel (as it is with many), but much more personal than that.

Even now I hesitate to ascribe to you person-to-person antisemitism. But the man who in 2005 (I guess you were drunk) jeered at a reporter, after being told that he was Jewish, that he was "just like a concentration camp guard", shows strong signs of that (bit.ly/kl-of).

Bottling out of a chance to defend yourself in debate with someone whom you can't plausibly dismiss as a "right-winger" shows that you are man who cannot muster the courage of your own malign convictions.

A pity.

Sean Matgamna



Markets, cuts, and education

By Maisie Sanders

The Augar review into post-18 education and funding, commissioned by Theresa May last year, was released on 30 May.

As yet the government says only that it will "take very seriously the report's proposals".

The report presents its aim as a more "accessible" system of higher and further education that provides "value for money" for both students and taxpayers and is more responsive to labour market demands.

University student numbers have continued to increase steadily since 2009/2010, but there has been a sharp decline in students choosing higher-level technical qualifications (Level 4 and 5, including foundation degrees and higher education diplomas) and in mature and part-time applicants at all levels.

The report calls for stronger technical vocational education in further education to meet these skills shortages and a bearing down on "low-value" degrees to address an "oversupply" of graduates in subjects which do not promote employability, such as the arts and humanities.

In higher education, it recommends the lowering of tuition fees from £9,000 to £7,500 per year, plus the reintroduction of maintenance grants for low-income students.

Universities will be incentivised to increase provision of "high cost" and "high value" subjects "better aligned with the economy's needs" which provide greater "value for money" for students and taxpayers. University bosses have come out against the recommendations, with Sussex University's Vice Chancellor saying it will "push universities into survival mode." Cuts have already begun, partly in anticipation of the Augar review's proposals, alongside increased staff pension costs and uncertainty over international student numbers driven by Brexit. Staff and students at Surrey University overwhelmingly voted no confidence in university management in May due to a proposed 300 job losses and course cuts. Students at the Guildford School of Acting (part of the university) went into occupation in late May to protest the closure of two degree courses last week.

The report calls for £1 billion to be invested into further education, cuts in adult skills provision to be reversed, and "life-long learning loan allowances" to be introduced to encourage part time, flexible and

later-life learning. Fixed at £30,000, or four years' full time undergraduate degree funding, the loan allowance will be available for all over 18s without a publicly funded degree to enrol on higher technical or degree level studies at any stage in their life and, if they wish, piecemeal in stand-alone modules.

The further education college network should be "rationalised" to even out the supply and quality of provision across areas with the aim of creating a "genuinely national system of higher technical education". Previous college mergers have led to huge job losses and course closures: it is likely that this "rationalisation" will mean the same.

The report wants the student loans system to be renamed the "student contributions system" as part of measures to increase the amount of loans repaid in full. Fees may be reduced, but the wage threshold above which graduates start paying back their loans should be set lower, and repayments should continue for 40 rather than 30 years.

National Union of Students (NUS) President Shakira Martin says that while NUS disagrees with the concept of "low value" and "high value" courses, the proposals make "a number of steps in the right direction" towards free education.

In a literal sense £7,500 fees are closer to zero than £9,000, but the changes to student loan repayments will mean only the wealthiest students will end up paying less. Those who earn less will pay more as interest accrues.

The reintroduction of maintenance grants, increased access, and funding for lifelong learning are important and good. But the Augar review preserves the logic of a marketised education system shaped around the interests of business and employers, not students, society and learning. It also ignores the reality that graduate earnings have as much to do with class backgrounds as with the discipline studied.

The report is not clear on reintroduction of funding for lower level courses, for example in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and adult skills.

The student left must campaign inside and outside NUS and link up with UCU, to resist the regressive changes and to fight for free education funded by taxing the rich, with living grants for all, a living wage for apprentices, lower rents, and an end to marketisation.

Losing the "climate election"



By Janet Burstall

The Australian Labor Party's climate action platform for the May 2019 Federal Election was the most ambitious yet.

Pre-election polls showed climate change was a high priority for voters. The Liberal-National coalition was divided on climate action. Climate-change deniers controlled the party room, and had elected Scott Morrison as leader, an MP who had famously cradled a lump of coal in parliament to show his support for coal-fired power.

Yet Labor lost the election.

Both major parties lost about 1% of their first-preference voters with minor parties, especially right-wing parties, picking up first preferences. The Greens (who usually swap preferences with Labor in Australia's alternative-vote system) did poorly.

The post-mortem on why and how Labor lost continues. Climate action was only one of several policy areas that are now being debated, amongst the Labor Party, the unions, the Greens, and the left. Climate change policy was a central issue, but its impact on voting can only be understood in connection with employment and economic policy.

The biggest swings against Labor were in coal-mining areas of North Queensland and the Hunter Valley in New South Wales. In North Queensland Labor was caught between two poles of opinion. The

Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy union stoked misguided hopes that Adani, a huge new coal mine project, will provide jobs in a region where unemployment is over 8%.

Climate activists, especially the Greens and striking school students, had "Stop Adani" as a central demand.

New coal mines make no sense when we need to reduce consumption of fossil fuels, not increase it. However, "jobs fear" is a ready weapon for the conservative side of politics. Neither Labor, union leaders, nor the Greens, had satisfactory or convincing answers for workers concerned for their livelihood.

Labor and the ACTU both adopted a "just transition" approach to phasing out coal-fired power stations, including a Labor commitment to funding an Energy Transition Authority. But the weaknesses of the Energy Transition Authority proposal were many.

LOW-KEY

It was low-key, and not particularly highlighted.

If it was developed with any consultation with communities based around coal-fired power stations, that was not apparent. The rationale was a claim that coal-fired power was coming to an end anyway, because it is becoming unprofitable.

Labor does not have a "just transition" policy for other climate-change implicated industries, including mining for export. It proposes no public employment programmes along the lines of a "Green New Deal".

The shock of the Labor defeat,

and the implications that the Australian government will fail to seriously curb carbon emissions for another three years, is generating debate on the way forward among supporters of climate action.

The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy union includes both supporters of Adani — in its mining division leadership — and opponents elsewhere in the union. Construction secretary of Queensland, Michael Raybar, has expressed doubts about Adani. Queensland Maritime Secretary Bob Carnegie is the most outspoken union leader in the country to make the case against Adani.

The National Union of Workers, after the election, issued a statement on secure jobs and safe climate which points in the right direction. They said "it's time for our movement to think big and take a lead".

Getting workers and job-hunters to support action on climate change needs unions to have out the debate on climate issues, to involve affected communities in developing concrete proposals for how they can transition to industries which do not continue to pump out atmospheric carbon. Where private enterprise does not do this, communities need to come up with their own ways to take the initiative. Only by involving workers and their communities will unions will be able to win workers from the right-wing parties that support the Adani coal mine.

There's plenty of debate about how to do this since the election, and prospects for developing a more positive approach look good.

Brexit: a “workers’ cause”?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Communist Party of Britain (CPB) general secretary Robert Griffiths had a piece in the *Morning Star* of 31 May entitled “Time for Labour to stand unequivocally by the working class”.

He claims that the way to do that is for Labour to back Brexit. Brexit is a working-class cause.

Griffiths sets great store by the Ashcroft survey of UK voters which, he reports, “confirmed that support for leaving the EU remains highest amongst the working class, whether defined narrowly (social categories C2, D and E) or more broadly (plus C1).”

Interesting, isn’t it, that a supposed Marxist defines class using categories developed by the marketing industry? According to this scheme, originally associated with the National Readership Survey and now maintained by the Market Research Society, society is divided into “higher” (A) and “intermediate” (B) “managerial, administrative and professional”, “supervisory, clerical and junior managerial...” (C1), “skilled manual workers” (C2), “semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers” (D) and “state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only” (E).

These are usually lumped together as ABC1 (the “middle class”) and C2DE (the “working class”).

From a Marxist viewpoint, the working

class – those working for wages for the benefit of and under the control of capital – has never been only manual or blue collar workers. Still less so today.

C1s and Bs (teachers, social workers, many civil service and local government workers) are the core of the working class in Britain today, 52% of the population, and especially of the younger sections of the working class.

Moreover, class has always been politically constituted – the working class is a class in itself, as Marx put it, with the shared experience of capitalist exploitation; but it only becomes a class for itself, to any degree self-conscious and united, with political education, organisation and struggle. The core of the organised working class is certainly C1 and B.

All the sociology here is designed for a political conclusion: that the response to Labour’s dismal performance in the European election should be just “don’t panic!” EU elections prove little, and anyway Brexit is a working-class cause and calls for a second referendum come only from middle class “liberals”.

The editor of the newly-revived *Tribune*, Ronan Burtenshaw, goes some distance in the same direction as the *Morning Star*. His piece in the latest *Tribune* is entitled “Hold the Line”.

A “negotiated Customs Union and further developing a Norway model” will provide Labour with “grounds on which some form of renewed social democracy might be won in Britain.” Ignoring left-wing campaigns like Labour for a Socialist Europe and Another Europe is Possible, Burtenshaw tries to make out that “People’s Vote is a movement for the

restoration of the ancient regime” (i.e. for “the years of social liberalism before the financial crisis”).

Burtenshaw advocates a form of “soft” Brexit that will satisfy no-one and disparages Remainers on the spurious basis that they support “progressive social views” rather than what he defines as “class politics” (i.e. nationalist reformism).

Even so, Burtenshaw’s analysis is sounder than that of the *Morning Star*. He admits that: “The Brexit vote can’t be reduced to a ‘working-class revolt’ ... That claim is typically based on polling from the C2DE category, which voted Leave by a wide margin. But in Britain’s modern economy, that category simply doesn’t correspond with the working class.”

The beginnings of wisdom, Ronan!

• **Jim Denham wishes to acknowledge the work of Rick Parnet in his article *Elections, social grades and class, The Clarion*, 25 March 2018.**



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

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Self-definition of oppressions?



Letters

DEFINING PEOPLE’S OPPRESSIONS?
I’m canvassing opinions on the call for marginalised groups of people to “define their own oppression”.

The LGBT+ organising group at NEU [National Education Union] conference argued for a definition of transphobia which I agreed with. It was however defeated on the basis that there are conflicting views on what constitutes transphobia and that the amendment was anti-woman.

The arguments in favour were largely that trans members had agreed on the motion and we should, as a union, listen to them.

I think this is a relatively weak line of argument. For example, if a group of marginalised people blame their oppression on a Jewish conspiracy, it does not mean we should simply accept that. How can we argue these issues better?

Natalia Cassidy

POLITICS DECIDES

Obviously the people at the sharp end of oppression should have the major input. But, first, even if people share an oppressed identity they do not all individually have any direct subjective experience all of the array of oppression, still less can subjectively experience certain categories of collective oppression.

Second, drawing up definitions is by its nature entirely on an objective, social level, i.e. a political level. Politics matters more in drawing this definition than membership of a group or even subjective experience of oppression. Politics is contested among trans people as everywhere else. Someone cis with good politics may be able to draw up a better definition than someone trans with bad politics.

A definition is a political tool. Unless you’re a pure 19th century liberal who thinks oppression begins and ends with changing the law, the point of a definition is to point the way towards a structural systematic understanding of oppression. The tools for such a critical analysis are not the property of a specific group.

Third, we should use intersectional politics as it was originally intended. That oppression is an intersection of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. that doesn’t mean that there need to be a separate movement for each “intersecting” combination, but that all the groups involved should take oppressions seriously and attempt to build a common movement. That obviously calls for ability to critique outside your particular identity.

Luke Hardy

RATIONAL AND “LIBERAL”

We should advocate rational “liberal forms” of conducting politics. People at the sharp end *should* take the lead, should be listened to and respected.

But people at the sharp end will have differences among themselves, and they need to take the argument into the wider movement in order to find common ground, unity, allies, and wider social support. There will be “clashes of interest” in all wider debates. Some of these may be “genuine” and these should be resolved by debate, compromise etc. Some will be attempts to manipulate debate.

I am guessing that the argument against the definition of transphobia was disingenuous, an attempt to pit one set of identity politics against another, a zero-sum game.

Focusing on and arguing for your ideas on the structural issue of transphobia, and asking people to agree with you on the strength of your argument, while taking account of other structural oppressions *as much as seems reasonable*, is the only way to win the argument, and is also, in the long-run, more “just”.

Cathy Nugent

IF WE SAY SO, THEN IT’S TRUE?

I’m not too sure how this fits in, but sections of the far-right have appropriated the language of defining oppression to claim that white people are oppressed.

Since “liberals” say oppressed groups define their own oppression, there’s nothing anyone can do about it. I don’t believe this is an argument they make in good faith, but it is an argument I’ve seen made.

Josh Chown



What a movement looks like

I don’t believe Paul Mason’s analysis on the old industrial left vs the new, young, urban, woke left holds much water, and I also think it’s kind of contradictory.

If that really was the divide, then how would Mason’s proposed solution of winning back the old heartlands by being tough on crime, pro-police, pro-Trident, help bridge the gap? Speaking as a young(ish), woke, metropolitan lefty, those are two strands of social conservatism I vehemently oppose. I’m not alone in this. But some parts of Paul Mason’s recent article that are spot on.

“Being seen to deliver Brexit loses votes from progressive voters and wins none back from more socially conservative ones. That’s exactly what a leaked internal poll by Hope Not Hate and the TSSA union told Corbyn back in February. It was ignored.”

And I think he’s spot on about the state of the Corbyn movement. It can’t be a sustainable movement when it’s based around one man and a historical fluke. We all piled in when we saw the crack form in Labour because everyone — liberals, social democrats, Trotskyists, hardline Stalinists — knew something had to change and there needed to be a revival in labour movement politics.

But we never dealt with what being a Corbynite meant. (That is not through lack of trying on the part of good comrades. I see you.) The rank and file activist base was never educated or remotely empowered. Partly that was due to the legacy of Blairism.

Most people my age and younger don’t have a clue what a socialist movement looks like. We’ve never seen one. We’ve been trained our whole lives to believe that everything comes from the leadership and the apparatus. Of course we tend to think replacing them with some lefties would be enough.

The problem also comes from some people actively wanting the membership at arm’s length and in the shadows. Unfortunately, for Labour’s electoral successes, these people are not comparable to the New Labour architects. Say what you like about New Labour, but at least in the beginning they had the vision and talent to carry out triangulation and bureaucratic takeovers successfully!

The left doesn’t have that, but what we do have are ideas, passion, heart and dedication.

If we empower the members (really empower the members), educate them, play to our strengths, we could unleash a social movement that will define the next generation.

We can win the culture war and actually drag this country to the left rather than rolling over and capitulating to reactionaries at every turn.

Carrie Evans

SOCIALIST MOTIONS FOR LABOUR CONFERENCE

Over the next couple of months Constituency Labour Parties will be discussing motions to go to the Labour conference in September.

The deadline is 12 September, and motions are no longer subject to the requirement that they must be “contemporary”. *The Clarion* is promoting motions on

- Stopping Brexit, as a step in the fight to transform Britain and Europe
- A Socialist Green New Deal, to tackle climate change
- Scrapping academies, winning a comprehensive, democratic schools system

Please put one to your CLP.
• **For the motions, visit theclarionmag.org**
• **For more information or support, email theclarionmag@gmail.com**

Why we marched against Trump

From page one

Trump has pursued trade relations with China, not by the old US method of seeking to integrate China into a global web and extracting concessions along the way, but by bilateral exchanges of threats, penalties, retaliations.

Though the Brexiters talk of keeping Britain "open to the world", their drive has been to extract the UK from the "rules-based order" of the EU and do the best they can with a series of bilateral deals.

Many governments of the new right, however, see no possibility of getting anything better from bilateral jousting than they can get from the "rules-based order".

The common core of the new right is not so much distinctive economics as politico-ideological: a nationalist, populist, anti-migrant or anti-minority appeal.

Often, though to varying degrees, they recycle some of the social conservatism that was embedded in neoliberalism in its Thatcherite version but then replaced by a bland but real social liberalism (on issues like same-sex marriage, for example) in more mature versions of neoliberalism.

They pick up on the resentments, not usually of the poorest, but of middling layers of society who feel themselves in relative decline.

The archetypal new right supporter is an older man of the majority ethnicity or religion. He is not necessarily poor. Trump's voters, on average, were better off than Clinton's.

Brexit-voting in 2016 was higher in lower-income areas than in higher-income areas, but not necessarily or markedly higher among lower-income individuals than higher-income individuals (except at the very top of the income scale, where there was a big anti-Brexit majority). Academic analysis concluded that "rather than representing the 'left out', Brexit was the voice of [an] intermediate class who are in a declining financial position" (bit.ly/bx-vote).

This archetypal new right supporter is more likely to live in a smaller town than in the big cities with more multicultural and



younger populations. Even if not badly off, he is less likely to have a formal educational credential like a university degree than younger, big-city people, and so more likely to feel resentment against the inflated "credentialism" widespread in neoliberalism.

That archetypal supporter is rallied by slogans like "Make America Great Again" or, in Britain, "Take Back Control".

We have seen over recent decades that new-right forces starting with such an apparently limited and declining demographic can expand from it to win wide support in some countries from younger people, women, minority ethnic or religious groups, and in big cities. Le Pen in France, and Salvini in Italy, have succeeded in that expansion.

Evidence suggests that new-right support

is not based on "realistic" calculations or estimates that the new-right politicians will bring this or that particular material relief. The new-right current represented today by Trump has been growing or stable in US politics for decades now, although it has "delivered" almost nothing material to its base. Many, maybe most, pro-Brexiters today expect cash-in-hand loss rather than gain from Brexit.

The new-right base, it seems, see their politics as a matter of "values". Way back in the Reagan years, a journalist was told by a Republican official at one of their conventions: "There's not much these people like. But there's a lot they hate". People have been recruited to support the new right because it plausibly represents their hatred or distrust of migrants, minorities, "elites", "intellectuals", "experts".

Prejudices sunk deep into the subsoil of society, over decades or even centuries, have been drawn to the surface again, to flow vigorously in current politics.

That has happened because labour movements and the left have failed to offer adequate alternatives, both on the level of specific proposals to improve material conditions, and on the more fundamental level of "values", ideals, general political culture.

And that's happened because our own political culture became so defensive and downbeat in the long decades of neoliberal hegemony, and as a consequence so cluttered and corrupted by the debris left over from Stalinism.

We joined the protests against Trump to signal our resolve to build a new socialist movement capable of defeating Trump and Trump-type politics on every front, and to link up with the young people new to politics who in future years will take the lead in that movement.

Reinstate the "auto-excluded"!

In November 2016, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) got a report that during that year's leadership election, 618 members had been "auto-excluded", and 1,038 members had been and were still suspended.

We know no definite figures for the similar purge during the 2015 leadership election, but surely many more were "auto-excluded" or banned from membership then.

Many of the excluded had been Labour members through the Brown and Blair years, marginalised no doubt, but not threatened with expulsion. Now they were "auto-excluded" because they had spoken at a meeting of a left-wing group, or "liked" a left-wing Facebook event, or were accused with no further specifics of some association with such a group.

Vastly more people have been "auto-excluded" for left-wing associations than the few who have been expelled for anti-semitism.

The "auto" in "auto-excluded" meant both that they were "automatically" excluded, and that they were deemed to be "self-ex-

cluded". To associate with a left-wing group — usually Workers' Liberty, Socialist Appeal, or Left Unity, but there was and is no actual "proscribed" list to be checked or questioned — meant you'd excluded yourself. No due process was necessary. You just got a letter telling you that you were out, without precise charges, without a hearing, without an appeal, and with a ban on reapplying.

Since late 2016, "auto-exclusions" have been many fewer. A few of the "auto-excluded" have even got back into the Labour Party.

Now the question of the "auto-excluded" has been reopened, paradoxically, by the summary "auto-exclusion" of the old Blairite hatchet-man Alastair Campbell for announcing that he voted Lib Dem in the Euro-election on 23 May.

Few Labour members are sad to see Campbell go. But an online survey by Labour List (informal, but, as their answers to other questions indicated, of a generally pro-Corbyn crowd) had a large minority, 43%, opposing Campbell's expulsion.

Maybe because 28% of the Labour members responding had voted Lib Dem or Green themselves.

The Labour machine has now announced that Campbell's case will be reviewed, and hinted that other "auto-exclusions" could be reviewed too.

Every "auto-excluded" person should slam in an appeal now. CLPs and unions should send in motions demanding that all the "auto-excluded" be amnestied, and excluded again, if necessary, only after due process.

The Labour List survey also showed that only 30% of the Labour members responding want a new contest for Labour leader this year, despite the evident wide discontent with Jeremy Corbyn's performance on Brexit and increasing moves from the circles close to Corbyn to boost Rebecca Long-Bailey as a successor candidate.

63%, however, want a new contest for deputy leader, presumably motivated by resentment at Tom Watson's moves to regroup the dishevelled Labour right around himself.

Losing the thread: ISO's collapse

By Martin Thomas

The veteran Marxist writer Paul Le Blanc has written the most substantial and critical account yet of the collapse of the USA's International Socialist Organization, of which Le Blanc was himself a member, though not a central one: links.org.au/node/5410

The ISO was the most active revolutionary socialist organisation in the USA, with 800 or 900 members. At its convention in late February 2019, opposition groups displaced its longstanding leaders with a platform promising wider activism.

Le Blanc (who was outside the USA at the time) reports "at the convention's conclusion there seemed among people I trust considerable optimism about the future of the ISO".

Then "two scandals erupted – (1) what was seen as a possible rape cover-up, and separate from this, though in some ways related, (2) revelations of what was seen as a pattern of abusive and unacceptable behaviour by a central figure of the once-dominant leadership".

Of course resignations, expulsions, nasty disputes followed. Also, within a few weeks and not at all "of course", followed complete collapse.

By 19 April the ISO's publications Socialist Worker and International Socialist Review had ceased. Its website had stopped taking new posts. Its summer school had been handed over to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), *Jacobin* magazine, and the Haymarket publishing house. It was all over.

Le Blanc reports that friends have complained to him that in the arguments that led to winding up the ISO "the primary focus has been on exposé, indignation, anger, pain, at times flowing into a destructive and depressing trashing of former comrades and former beliefs, with contributions laced with one variety or another of 'purist' conformism, followed by multiple 'likes' spiced by jokes and flashes of going one better than what the last person said.

"Some inclined to disagree have held back... because they do not want to become the focal-point of online trashing. All of this has seemed to my outside interrogators to be the opposite of serious revolutionary politics..."

Audio of *Solidarity*

Many thanks to the volunteers who have enabled us to produce an audio version of the paper.

Links to the audio version are at workersliberty.org/audio, and can be found through many podcast providers: search "Workers' Liberty" or "Solidarity & More". Email awl@workersliberty.org for e-reader versions of *Solidarity*.

Le Blanc does not say that his friends are wrong — and, myself, I think they are right — but he says that they have missed part of the picture.

The ISO, writes Le Blanc, had usefully recognised that it was "the nucleus of the revolutionary vanguard party", already fully-formed except in not yet being big enough.

But, he writes, "For some members, the ISO was more or less an affinity group of those who believed socialism is a good idea, and also an educational and discussion group for those who share such an affinity.

"More than this, it was an outreach organisation designed to draw more such people into the socialist circle. That was the purpose of paper sales, public forums, socialism classes and even — in the minds of some — participation in political demonstrations..."

"There was an inclination to see the ISO as an association of the good people, of pure souls, standing up against the immorality and viciousness of capitalism, animated by the hope or promise that the working-class majority also has the potential for such purity..."

Le Blanc quotes some ex-ISOers: "Our politics were mostly good in the abstract. But in practice [when the ISO went beyond general advocacy of socialism] we adapted to the hostile territory".

REGULAR LOCAL ACTIVITY

The ISO, from Le Blanc's description, focused heavily on establishing regular local public meetings and stalls, especially at university campuses.

I have observed a similar focus by the ISO's Australian sister-group, Socialist Alternative (SAlt).

In our times, when young people gather on university campuses in much larger numbers than anywhere else, and it is easier to run and advertise stalls, meetings, etc. on those campuses than anywhere else, I think that is sensible. It's worked well for SAlt. Despite what some ISOers seem to have said, such regular activity is nowhere near so demanding as to exclude activity in unions, strikes, etc.

Yet the heavy focus on apparently "educational" activity left the ISO with a culture that went not far beyond moralistic self-praise: "we're the good guys, the socialism-from-below guys". And despite being perceived by those around it as very active and "punching above its weight", the ISO "adapted to the hostile territory" and did not work as an ideological lever to transform the labour movement.

Any broad political explanation leaves questions unanswered. That not a single member of the ISO had the will and energy to continue the building of a revolutionary socialist organisation is astounding. Every single one, apparently, opted for becoming inactive, continuing only in a local ex-ISO collective, disappearing into the DSA, or (presumably, for the old leadership) officiating over the large leftish publishing house previously linked to the ISO, Haymarket Books.

As they say, a pet is not just for Christmas. And commitment to build a revolutionary



ISO placards on a demo, around 2016-2017

socialist organisation is not just for a few years when you are young and healthy and footloose, or when there are no nasty jolts or setbacks. It is a life's work.

The completeness of the ISO collapse suggest some prior personal exhaustion in the old leadership. Maybe the recent rise of the DSA, and setbacks from the ISO arising from DSA competition (ISO is reported to have gone down from 1300 members in 2013 to 800 or 900 before the collapse), demoralised them. I don't know.

An article on "why organise" which SAlt published (bit.ly/why-org) as an implicit response to the collapse of its sister group (though without telling its readers about that collapse!) gives us clues about general political issues behind the paradoxes.

MODELS FOR REVOLUTIONARIES?

The article cites two models of how a revolutionary socialist organisation can do good work.

Not the Bolsheviks. Not the Trotskyists who kept the flame alive in hard times and were then able to do much in the explosions of 1968 and after. No: the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, before 1914, and... the Communist Party of Australia in the 60s and 70s. They are models because they encouraged and facilitated mass struggles.

What of the politics of the IWW and the CPA (beyond general advocacy of socialism)? Their program? The fact that the same CPA headed off the mass strike wave of 1975 and aligned the unions behind the union-Labor Accord which after 1983 devastated the Australian labour movement? Not mentioned.

A small organisation, like SAlt or ISO, is building rot into its foundations if it develops on the basis that precise program doesn't matter — if it suggests that being (1) a socialist "virtue-signalling" group, and (2) energetic in pushing along whatever is broadly defined as left-wing, is enough.

To be sure, the fact that they have systematically organised meetings and put out publications puts SAlt and ISO ahead of other currents of the left. The ISO had, and SAlt has, a good number of impressive young writers and speakers.

DEBATE

Yet their press and their meetings have been largely devoid of intra-socialist debate or polemic (and, in my experience at SAlt meetings in Australia, often actually hostile to debate).

They have largely lacked effort to establish continuity with or reasoned departure from

the hard-won traditions of revolutionary Marxism, the "classics".

The British revolutionary left in the late 1960s and the 1970s, when I first became active, was not much more numerous than it is now. It was materially much poorer in its facilities for publishing and communicating. Yet if you were an activist then, you would have many political arguments every week — sometimes foolish, sometimes off the wall, but real arguments, referring to more-or-less Marxist common stock — in individual conversations, in meetings, in print.

CULTURE OF THE LEFT

Now you're more likely to have your adversaries throwing personal abuse via social media, and your friends telling you that they don't dispute your politics but are "too stressed" to join in.

As Sean Matgamna wrote in *Solidarity* 469:

"The atmosphere on the ostensible left is heavily charged with heresy-hunting, trolling (which is only another name for gang mobbing and bullying), shouting-down, and drowning-out. There is little or no real political debate or dialogue..."

"Malice does service for information, hostility is enough to establish guilt on whatever charge you can think of. Anything-goes demagoguery smothers reasoned, truthful discussion..."

"Social media both are the vehicle, and provide the new model of discourse. There is it possible to spread opinions without knowledge, and rampant prejudice with no basis other than itself". (bit.ly/c-c-l)

ISO and SAlt have adapted to and skirted round that soundbite, virtue-signalling/vice-denouncing culture, rather than fighting it. And that has rotted the ISO, at least. (I wouldn't expect SAlt to collapse, unless and until its longstanding leaders suffer personal meltdowns. I say only that what it does is politically inadequate.)

A low level of direct working-class struggle, and a consequent pressure to look elsewhere for socialist virtue, frames all this.

We cannot raise that level at will. We can and must be aware of the effects on the culture of the left, and fight against them.

The ISO collapse is a startling example of the possible consequences if we fail.



Arabs, Jews, and socialism

Arabs Jews and Socialism: The socialist debate in the 1980s and 90s on Israel and Palestine, and the development of Workers' Liberty's ideas.

We recently reprinted this pamphlet, with an additional introduction by Sean Matgamna.

£5 cover price, £6.20 including postage.



“In 1989 public opinion had soured because of inflation, corruption, and stagnating living standards — and the [ruling] party itself was divided among reformers and hard-liners. Ultimately, it was this confluence of events that led to the massacre. For China’s Communist Party, relaxing its grip on power means losing it”.

That’s the picture given in a new book, *The Last Secret: The Final Documents from the June Fourth Crackdown*, edited by Bao Pu, about the crushing of China’s democracy movement in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989.

Despite the souring in the cities, the CCP still had support in the countryside and thus was able to keep the army solid to



suppress the urban population.

The events will be discussed at Ideas for Freedom, 21-23 June, in a discussion led by Camila Bassi, author of a number of research articles on modern Shanghai.

•180,000 demonstrated in Hong Kong on 4 June this year in commemoration of Tiananmen Square in 1989

A new humanist politics?



Review

By Matt Kinsella

Paul Mason’s latest book, *Clear Bright Future*, is written as a defence of humanism and human-centred politics, against the resurgent threat of the far-right, from Trump to Bolsonaro, Le Pen to Salvini.

The title is a reference to Leon Trotsky’s testament. Mason entreats us to fight “all evil, oppression, and violence”, and shares Trotsky’s optimism for the future.

Mason draws a convincing link from the financial crash in 2007/8 to Trump’s election. Mason emphasises how the monopolisation of information (think Google and Facebook) has led to systems outside our control, for example, of online advertising.

Trump paid \$150m in online advertising during the election. Facebook even trained Trump campaigners to use its algorithms to target potential voters based on things like shopping habits, friendship networks, and even porn habits. Negative ads about Hilary Clinton were also targeted at potential Democrat voters, to encourage them not to vote. This is yet another area in which workers’ control is necessary!

Mason sees the recent growth of the far right stemming from an anti-universalism, that took particular forms, from supposedly ironic memes, to the prevalence of “fake news”, to the links made between the far-right, the populist right, and the mainstream conservative right.

The aims of Russian bots, far-right groups, and misogynistic internet trolls was to “pollute the networked space with so much disinformation and abuse that people recoiled from it”.

The intellectual origins of this anti-universalism go further back than the crash however. Though Mason emphasises some of the positives of the post-modernist and post-structuralist academic left, in highlighting oppressions such as racism and sexism often

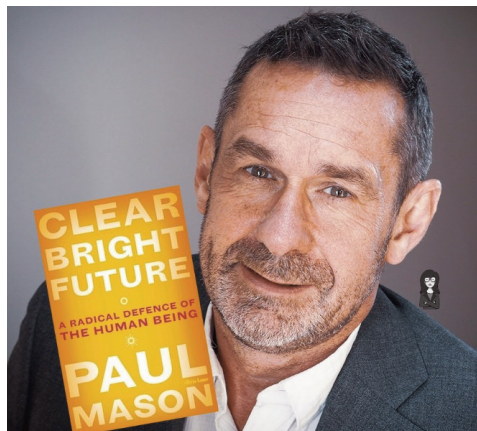
sidelined by the traditional left, he traces a fatalism inherent in many of its thinkers.

In its most extreme post-modern variations, truth and falsehoods just become “social constructs”. It is one thing to, for example, acknowledge the role that homophobia in society played when the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) included homosexuality as a disorder. It is quite another to entirely junk the entire scientific method, and the belief in empirical enquiry. We might think of the famous Sokal hoax (bit.ly/sokal-h).

The “new materialism”, which emphasises either the “agency of objects”, or the idea that it is impossible to make a “truth-claim”, contains a fundamentally anti-Enlightenment belief in the powerlessness of human beings, and our ability to observe and change the world around us.

Mason points to Marx as a philosopher who welcomed the best of Enlightenment rationalism, and whose philosophy is predicated on the idea that humans are different from animals in our capacity for our imagination, and our ability to work and change the world, based on our mental conceptions of it – labour, in short.

This is contrast to many of the post-modern thinkers, who either ignore class (Mason writes convincingly about how Hannah Arendt, and believers in the “horseshoe theory” of authoritarianism ignore class –



Matt Kinsella reviews Paul Mason’s new book, *Clear Bright Future*

though I would suggest Mason himself fails to apply this rigour to his ideas of the “networked individual”), or rely on Friedrich Nietzsche’s reactionary beliefs in biological hierarchy — Lukacs said Nietzsche possessed a “reactionary romantic pessimism for all time”.

Mason draws a link from the vitalism and fatalism popular in Weimar Germany, to the growth of twentieth-century fascism, to post-68 Althusserian belief that history was “a process without a subject”, to the post-modernist idea that there can be little or no human agency (there will always be “power structures”). All stem from the smashing or defeat of workers’ movements, which emphasised the possibility of humans changing the world around us, and these ideas reflect the subsequent ideological retreat into forms of idealism and belief in fate.

This particularly concerns Mason, given the extraordinary changes in computing power over the last 40 years. It is hard to imagine a world without smartphones today, yet the iPhone is barely twelve years old. Mason continues his theme of ideological resignation following defeat, by suggesting that after the collapse of stability in the neoliberal order in the 2007 financial crash, and the subsequent austerity programs, many ideologies, indifferent to the human being, now surround this future technology, from the right-wing libertarianism of Silicon Valley tech billionaires, to post-humanist techno-claims that there are no essential human characteristics.

Mason rightly point out that “we must impose on artificial intelligence, robotics, and projects to enhance human beings biologically... an ethical system that prioritises all human beings”.

Mason’s solution to these problems is contradictory, however. Whilst his reassertion of Marx as a philosopher committed to the belief in human agency, or in Raya Dunayevskaya’s words, a Marxist humanism, is welcome, this is also tinged by utopian socialist ideas. Mason believes future political projects must “nurture... non-profits, collaborative production, the peer-to-peer econ-

omy, and open source software and standards”.

Paraphrasing the sociologist Manuel Castells, Mason states that internet users “created a temporary model of the society they wanted to live in”, and idealises the squares occupations of 2011. The idea that we can create pre-figurative “bubbles” or “islands” outside of capitalist control is straightforwardly a utopian socialist idea.

Mason also asserts that to overcome the dichotomy between utilitarianism (the greatest happiness) and deontological ethics (rights), we must return to a system of Aristotelian virtue ethics.

The relationship of Marxism to systems of ethics is an interesting discussion (I have agreed in the past with Terry Eagleton that Marxism is a hybrid system, one that “views the moral good as the promotion of general well-being, but not, say, at the expense of the deontological imperative that all men and women have a right to participate in this process”), but I believe the necessity of a human-centred politics can be made without strict adherence to a particular school of ethical thought.

Mason’s utopian socialist ideas, leanings towards techno-determinism, and thought-experiments about ethics, should not stop the reader from enjoying the book. From his explicitly Marxist account of trade union struggles in *Live Working*, *Die Fighting*, to his most utopian work to date, *Post-Capitalism*, Mason has always written fluently, and in the style rare of activists and historians, by, story-like, weaving everyday struggles into big political ideas.

The book’s sections on Trump, the Paris Commune, the failures of post-modernism, and futurist yet grounded speculation of how technological advances will change our working lives, are interesting and largely convincing. Those passages remain encased in Mason’s more sci-fi and “pre-figurative” politics.

Yet a new attempt to argue for rationality, universalism, freedom, and the central importance of human agency in politics must be welcomed.

The break-up of Yugoslavia

By Sarah Correia

The understandings of how things worked between nationalities in the old Yugoslavia varies. But a lot of the time there were no big apparent issues.

The idea of being “Yugoslav”, and that being compatible with diverse national sub-identities was popular. A significant minority saw themselves as just “Yugoslav”. Often children were not very conscious of which national sub-identity they belong to.

That was especially true in Bosnia, and especially in the cities in Bosnia.

It gradually became different in Serbia. Serbia does not have the same ethnic mix as Bosnia. As early as 1981 there was growing agitation there, especially in Serbian Orthodox Church and intellectual circles, about Serbs allegedly being persecuted in Kosova, and even about “genocide” against Serbs.

Kosova was always an exception in the structure of Yugoslavia. It had never come into the federation voluntarily. It was conquered, first by Serbia in 1913, and then by Tito in 1945. And that exception, gradually, poisoned the whole set-up.

Kosova had the status of an autonomous region within Serbia. There were some measures of liberalisation after 1968. From 1981 there was a nationalist backlash.

There were student protests in Kosova, at the university of Pristina, initially around conditions in their halls and canteens and so on. A new generation in Kosova was gaining some confidence after decades of the population being overwhelmed by the conquest of 1945.

Soon the protests took up the question of



Sarah Correia is a researcher at the London School of Economics. She will speak at Ideas for Freedom, 22-23 June, on the case in Eastern Europe where the collapse of the old bureaucratic “one-party” regime around 1989 led to outright regression — the breakdown of the federal state of Yugoslavia into war.

autonomy. There was no talk of secession then, but there were some demands for Kosova to become a republic in the Yugoslav federation rather than a sub-unit of Serbia.

There was massive state repression and many imprisonments.

At that time maybe 10% of the population of Kosova was Serb. There was emigration, of both Albanians and Serbs, from Kosova to other parts of Yugoslavia, for economic reasons. Some intellectuals interpreted that as Serbs being driven out and being unable to live in the territory which (in medieval history) had been the cradle of the Serbian na-

tion. At first the agitation was about individual rights of dissent, then it became expressed in terms of collective rights, and then it evolved into nationalism.

There were no similar issues in Bosnia at the time. The Communist Party policy of balance between nationalities and self-censorship to mute nationalist grievances was generally accepted.

Nationalists now say: “we got along because we were forced to get along”. Yet today, somehow, everyone misses Yugoslavia. Life was better then. People had jobs. Towns had factories.

In the early 1980s, Serbia was the most liberal part of Yugoslavia, except perhaps Slovenia. But the liberals who lived within the system were slowly reshaped by a shift from defending nationalists in the name of individual rights towards collective nationalism.

It was something like what we see now in Britain, with the move from defending racists in the name of individual rights to collective assertions of racism.

There was a political shift to the right among dissident or semi-dissident intellectuals all across Eastern Europe in the 1980s. In most countries it took the form of a shift to neo-liberalism, sometimes by people who had placed hopes in Eurocommunism in the 1970s and seen them disappointed. In Yugoslavia, though, the shift to the right was a shift to nationalism.

Tito died in 1980. That created a lot of uncertainty in the regime. Tito had been the final arbiter. No-one replaced him. There was much effort by the regime to reconfigure itself, with the rotating chair of the collective presidency for example.

Even so, up to the late 1980s there was still widespread allegiance to the regime and identification with Yugoslavia.

I remember going to Srebrenica in 2008. It was half-deserted, and I knew it had been the scene of a terrible atrocity. But I also thought, looking at the houses: the people here in the 1990s had a level of life better than in small towns in my own country, Portugal, at that time.

There was poverty in Yugoslavia, but nothing like the levels of poverty in Portugal even in the 1980s and 1990s. There were some slums in Belgrade, where the Roma lived for example, but nothing like the shanty towns round Lisbon, which began to be cleared and replaced only from the late 1980s.

Slobodan Milosevic, who became president of the CP in Serbia from 1986, was a trail-blazer for the nationalist right across Eastern Europe, way before Orban. Individual contingency is important here. Someone else might have seized the initiative, and then things would have gone differently.

He was the first person to mobilise the nationalism that was brewing into an effective political force, and then to place his allies so that he could dominate the media spectrum.

Milosevic did not break with the Communist Party legacy or the Partisan tradition. Instead he “nationalised” them. He always claimed to be a Yugoslav and a socialist. He presented himself as the person who could secure continuity. He was able to attract both hard-core nationalists and people with some general nationalist feeling who did not think of themselves as nationalists, and change the political identity of his supporters.

His appeal was in some ways similar to the “no more experiments” appeal of pro-market opponents of other regimes in Eastern Eu-

rope in 1989, only his particular “no more experiments” program was one which would gradually transform the idea of a big Yugoslavia into that of a big Serbia. He appealed to a sense of keeping what people already had.

Nevertheless, his regime became a kleptocracy, and a regime which needed to be in a state of war to keep going. Milosevic never had as much support as Orban has today.

1987 was the start of Milosevic’s ascent to power, continued in 1988 and 1989 with a movement he called “the anti-bureaucratic revolution”, with an appeal something like Farage now in Britain. There were huge rallies of up to a million people. The Communist Party machine was working for those rallies, but there was more to them than that.

CONFLICT

Conflict with Slovenia and Croatia followed, and the collapse in early 1990 of the federal Communist Party. There were still federal state institutions, but no longer an all-Yugoslav party.

Milosevic got half the seats in the collective presidency by getting his supporters in as representatives of Vojvodina and Montenegro and Kosova.

In a parallel process the Yugoslav army became a Greater Serbian army. The army always saw its main duty as to preserve Yugoslavia, and historically the officer corps had always had a strong Serb majority.

Milosevic’s ascent was independent of the army, but once he was in power there was a convergence of interests, an alliance, between him and the army.

The Communist Party in the republic of Croatia, in anticipation of the need to open up to multi-party elections, created a proportional representation system skewed so as to massively favour the party with the highest vote. They did that because they expected they would win the highest vote. But the nationalists won the election, and the system helped. The Communists had not taken into account the dynamics of the election campaign — as with the Tories and Brexit, here.

The big nationalist parties did not campaign for war; on the contrary, they campaigned as being able to reassure people that they could assert their identity and be secure.

It was relatively easy to co-opt the Partisan tradition to nationalism in Serbia. In Croatia, Tudjman had to resort more to “the invention of tradition”. He himself had fought with the Partisans in World War 2, but he topped that up with appeals to anti-Partisan tradition.

The Croats thought that they were more economically developed than the rest of Yugoslavia, the economic powerhouse that was dragging the other republics on behind it.

After World War 1, Croat nationalists were a chief driving force in the creation of the first Yugoslavia, because they thought that only a federation of the south-Slav peoples could resist the threats of external domination which otherwise would overwhelm the separate small nationalities. They knew the history of domination by the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and feared domination by Italy.

The movement towards secession by Croatia was not a German plot, as some describe it, but it was facilitated by the fact that the Croats saw external friends rather than external enemies. They observed how Portugal, Spain, and Greece had been integrated into the EU, and saw those as models which Croa-

Yugoslavia timeline

From 15th century: most of the region ruled by Ottoman Empire

19th century: Serbia wins independence. Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia ruled by Austro-Hungarian empire.

1912-13: Balkan wars. Ottoman Empire pushed back, Serbia gains control over Kosova and Macedonia.

1918: first joint Yugoslav state formed. On Croatian initiative, but becomes heavily dominated by Serbian monarchy.

During World War 2: Catholic-fascist (Ustashe) Nazi puppet state in Croatia, ruling also over Bosnia. Nazi occupation regime in Serbia. Serbian royalists (Chetniks) sometimes fight Nazis, but more often collaborate. Stalinist-led Partisans fight Ustashe, Chetniks, Nazis, and win.

1945: second Yugoslav state. Stalinist-ruled, federal.

1948: Stalin attempts to topple Yugoslav leader Tito, whom he sees as too autonomous, and fails. Tito steers distinctive course (heavy reliance on market mechanisms, “self-management” in industry, free emigration) within “one-party” state model.

1980: Tito dies, replaced by “collective presidency” with rotating membership.

1988-9: Milosevic conducts “anti-bureaucratic revolution” in Serbia, actually a successful drive to establish Serbian (his) control over federal institutions.

1991: Slovenia and Croatia declare independence. Small military clashes in Slovenia; big war between Croatia and Milosevic.

1992: Bosnia declares independence. War with many atrocities until 1995, when Bosnia becomes independent under intricate big-power supervision.

1999: Milosevic launches drive to slaughter or drive out Kosovars. NATO intervenes, defeats Milosevic. Kosova eventually becomes independent under big-power supervision. Milosevic falls from power in 2000.



Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladić (left) and Radovan Karadžić (right)

tia could follow.

There has long been a very strong “European” identity in Yugoslavia. In Bosnia, even the more religious Muslims also had a strong “European” identity. The visa regime which people in Bosnia face today is experienced as deeply painful.

Slovenia became independent in June 1991, with only a brief attempt by the Yugoslav army to prevent that. Croatia declared independence, and a fierce war followed in 1991-2 between Croatia and the “Yugoslav” (now in fact largely Serbian) army.

It seems difficult to understand why Bosnia chose to declare independence in March 1992, and trigger a larger war that would last until 1995.

I think it was a matter of the Bosniac Muslim leadership not being prepared for what was going to come. They seem to have expected that the international community would somehow protect them. They did not have the understanding that the Albanian leadership in Kosovo had then, that it was better to build up strength and wait: the Milosevic regime would not last forever.

The leadership was not competent, I think. Alija Izetbegović was the wrong person in the wrong role. It seems that Izetbegović was even undermining the efforts of people in his own party to make preparations for the threat of war. He didn’t believe Serbia would be so brutal, though in retrospect it seems so obvious.

Even in 1991 there were still individual Muslims being drafted in the Yugoslav army and going to fight in Croatia. Then only months later they would be in a Serbian concentration camp. There were also draft-dodgers, of course.

Serb nationalism in Bosnia was different from Serb nationalism in Serbia. It did not openly break from the Partisan tradition, but tried to annex more of the Chetnik legacy. On the other hand, Croat nationalists in Bosnia were more moderate than Croat nationalists in Croatia itself.

The Bosniac Muslim leadership came from the tradition of the Young Muslims repressed by the Yugoslav regime in the 1980s. It was more connected to the Islamic structures in Bosnia than to any Yugoslav tradition.

Islam in Bosnia is much more centralised, much more organised like the Catholic Church, than Sunni Islam is elsewhere. It has been like that since Ottoman times. For a long time it had a *modus vivendi* with the Communist Party, because the Islamic community was modernist, and very much against Sufism, for example.

During the Bosnian war most of the Arab states sided with Milosevic. Turkey and Iran supported Bosnia, and Iran supplied weapons, with American help. After the war, it was different: all the Islamic states scrambled to get involved in the reconstruction.

European diplomacy made a negative contribution in the early 1990s. Germany did side with the nations that wanted independence, but the other European states were strongly opposed to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, for fear of precedents.

And the European diplomats also had a na-

tionalist mindset. They assumed multinational states couldn’t work. Even before the Bosnian war broke, their big plan for peace involved forced transfers of population. That played an important role in encouraging the ethnic cleansing during the war.

Even in the Serbian leadership, partition was not initially a goal. They thought in terms of a maximalist demand to dominate the whole of Bosnia. Partition emerged during the war.

MEMORIES

What are the usable memories which shape political prospects in Bosnia now?

There is the lived memory of the war. That acts as a deterrent against any new war. People are very cautious. Since the war there have been very few incidents of violence.

That is good. But the memory also makes society passive, with little appetite for political change. The political parties in power are plundering the population, but efforts to unseat them are very limited. People say: “As long as they don’t start shooting...”

There is another “memory” which is mostly not lived experience, and that is a strong nostalgia for Yugoslavia.

Nostalgia can have a positive role. It can underpin projections into the future. In practice, this nostalgia doesn’t have that positive role. It’s escapism.

Among the Bosnian Serbs, the division between the Chetnik and Partisan traditions is strong and pervasive, but it is like a family secret. During the war years the Partisan legacy was openly attacked — memorials vandalised, and so on — but nowadays there is a precarious accommodation of the two legacies.

In Croatia there is a very disturbing revival of the Ustashe and fascist legacy. It’s a bit like the Brexit populists here.

For instance, the city of Split had a very strong Partisan tradition, and that’s under strong attack. Nationalist graffiti have revived, for example among young football hooligans.

In Serbia there is a process of reintegration of the Chetnik legacy and the legacy of Milan Nedić, the Nazi-Quisling leader during World War 2. Politics in Serbia now is completely dominated by people from the Chetnik legacy, though they look moderate compared to Orban.

In Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, everyone who can leaves the country. That is easier from Croatia, because it is in the EU. From Serbia and Bosnia there is a massive drain of doctors and nurses, but also a stream of people going to Germany, Italy, or Austria on 90-day visas for temporary work.

The driver is not so much poverty, but lack of prospects and hope. The wish to leave is not based on the idea that they will have a much better material life abroad, but that they will live in a healthier society.

Even people who think they will have a poorer individual standard of living abroad want to leave.

•Sarah Correia was talking to Martin Thomas from *Solidarity*

A British counter-revolution

By Cathy Nugent

The current BBC2 documentary series *Thatcher: A Very British Revolution* is worth watching for the film footage — interviews with Thatcher, old news reports of events, and other rarer clips.

Beyond that, it won’t tell you much more than Wikipedia does. Most of the talking heads are Tory ex-MPs and civil servants who served under Thatcher. Also Bernard Ingham, Thatcher’s press secretary, who proves that reactionary pomposity does not fade with age.

After three instalments I can say the first episode was the most interesting. It explained how Thatcher came to be leader of the Tory Party in 1975 almost by accident.

Tory MPs had not been pleased with how Edward Heath had failed to face down the miners and other unions during his tenure as Prime Minister (1970-74). Heath had called an election in early 1974 on the ultimatum “who governs Britain” (the government or the unions) and lost to Labour.

Some Tory MPs wanted to give Heath a jolt. A leadership contest was called in February 1975. Heath was expected to win.

Thatcher threw her hat into the ring. She was not expected to win, not least because she was a woman. But she engaged the Tory MP Airey Neave as her campaign manager. Neave claimed to have only ever read Clausewitz while at university, but that came in handy during Thatcher’s campaign, where he employed divide and rule tactics successfully.

Neave (famous for escaping from Colditz) was blown up by a car bomb in the courtyard of the House of Commons in 1979 by the Irish National Liberation Army (police have recently re-opened an investigation into the assassination).

PETTY BOURGEOIS

Bit by bit, Thatcher established her authority over the Tory party.

Her class outlook — petty bourgeois, a self-made person — drove her on. That was always much more important than her gender. That aspect of her identity was deeply conservative — she loved dusting!

Heseltine describes her well. He says Thatcher was intolerant to the point of bigotry towards people she perceived to be lower on the social scale to her, if they could not or would not “help themselves”. But she was also never, ever, going to be part of the Establishment — one of the ex-Etonian gang.

Her social position, combined with workaholic, freed her to take a different and more ruthless political trajectory than the old-guard Tories.

The series does not define “Thatcherism” clearly and sharply in contrast to post-war “one-nation” Toryism. In truth, consensus bourgeois politics (mixed economy and welfare state) was breaking down before Thatcher came to power. She was more determined than her predecessors to crack that failing consensus.

She fixated on bringing down inflation (thus the “monetarist” experiment of her first two years), making huge cuts in public expenditure and direct taxation for the better-off, and increasing indirect taxation (VAT). Those policies facilitated a massive increase



in inequality. Upward mobility (a cherished belief, perhaps shibboleth, of post-war Europe) now meant displacing someone else on the social ladder.

British manufacturing went to the wall, and unemployment was ratcheted up — standing at over three million by 1982.

Thatcher was very unpopular in her first two years in government after 1979. 1981 saw riots in Toxteth in Liverpool, Chapeltown in Leeds, Handsworth in Birmingham, and Brixton in London.

Such events, and the all-pervasive social discontent, drew many people (including myself) into political awareness.

Then came the early 1982 war which followed Argentina’s military junta invading the Falklands/Malvinas — a tiny group of islands in the South Atlantic. Thousands of miles away from Britain, the islanders nonetheless saw themselves as British (and they were also 2000 miles from Argentina’s main population centres).

Our political tendency supported their right to self-determination while opposing Thatcher’s war. Britain quickly won the war, and the victory saved Thatcher’s government.

Thatcher was seen as a woman of courage, an Iron Lady, no longer the leader of a “clapped-out nation” as Ingham puts it.

The stage was now set for Thatcher to take on the miners in 1984-5, the people she described in her soft posh voice (the product of elocution lessons) and with overdriven right-wing rhetoric as “the enemy within”.

She said that the miners, led by Arthur Scargill wanted the break down of law and order and the destruction of Parliamentary government.

Unfortunately the film-makers interviewed Neil Kinnock (Labour leader in 1984-5) as a “balancing point of view” on the strike. Kinnock, in fact, betrayed the miners. He condemned “all violence” and took a year to get down to a picket line.

Socialists who were active in the early 80s will find themselves revisiting the bitterness and anger you felt then.

Others will learn something from the film footage, but for facts and truth talk with people who were involved in the many fights against Thatcher and the class war she led.

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More online at www.workersliberty.org



Workers' Liberty



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Khakan Qureshi (right) and NEU activists on LGBT+ education in schools



Ruth Cashman debates Paul Embery: Socialists and Brexit



Paul Vernadsky debates Steve Smith: 1917 and the legacy of the Bolsheviks

Ideas for Freedom

Reason in revolt: Third Camp socialism in the age of Brexit

20-23 June, London. Until 20 June tickets are £12 unwaged, £27 low-waged/uni students, £43 waged. More expensive on the door. Free creche and accommodation available.



Danny Dorling and Cath Fletcher

Brexit and imperialist nostalgia



Richard Wilkinson on mental health

The Inner Level: talk by Richard Wilkinson co-author of *The Inner Level: How More Equal Societies Reduce Stress, Restore Sanity and Improve Everyone's Well-being*



Pragna Patel, 40 years of Southall Black Sisters



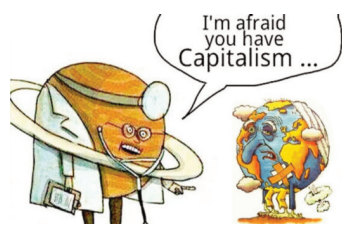
Queer Walking Tour

Join a guided walking tour with Ian Townson on the radical gay community and squats in and around Brixton Road from the mid-1970s to 1981, the year of the Brixton riots



Judy Singer, Janine Booth and Fergus Murray

Arguing for Autistic Rights: the backlash against neurodiversity and how to overcome it: Judy Singer, author of *Neurodiversity: the birth of an idea*; Janine Booth, author of *Autism Equality in the Workplace*; and Fergus Murray, co-founder of Autistic Mutual Aid Society, Edinburgh.



Climate and Capitalism

- An Introduction to Andreas Malm's *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*: Mike Zubrowski
- What kind of "Green New Deal": Luke Neal



International Struggles

- US teacher struggles and reviving the labour movement: Teacher trade unionist and socialist activist Lois Weiner
- The Uyghur people's fight for freedom: Aziz Isa Elkun, Uyghur activist



Book and Agenda

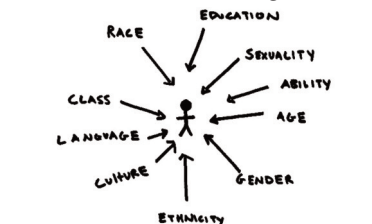
Visit workersliberty.org/ideas for the full agenda and to book online, or book over the phone on 020 7394 8923.

Thursday, 6:30pm, starts Herne Hill rail station, SE24; Friday 7pm, Student Central, WC1E 7HY; Saturday from 11am and Sunday 10am at Camden School For Girls, NW5 2DB.



1919: the year of strikes and struggles

- Zetkin, Luxemburg and the German Social Democratic Women's Movement with Kelly Rogers and Kieran Miles
- Luxemburg and Luxemburgism with Justine Canady and Martin Thomas
- Was workers' revolution possible in 1919? Was it desirable? discussion and debate with Simon Webb and Janine Booth
- György Lukács: a Marxist of 1919 with John Cunningham



Ralph Leonard and Christie Neary

Identity politics and class struggle: with Ralph Leonard and Christie Neary



Eric Lee, Maya Ilany and Tom Harris

The future of the left in Israel with Eric Lee (Labour Start, p.c.), Maya Ilany (Yachad, p.c.), Tom Harris (Workers' Liberty)



The Collapse of Stalinism

- The breakup of Yugoslavia with Sarah Correia
- Solidarnosc: workers against Stalinism with Chris Marks and Mark Osborn
- The Tiananmen Square uprising: when Chinese workers and students fought for freedom with Camila Bassi
- Hungary 1956 with John Cunningham



And More...

- The Deliveroo strike: workers fighting back in the gig economy with Zack Murrell-Dowson and Tom Harrington, couriers and IWGB activists
- The bourgeois Marx: a critical appraisal of Max Weber with Dan Davison
- What kind of left does Labour need?
- The Roots of Lexit with Paul Vernadsky
- Independent working-class education and the legacy of the Plebs League: Colin Waugh



Sparking and spreading disputes

By John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary-elect, Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), in a personal capacity

There are numerous disputes going on across the PCS at the moment. The Universal Credit dispute in Walsall is just one of them.

That dispute focuses on workload, and there's a feeling that other workers in similar situations across the union might take similar action. That opens up the potential for a wider dispute within the Department for Work and Pensions.

There are also disputes against the threatened closure of offices, such as the Ealing tax office, where workers have recently taken action. In HMRC and DWP the Government plans the mass closures of offices therefore it is possible that other disputes will be sparked.

There are also hugely significant disputes of outsourced workers currently taking place, in the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The PCS branches at BEIS and FCO has done exemplary work to organise outsourced workers. At BEIS, the contractor underpaid their workers recently, plunging many into real financial hardship. The situation the workers face is so acute that the branch recently organised a food bank in the workplace. That dispute has recently extended to involve another group of outsourced workers at BEIS, who have returned a majority for industrial action.

Therefore PCS now has the possibility of more cleaners, security guards etc. taking action in the period ahead.

We need to spread this kind of organising throughout the union. Wherever work has been out-

sourced and where PCS organises we need to get cleaning, catering, security workers, maintenance staff etc into the union.

Our immediate goal is to win improvements in pay and conditions for these workers but it also vitally important that we fight on to win recognition for PCS in these contracts. Of course the end goal must be to have all these workers in-sourced so that they have the same terms and conditions as their in-house colleagues.

Our national conference voted for a further ballot over national pay. That ballot may also include redundancy pay and cover pensions. The July meeting of our National Executive Committee will decide on the voting timetable. We need to use the campaign around the ballot as an organising and recruitment drive.

We shouldn't just be aiming for 50% plus one, but for a massive majority that engages workers in the union and gets them active.

TDL out again on 10 June

By Duncan Parker, TDL courier and IWGB union rep

The couriers at The Doctors Laboratory (TDL) went on strike for the very first time for a 48-hour period on 24 and 25 May.

After a year of negotiations over pay and terms and conditions, where TDL used delaying and intimidation tactics, the couriers had had enough and balloted for strike

action. The final straw was an attempt by TDL to force couriers into PAYE contracts with another pay cut. The ballot was a complete success with 85% voting for industrial action.

We had two stunning sunny days and a great turnout for the strike. Nearly 30 motorbikes parked in front of TDL headquarters on Euston Road, decked out with IWGB flags, was a very potent message to TDL management. On Thursday there was a solidar-

ity breakfast and guest speakers. Friday saw a ride out of 20 plus motorbikes through the streets of the West End. The strike was a great success. The solidarity and resolve of the couriers was greatly strengthened.

TDL management have not responded in any way, and their silence is another attempt to intimidate the couriers. To no avail, though. We will be striking again on 10 June. Please come down and join us in solidarity!

Tube cleaners to strike

From Tubeworker

Cleaners in the RMT union working on London Underground are preparing to ballot for strikes. A cleaning worker and union rep spoke to the *Tubeworker* bulletin about the dispute:

"Tube cleaners have been campaigning for many years against injustice. We're fighting for dignity, and equal conditions in our workplaces. Currently we have no company sick pay, which means cleaners who get sick are forced to come to work or face financial hardship. And we also have no free travel passes, unlike directly-employed staff working on the railway.

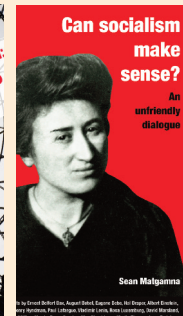
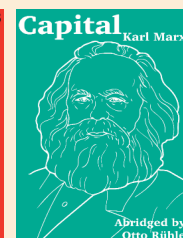
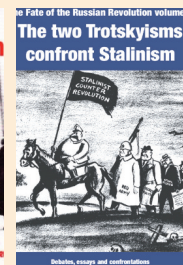
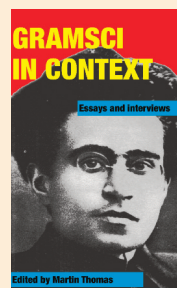
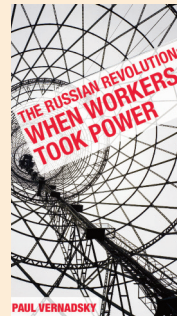
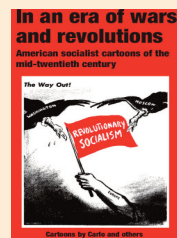
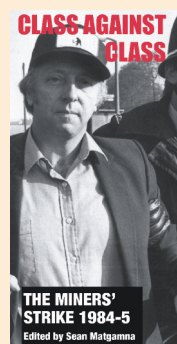
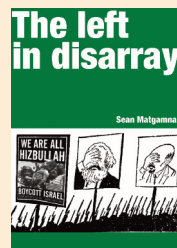
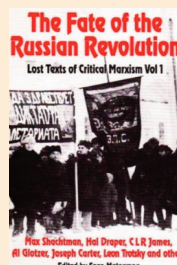
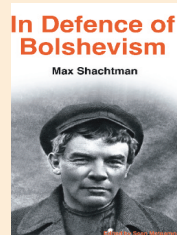
"The biggest demand we are fighting for is direct employment, for cleaning to be brought in house. I don't consider myself an ABM cleaner. I am a TfL cleaner, I am a London Underground cleaner. ABM will probably go in a few years, some other contractor will come along. But we are doing the same work, cleaning London Underground. We should be employed directly.

"There's hasn't been industrial action for several years; union members amongst cleaners have been waiting for this dispute for a long time. People were asking, 'when are we going to have a real fight?' Non-members have also been enthused by the announcement that we're planning to ballot. Since the decision was announced, I've personally recruited six people. Cleaners want to join because they see us preparing for a strike.

"We're not planning to strike simply because we're pissed off. Action is an essential organising tool. A union is only as strong as its membership. By taking action, we build the union. We need support and guidance from the rest of RMT. Many cleaners have English as a second language and may not know their legal rights. Some feel scared and isolated. The wider union can provide us with direction and information to help us build the dispute, and support us when we take action. We need to be honest with members about what it will take to win.

"We have been making good links with other unions organising cleaners, such as the IWGB. We have attend picket lines and demonstrations with them, and we've been sharing ideas and tactics at events coordinated by the New Economics Foundation. It's good to meet cleaners from universities and hospitals and discuss what we have in common. We're part of the union movement so should support each other. If they strike, they know RMT members will have their back, and vice versa.

"Our voice is bigger if we combine, so unions organising outsourced workers to demand direct employment should join together in common campaigns."





Solidarity

For a workers' government

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Against “exam factories”!

By Duncan Morrison

The National Education Union (NEU) is balloting its primary school members between 4 June and 12 July over whether to boycott high stakes summative testing (HSST) in primary schools.

WHAT IS HSST?

“Summative” means that the main purpose is to attach a score to what has been learnt, not to inform future learning and teaching. “High stakes” means that the school and school workers are measured by that score.

The tests are used to compile league tables of schools, and those in turn play in to the marketisation of education. Testing is also big business: companies make a lot of money selling tests, data monitoring programmes and revision guides to schools, school workers, parents and children.

IT'S JUST SATS?

No. In English primary schools there are now four sets of HSST tests that the government insists all publicly-funded schools do.

These are called statutory tests: phonics screening in Year 1 (age 5 to 6); Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) in Year 2 (age 6 to 7); times table test in Year 4 (age 8 to 9), which will begin next year; and SATs in Year 6 (age 10 to 11).

In September, the government will begin a pilot of “Baseline Testing” for reception children (age 4 to 5). It intends to implement that fully from September 2020.

AND THERE'S MORE?

Yes. On top of the statutory tests, many primary schools now feel compelled to run additional HSST to provide evidence for Ofsted and the government of how the school is doing.

Maybe as many as six tests (arithmetic, two maths reasoning, punctuation and grammar, spelling, reading) every half-term. These are often “bought in” at significant cost. Such tests generally start in Reception and run throughout the school. They are equivalent to a whole half-term (six weeks) of testing each academic year.

BUT THE TESTS HELP A BIT?

These tests have no positive impact on children's learning.

There is never any feedback provided to the child. In a survey by the NEU in 2018, 88% of teachers said that SATs do not benefit children's learning, 66% thought that children who had English as Another Language (EAL) were disadvantaged, and 54% thought that summer-born children (the youngest in the class) were disadvantaged.

OR AT LEAST THEY DO NO HARM?

The primary purpose of the tests is to “measure” schools. Some secondary schools use the Year 6 SATs results for streaming.

There is a lot of pressure to make children and parents believe test results determine children's futures.

Thus all the SATs revision



guides in book shops and the after-school tutors claiming to prepare your child for SATs. School leaders and sometimes other school workers often play in to the narrative of these tests affecting the child's life chances.

This puts an unbearable stress on young children. In August 2018 The Children's Society described Britain as suffering “a children's mental health crisis”.

That is not just down to testing, but research by the NEU in 2018 demonstrated that nine in ten primary school teachers believe a SATs-based primary assessment system is detrimental to children's well-being. Teachers report children crying and having nightmares.

HSST are used to label children as red (will not make national expectations), amber (not currently on course to make national expect-

tations), and green (will make national expectation).

So schools focus on preparing the “amber” children for the tests. “Red” and “green” children get less focus. Even the bosses' organisation, the CBI, says that schools have become “exam factories” which don't prepare children for life and work.

HSST NARROWS THE CURRICULUM

Many schools run additional revision and booster classes for the SATs.

A union survey of teachers in 2017 found 70% of those schools withdrew students from other lessons, 20% ran classes in school holidays, 57% had classes after school and 23% during children and teachers' lunch breaks.

And it drives out good teachers. Many quit, saying that teaching

isn't the job they thought it was going to be or the job it used to be. School workers work in a system where their judgement and autonomy are undermined and where they regularly work hard doing things that they know are of no value for their children.

BUT YOU NEED SOME TESTS?

Most countries test much less than England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland test less.

There are many examples of assessment systems which warp learning and workload less, but provide accountability and rigour.

•Duncan Morrison is Assistant District Secretary of Lewisham NEU (writing in a personal capacity). Thanks to Patrick Yarker.

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