



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 496 20 February 2019 50p/£1

Clear migration spies out of workplaces



Tories plant border guards in hospitals and councils

The *Observer* newspaper on 17 February reported that the Government is “attempting to embed immigration officers at a rate of almost £60 an hour as part of an ‘enhanced checking service’ being offered to public services, understood to include NHS trusts and local authorities, as well as private firms.”

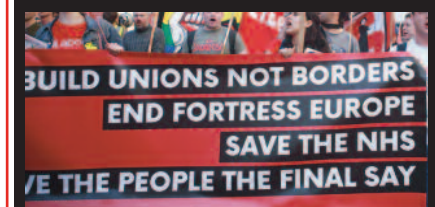
The attempt goes back a while. In May 2017 a local authorities’ information website summed up: “A Home Office immigration official can be placed within a local authority [to] provide.... immigration status checks”.

The Home Office told the *Observer* that some 13 officials are already in place.

More on page 5

Stop Brexit! New public vote!

page 5



Yellow vests

Michael Elms dissects the potentials and the dangers in France’s “Yellow Vests” movement.

See page 6



The Gang of Seven

Condemn the right-wing Labour splitters, but don’t let the condemnation whitewash the real problems on Brexit and antisemitism.

See page 4

Labour for a Socialist Europe National conference

9 March 11.30 am-5.30pm

Camden School for Girls, London NW5 2DB
labourforasocialisteurope.org

Labour: call a Special Conference!

Two months of revolt in Sudan

By Simon Nelson

Mass protests in Sudan have been ongoing since December 2018.

The rising cost of bread and fuel has sparked calls for “Just fall – that’s all” against President Omar al-Bashir and his ruling National Congress Party.

Leaders of nine opposition parties have been arrested. The individuals reportedly include Siddiq Youssef, a senior leader of Sudan’s Communist Party, and leaders from the pan-Arabist Ba’ath and Nasserist parties.

Sudan’s opposition is weak, split on ethnic and religious lines. There seems almost no chance that any of the existing political parties could topple the regime, which has been in place since 1989.

The protests started on 19 December. Since then the offices of the ruling party have been burned down in the city of Atbara; and the Association of Sudanese Professionals has become the leading voice within the demonstrations.

The Association of Sudanese Professionals, a semi-underground union originally set up by doctors and now including lawyers, teachers

and university workers, has held a series of strikes. At first it focused on a rise in wages. Now it has become the leading voice in opposition to the government.

Bashir has the support of Turkey, which has passed aid to the government, and of the Arab League, of which Sudan. Egyptian President al-Sisi and the Saudi monarchy have been quick to reassure Bashir that he has their full support. Bashir has claimed the protests are the result of foreign interference.

Since the coup in 1989 Bashir has ruled over a repressive Islamist



Bashir: Just fall – that’s all

regime, originally based on the pol-

itics of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood. Morality laws outlaw women congregating in public and restrict the consumption of alcohol.

To gain the support of Egypt, Bashir has now cracked down on the Brotherhood, helping to deport members of the Egyptian group back to Egypt.

Saudi Arabia has used Bashir as a proxy to make links with Assad in Syria, and got his backing for its war in Yemen.

Sudan has broken off ties with Saudi’s arch-rival Iran, and describes the Iranian government as a threat to the region.

SDLP semi-merges with Fianna Fáil

By Micheál MacEoin

At a special SDLP conference in Newry on 9 February, delegates voted 121 to 53 to endorse a proposal from the party’s leadership to establish formal cross-border “policy partnership” with the Republic of Ireland’s main opposition party, Fianna Fáil.

A rival motion, to affirm the SDLP’s “long established relationships with Fine Gael and Labour as well as Fianna Fáil” and to explore less exclusive arrangements with these parties, was defeated.

The internal debate was highly divisive, with party activists taking to the national press and social media to air disagreements. In the wake of the special conference, the chairs of the SDLP’s Youth, Women’s and LGBT+ sections have resigned, citing procedural irregularities at the conference.

On 11 February, one of the party’s most high-profile figures, South Belfast MLA Claire Hanna, widely seen as sitting on the social

democratic wing of the organisation, resigned from the SDLP whip (reducing the Assembly Group to 11) and as the party’s Brexit spokesperson. She says she will remain a party member.

The move should be seen as an effort to halt the seemingly terminal decline of the SDLP. It has struggled to find a role in Six-County politics ever since the Good Friday Agreement.

Between 2001 and 2017 the SDLP lost around 44% of its vote. It has long been supplanted by Sinn Féin as the main party of the nationalist population.

In the last Assembly election in 2017, the party won only 12 seats — half the number of seats it won at its high-point in 1998. The SDLP leadership now hopes that cross-border co-operation will appeal to voters hoping for 32-county solutions to problems such as Brexit.

Some see the decision, however, as the first step towards a full-on merger with Fianna Fáil, which would simply spell the end of the SDLP by other means. Already the move has potential implications for the SDLP’s relations with the governing party Fine Gael, and particularly with its sister party in the Republic, the Irish Labour Party.

The SDLP is currently a member of the Party of European Socialists (PES, together with Irish Labour, the UK Labour Party and other European social democratic parties) and sat as part of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group in the European Parliament when it had an MEP.

The Irish Labour Party commented, implying that these affiliations could now be challenged: “The consequences of the partnership decision will now be carefully considered by the Labour party in the coming weeks, and in consultation with our colleagues in the Party of European Socialists.”

The main concern for socialists is not the future health of the SDLP, which although it has members of

a social-democratic or Labour Party persuasion, has drawn its support fairly narrowly from the Catholic population, and advocates socially conservative positions on abortion and a range of other issues.

Rather, the paramount interest is in the implications of these developments for independent working-class politics in Ireland.

The SDLP’s affiliation to UK Labour has long been cited as a reason why no Labour Party could stand candidates in the 6 counties. Both UK Labour and Irish Labour parties allow membership in the North.

UK LABOUR IN IRELAND

The UK Labour Party attracting a short-lived but large flurry of supporters in the wake of Corbyn’s election as leader. That was never organisationally consolidated, however, and seems to have largely receded.

Given the unresolved national question in Ireland, and the continued sectarian division, it would be wrong simply to advocate that the UK Labour Party stands in the North. One option that could be explored, however, is a confederal vehicle for labour representation in the Six Counties, with close links to the Labour Parties in the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

Within that, however, an independent labour movement programme to resolve the national question and unite the working-class in the struggle for socialism could at least be openly discussed and thrashed out.

In such a debate, Workers’ Liberty advocates a federal united Ireland, with a degree of autonomy and local self-rule for the Protestant-majority areas in the north-east, and protections for the Catholic minority in those areas.

That could lay the basis for persuading Protestant workers who currently support Unionist parties, and building working-class unity across the sectarian



Neurodivergent Labour launched

By Fraser Andrews

On 9 February, over fifty activists from across the country attended the official launch of Neurodivergent Labour at a meeting in London.

The term “neurodivergent” refers to the condition of being cognitively atypical, e.g. autistic, dyslexic, dyspraxic, or Tourette’s.

The organisation has been born out of the groundwork laid through the drafting of Labour’s Autism and Neurodiversity manifesto, and is now looking forward to hosting its founding AGM later this year.

At the meeting, the organisation agreed its aims as: “to develop socialist policy on neurological diversity;

- to win support for Labour among neurodivergent people and their supporters;
- to campaign against discrimination, exclusion, oppression and injustice and for equality for neurodivergent people;
- to provide support to neurodivergent Labour Party members

who are experiencing discrimination;

• and to work to make the Labour Party more accessible to its neurodiverse membership”.

The event was good-natured, with lively discussion, and it was clear that the room had a wealth of knowledge and energy. Members discussed a range of issues that affect the neurodivergent population – disability, education, LGBT rights, the welfare system and much else.

There was appetite for developing a trade union network to encourage neurodivergent people to be able to defend their rights in the workplace and challenge the hostile nature of the work regime, as well as to bring neurodivergent issues into the political arena of the trade union movement.

The meeting elected two convenors — Janine Booth and Austin Harney — to organise groups to carry out the tasks of promoting the manifesto and organising the founding AGM.

To find out more or get involved see bit.ly/nvd-l or bit.ly/n-div.

Radical Readers: Black Boy

Black Boy is a memoir by African-American Communist Richard Wright. Radical Readers in Space will be meeting via online video-call to discuss it on Thursday 28 February.

The book is a memoir of Wright’s youth as a black kid in the American South, written from a Marxist point of view.

Please take a moment to share and RT the event page very widely.
bit.ly/rr-rw-bb

There’ll be a stream of content coming out on the page in the weeks leading up to the meeting. There’s an audiobook of part one of Black Boy at bit.ly/bb-rw-ab

Two emergencies in the USA

By Chris Reynolds

On 19 February, 16 US states announced that they were combining to sue the administration of President Donald Trump over Trump's decision to declare a "national emergency".

Trump declared the "emergency" on 15 February. Previous presidents have declared "emergencies", to gain powers to bypass Congress, but mostly on foreign-policy issues. Trump himself has declared three previous emergencies.

This one is different. Its only purpose is to enable Trump to pursue a longstanding domestic policy, building a wall along the US-Mexico border, by diverting money voted by Congress for other purposes.

Even when the Republicans had a majority in Congress, Trump was not able to get Congress to vote him the wall-building funds he wanted.

Trump's "emergency" is vulnerable on at least three fronts other than its unusual domestic-policy focus.

One: there is no emergency. Even if you reckon that hard-pressed people entering the US to work and live might be an "emergency", the numbers crossing the border are much lower than in the early years of this century (bit.ly/us-mx-b).

Two: to use the "emergency", Trump has to take funds from other purposes voted by Congress. Those include, for example, military construction projects. Even right-wing conservatives are likely to object.

Three: Trump has said: "I can do the wall over a longer period of

time. I didn't need to do this. I would rather do it much faster".

On 18 February, Richard Painter, the former chief ethics attorney for Republican president George W Bush, declared that Trump is "not well at all mentally" and should be removed under the 25th Amendment to the US constitution.

The 25th Amendment gives procedures for replacing a president who has died or become incapacitated, rather than been impeached by Congress as Richard Nixon might have been if he had not resigned in 1974.

The same day Andrew McCabe, former deputy director of the FBI (and at one time acting director, until sacked by Trump) claimed that he had been in conversations with serving deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein about a 25th Amendment procedure.

In its early days the Trump administration had a number of senior figures who were established, mainstream, "orthodox", bourgeois experts. Pretty much all of those have since resigned or been sacked.

A whole chunk of the established "cadre" of the bourgeois state is alarmed by or hostile to Trump. And Trump is openly hostile to them.

Trump also has very high disapproval ratings in polls (for a US president). When elected in November 2016 he had low scores in most of the US's big cities, only 18% in New York City for example. Those scores have not improved.

Among the anti-Trump, big-city population, there is a drift to the left. A poll in late 2018 showed 31% of people aged 22 to 37, and 48% of

Democrat supporters in that age range, defining themselves as "socialist" or "democratic socialist".

Most of them would see "socialist" as meaning support for a comprehensive welfare state, rather than common ownership of the productive wealth. Nevertheless, among young people in the traditionally anti-socialist US, as many now declare for "socialism" as against it. It's a big shift.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib have become the first two members of the Democratic Socialists of America to win election (as Democrats) to Congress. (DSA originated from a 1973 split in the longstanding Socialist Party of America. It often, but not always, supports Democrats in elections).

Yet opposition to Trump from Republicans in Congress has been minimal, and even more so since the death in August 2018 of John McCain (Republican presidential candidate in 2008).

And Trump's electoral base has remained surprisingly steady. His poll approval ratings are low, but no lower than they were when he was first elected.

The relatively booming condition of US capitalism over the last two years — owing little to Trump's policies other than his tax cuts for the well-off — will explain some of that. But far from all: there is a mass right-wing ideological base underpinning Trump.

There is a political emergency too: the need for the left to find ways to dig into and win over sections of the plebeian layer of that right-wing base.



The White House officially reports that 60% of Trump's nominal work day is "executive time," when he tweets, watches TV, etc.

Opioids: when profits kill

By Angela Driver

In the US, the use of opioids has now overtaken road traffic accidents as a leading cause of death.

In the 1980s the rise of the hospice movement in the UK highlighted the fact that many cancer

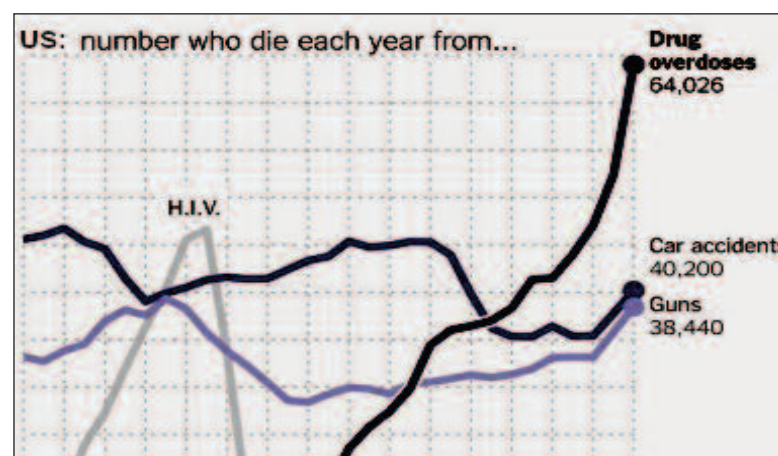
patients were dying in pain. To manage pain caused by advanced cancer at the end of life, strong painkillers — opioids — are often required. With careful titration many side effects can be avoided, and pain well controlled. That led to a more humane approach to end-of-life care. Further studies suggested that opioids were also beneficial in the management of chronic pain. At the same times, the idea was gaining that pain should not just be accepted. More patients asked for more pain relief.

Later studies showed irrefutably that for many patients suffering chronic pain opioids were not useful. But pharmaceutical companies are driven by the need to make a profit, even despite evidence and human need. Using the flawed initial studies companies, including those manufacturing the opioid oxycontin, encouraged widespread prescribing of opioids for patients

with chronic pain. They claimed that oxycontin was less likely to be addictive because it was a slow release preparation.

The company producing oxycontin, and three executives, were found guilty of criminal charges in 2007 because of such misleading claims, and had to pay over \$600 million in fines. But opioid prescriptions had already become more common.

Patients who are already impoverished and depressed are less likely to manage the additional burden of chronic pain, or to cope with the help from physiotherapy and psychology which can manage it better. Even if opioids do not relieve the pain, they may cause pleasant side effects such as sedation, though ever-increasing doses will be required to maintain this effect. Then a physical dependence on the drugs develops, leading to severe withdrawal effects if it is



withdrawn.

The Sackler family own the pharmaceutical company that manufactures oxycontin. They have a reputation for philanthropy, and have sections of museums, libraries and galleries named after them.

Early in February, a "Shame on Sackler" protest at the Guggenheim Museum in New York attracted media attention with a rain of fake prescriptions falling on empty pill bottles rolling across the floor.

More needs to be done: we need a system of health and social care based on human need, not on the profit motives of pharmaceutical

companies.

Treatment of chronic pain should be evidence based and managed holistically. We need a civilised society where employers promote health, and help people to continue in employment when they are impaired by pain.

And we need museums, libraries and art galleries to be properly funded by the state. These public institutions should not be a part of sanitising the reputation of people who have profited from mass deaths and spreading addictions in the working class.



Corrections

We printed the name of the writer of a *Morning Star* article on Cuba's official "trade unions" (*Solidarity* 495) as Bernard Reagan.

The form Bernard Reagan was also found in past years, and he now prefers that. The writer of our article used that form, and we changed it in sub-editing: sorry.

Morning Star still in knots over Brexit



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

After a still unexplained period of silence on Brexit (following the 29 January parliamentary votes on that subject), the *Morning Star* has found its pro-Brexit voice again.

Mind you, there's been no repetition of its editorial support for no-deal and the attractions of trading on WTO terms. Presumably that policy is just a little embarrassing for a publication that prides itself upon its unwavering support for Jeremy Corbyn, whose only consistent policy on Brexit is opposition to no-deal.

No, rather than tell us what it's for (i.e. no-deal), the *Star* prefers to tell us what it's against. And it's most definitely against a new public vote on Brexit.

"The 'people's vote' has already taken place — and the people voted Leave" belows the *Morning Star*, taking the *Telegraph*/May/ERG line that the democratic process reached its apogee on 23 June 2016 and any form of public reassessment after that date is a betrayal that may well result in street riots.

The problem for a supposedly labour-movement publication peddling that line is, of course, that, despite all the bureaucratic manoeuvring at the last party conference, Labour party policy is to keep a public vote

"on the table" if a general election cannot be achieved.

It has become increasingly apparent that the Stalinists who populate Corbyn's inner circle have no intention of allowing Labour to campaign for its own policy. The *Morning Star*, eager to help, last week carried a lengthy article ("investigation", indeed) over two successive days, denouncing the People's Vote campaign as a right wing "conspiracy" and "clearly a plot."

Interestingly, the article equates the campaign for a new referendum solely with the People's Vote campaign and conveniently ignores the left wing Another Europe Is Possible, never mind the still more explicitly left-wing Labour for a Socialist Europe.

The author, one Sam Edwards ("a Labour and Momentum activist in south-east England") rather shoots himself in the foot by asking us to:

"Consider for a moment a key basis upon which Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters have staked their legitimacy — Corbyn's decades of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy membership and adopting political positions that are consistently more representative of the membership and much of the base of Labour than many in the PLP and successive Labour leaders.

"The Labour right, using the People's Vote campaign, now turn this to their advantage — trumpeting that the man who was the embodiment of the membership is now finally out of touch with the rank and file, who they describe as being overwhelmingly in favour of a second referendum."

Poor comrade Sam never quite manages to wriggle out of that conundrum, set by himself. The best he can come up with is (a) the lack of a parliamentary majority for a second referendum (what do you think campaigning's supposed to be about, Sam?) and the fact that the recent ESRC poll of Labour members shows that while 88 per cent of Labour members would vote Remain in any new referendum, 47 per cent still support Corbyn "stance towards Brexit".

CONTRADICTION

Sam, like his Stalinist pals at the *Morning Star*, simply can't get his head around this apparent contradiction.

In fact (as I've had cause to remark before in this column), there are two clear — but not actually contradictory — facts about the Labour Party membership, gleaned from good quality evidence in the ESRC study:

(1) The membership still largely supports the Corbyn leadership — and, by implication are willing to go along with the present actual policy position, and allow room for tactical manoeuvring.

(2) In the longer time frame, they are clearly and overwhelmingly against Brexit, and, if there is no general election, want to see another referendum. They are clear where the tactics should lead, and show no evidence whatsoever that they support going into a general election on a "Leave" ticket.

Finally, comrade Sam comes up with conclusive proof that the aim of the "People's Vote conspiracy" (as he calls it) is, in fact

not a second referendum or stopping Brexit, but "stopping Corbyn from reaching Number 10 and splitting the party base."

The evidence? "Instead of addressing the leadership's concerns ... the campaign focuses instead on the Labour membership." Again, one has to ask comrade Sam, what do you think campaigning is actually about?

Still more entertaining in last week's *Morning Star* were the letter from Fawzi Ibrahim of the Arron-Banks-funded "Trade Unionists Against the EU" and the reply from Alex Gordon of the "People's Brexit Campaign" backed by the Communist Party of Britain.

As letters do not appear on the *Morning Star*'s website, I consider it my duty to preserve this exchange for posterity. You can read it at bit.ly/ms-brx.

Note that when all the verbiage is cut away, Ibrahim supports May's deal and thinks being a British worker in the EU is comparable to being a slave in civil war America. Gordon wants no-deal on WTO terms, as well as going full-on ERG-conspiratorial, calling May "the Remain-in-chief in 10 Downing Street" and describing an "insidious continuity remain campaign" led by "The British Prime Minister and her Whitehall mandarins" with the Irish backstop a "Trojan horse".

Note how these two clowns' disagreement exactly mirrors the split in the Tory party.

• Part 1 of Sam Edwards' article can be read at bit.ly/ms-se1, and Part 2 at bit.ly/ms-se2.

Dismay in Wavertree

By Tom Harrison

Proposing votes of no confidence in a sitting MP is a great way of improving attendance at constituency meetings.

Liverpool Wavertree CLP usually has just under 60 members out of 1,700 at its monthly all-members meetings, but on Thursday 14 February attendance increased fourfold.

The enlarged turnout was a consequence of the furore over two no-confidence motions submitted against Labour MP Luciana Berger, but subsequently withdrawn under heavy pressure from the Labour Party national HQ.

Here was an MP who'd been subject to vile antisemitic abuse from fascists and others. She was also highly critical of many aspects of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and policies, from a right-wing angle: she has now left the Labour Party.

Every Labour Party has the right to table no-confidence motions if it disagrees with the stance its MP is taking. But the ground was cut under the movers when a glance at the Facebook page of one of the movers, Ken Campbell, revealed it contained posts promoting "Zionist" conspiracy theories.

Campbell turned up at the CLP meeting proudly brandishing a letter informing him he was subject to investigation as if it were something to be proud of.

At the meeting proper, two "emergency" motions were presented — one criticising the local party executive for allowing the no-confidence motions, and another defending their actions.

By a majority vote it was decided not to



debate the issue. Interestingly enough the "right wing" and the "hard left" — both inaccurate labels — voted together to have the debate but lost by about 20 votes.

When *Solidarity* talked to some open-minded people on the left of the Wavertree party, they expressed dismay that the regular monthly meetings were not representative of the mass membership of the party, with very few present below the age of 50.

At the January meeting, a new public vote on Brexit had been voted down. A previous resolution rejected a two states solution to the Israel/Palestine question.

Such outcomes reflect the influence of a rotten political bloc between supporters of Socialist Appeal and Lexiters. They are totally uncritical of Corbyn and quite happy to see calls for a people's vote on Brexit rejected despite nearly 90% of party members supporting it.

It is hoped that future meetings of the Wavertree Party will be better attended and give a fairer representation of opinions of the majority of party members.

Gang of Seven, Brexit, and antisemitism

By Ralph Peters

Seven right-wing Labour MPs quit on Monday 18 February. They did not join another party or form a new one. They did not call on their rank-and-file supporters within Labour to quit.

Two Tory MPs sceptical about Brexit, Nick Boles and Sarah Wollaston, face deselection by their local Tory parties in coming weeks, and a Government minister has openly said that the hard-right Tory MPs "are not Conservatives" and should join the new "Brexit party" being launched by former Ukip leader Nigel Farage.

The seven have chosen the bland name "Independent Group" for themselves, surely to maximise their chances of attracting dissident Tories. They may also have other right-wing Labour MPs lined up to join them, and planning to do so over time so as to create a show of progress.

The immediate political effect of the split will only be to help the Tories, and its longer-term course can only be towards allying with or joining the Lib-Dems.

The (right-wing) chair of the constituency Labour Party in Chuka Umunna's Streatham responded: "Streatham voted overwhelmingly for a Labour MP in 2017 and will continue to want a Labour MP. I am... asking [Umunna] to immediately call a by-election, to allow the people of Streatham to have their say".

The seven have picked up on real issues. The Labour Party has not got to grips with left antisemitism. Labour has failed to be



clear in opposing Brexit.

There are more fundamental reasons why the seven quit.

Most of the seven came into politics as "New Labour". (The exception is Mike Gapes, from a background as an old-style Labour Stalinist). Their tutor was Tony Blair. His aim was to systematically reduce the voice of the trade unions and the working class within Labour.

They see themselves as "the professionals" in politics. Principles to them are secondary. They want jobs in politics. And the job market within Labour does not look good for them with new parliamentary selections.

One effect of the split is that it speeds the process of the internationalist left in the Labour Party becoming the main banner-carrier of resistance to Brexit and to antisemitic taints in the labour movement, rather than the neoliberal right. We have relocated anti-Brexiteism in working-class and democratic concerns, rather than in the business globalisation of Blair.

Those who try to reduce the argument over Brexit to one of "are you for Jeremy or for Blair?" will need to find some better arguments.



Clear migration spies out of workplaces!

From front page.

Punitive anti-migrant policies go back a long way. Snooping and checking have been stepped up especially since 2012, when Theresa May first announced her plan to make Britain a “hostile environment” for migrants.

The Immigration Act 2016 made a criminal offence for companies to knowingly employ an “illegal” worker if there is “reasonable cause to believe” the person does not have the right to work in the UK.

Employers also face a civil penalty of up to £20,000 for each worker employed who lacks the right to work in the UK.

Increasing tens of thousands of migrants who do have “leave to remain” are having that “leave” tagged with “no recourse to public funds”, meaning that they and their children cannot get benefits such as free school meals.

The Windrush scandal of 2018 showed that many elderly people who had been born British subjects, especially in the Caribbean, and had come to Britain in the 1950s, had been deported or harassed by officials pushing “hostile environment” policies.

Since then the Government has stepped

back from the “hostile environment” rhetoric, but its substantive policies have not eased.

In fact they are slated to become worse.

The Tories’ new Immigration Bill, designed to end free movement with Brexit, is due to come back to the Commons, after committee procedures, on 7 March.

On its “second reading” (in fact its first real discussion in Parliament), on 28 January, it passed by a big majority because until the last minute the Labour front bench talked of abstaining on it, and, by the time it swung to voting against, many Labour MPs had already arranged to be absent.

The Bill will restrict entry to “skilled” workers. The Government’s White Paper of 19 December 2018 defines “skilled” as “paid over £30,000”, but big employers are pushing for a lower figure.

So-called “unskilled” workers are to be limited to 12-month visas and denied the right to claim benefits, bring family members, or switch to another visa type that might allow a longer stay. After 12 months they must leave the country, and wait another 12 months before reapplying.

The White Paper proposes discrimination between migrants from “low-” and “high-

risk” countries. In other words, extra barriers for those from poorer, less white, less English-speaking countries.

These proposals will not help British-born workers. On the contrary, they will serve the employing class by turning more migrants into a segregated, hyper-exploitable layer of workers.

Workers made unable to put down roots and bring or build families, and facing destitution or deportation if they lose their jobs, are bound to be reluctant to integrate, to build links, to unionise, and to stand up against ill treatment at work.

That is what Brexit means. That’s why we’re for a new public vote and stopping Brexit.

Most unions have policy against Brexit. Many unions say or suggest that the June 2016 referendum vote obliges them to go along with Brexit. But that vote surely does not oblige them to abandon migrant workers’ rights.

Brexit, whether via Theresa May’s deal (maybe modified), or “no-deal”, means economic and political regression, a great set-

£11,010 to date

£328 came in this week for our fund appeal.

The biggest part of that was £235 from a comrade in South London to pay for production of printed copies of the factual briefing on the “Red London” group which we published online in January (bit.ly/rl-do).

Cleaning up from, and marginalising,

£15,000

the culture of anonymous smears which “Red London” promotes is an important part of invigorating the labour movement.

According to parliamentary records (bit.ly/loto-pay), Seamus Milne, the “Director of Strategy” in Labour’s “Leader’s Office”, is paid £101,855 a year (or was a year ago, at the time of the last report). The total pay bill for that office is £761,000 a year.

Even that would only buy you 1.5 university vice-chancellors, or 0.003 of a high-paid capitalist boss, or 0.001 of a top hedge-fund plutocrat.

We need more and better-resourced organisers, first to counter the weight within the labour movement of the high-paid officials at the top, so as then to deal with the dominance of the plutocrats in society.

Think about making a donation! 0.0001 of a university vice-chancellor would be £40. 0.001 of a Seamus Milne would be £100.

- www.workersliberty.org/donate
- www.workersliberty.org/books

back to migrant workers’ rights, and greater obstacles in the way of workers’ unity.

Activists are demanding that unions call for bosses to come clean about any Home Office spies they are employing under the £58.20-per-hour scheme, and remove those spies from the workplace.

On 1 March the Labour Campaign for Free Movement has called a day of action against the Immigration Bill: “organise an action in your community — a rally, a protest, a direct action, lobby your MP or leaflet your high street...”

- bit.ly/lcfm-1m

For dyslexic readers

We’ve been looking at ways to make *Solidarity* more accessible to dyslexic readers.

The British Dyslexia Association has a style guide, but it is geared to material such as instruction leaflets and short manuals.

It says, for example, flatly: “Avoid multiple columns (as used in newspapers)”.

One workable thing which may help, however, is producing an e-reader version of the paper. With an e-reader, the user can choose to convert the text of the paper into single columns, large type, sans-serif font, wide line-spacing, and a completely uncluttered layout.

If dyslexic (and other) readers email us on awl@workersliberty.org with a send-to Kindle e-address, we’ll send them Kindle versions of *Solidarity* 495 and *Workers’ Liberty* 66, so they can let us know if that helps.

An audiobook version of the paper might also help. We did that for a while many years ago when we had a volunteer willing to read out the paper to record an audio file. We’ve experimented with automatic convert-to-audio technologies, but they produce an unmanageably monotone audio file. So the audiobook version needs a new volunteer.

UC action day on 1 March

By Rosalind Robson

Friday 1 March will be a national day of action against Universal Credit.

Campaigning on the issue has been patchy, as the benefit is being rolled out slowly across the UK. Unite Community have been active on the issue for some time, and in cities around the UK.

Claimants have had long waits for money, had difficulty negotiating online applications, got into debt and rent arrears, been forced into using food banks and lost money.

About 1.6 million people are on Universal Credit now. The Tories have delayed implementation, but eventually around seven million people, half of all families with children, are scheduled to go onto the new benefit.

One event on 1 March, from a particularly active local campaign, organised by Sheffield Trade Council, will be calling for “Stop and Scrap”, at a rally in Hartshead Square from 12 noon.

However there is no consensus among campaigners about whether to “stop and scrap” (i.e. revert to the old system of multiple benefits) or seek to continue the idea of merging benefits in a changed form. The Labour Party is calling for “pause and fix”, although Jeremy Corbyn recently pledged a Labour government would introduce something radically different.

A popular *Daily Mirror* petition calls for a review to take place and for the system to be axed if it is unfixable.

Meanwhile Universal Credit staff in Midlands are set to strike next month over workload.

Unfortunately, it appears far-right populists are getting involved in campaigns about Universal Credit, organising a rally on 1 March in Parliament Square, London.

To stop vulnerable people from being politically taken in by those people, the labour movement also needs to crank up its activity.

The Yellow Vests: potentials and dangers

By Michael Elms

The Yellow Vests (Gilets Jaunes) movement, now fourteen weeks old, drew thousands of protestors onto the streets of France on 16 February.

Although the latest demonstrations fell short of the estimated 50,000 who came out the week before, the movement shows little sign of stopping.

The general strike that some in the Yellow Vests movement called for 5 February failed to materialise, but France's biggest trade-union confederation, the CGT, did call a well-followed day of action among public sector workers.

Alongside the Yellow Vest actions, ferment continues in colleges, with several institutions in Paris going on open-ended strike. There are continued mobilisations in the health sector, in particular protests by workers in the EHPAD support service for the elderly, and ongoing regional disputes on the railways and in the post.

Arguments Pour La Lutte Sociale reported on 30 January: "500 workers at the Carrier-Transcold factory near Rouen vote for an open-ended strike and draw the unions along with them. "Total black-out" of Kingfisher shops from 1 February. Permanent pickets at the Bayer chemical plant in Villefranche-sur-Saône/Limas ..."

The Yellow Vests movement continues to be hotly debated by the French left. This is a movement which has mobilised many workers and the rural poor, but also large numbers of small business-owners, some of whom have obliged their workers to join them on demonstrations, or closed shop on days of action, docking their employees' pay.

There are many warning signs of racist influence on the movement. There was antisemitic heckling of Jewish writer Alain Finkielkraut on 16 February. The Yellow Vests have the openly-stated demand that foreign-

ers should undergo compulsory exams in "French culture".

Fascist agitators and groups are often present in the movement. (That came to a head on 9 February, with violent clashes between fascists and anti-fascists within the demonstration in Lyon).

Flying of the French flag and singing of the national anthem is widespread on Yellow Vests demonstrations. How should the far-right danger lurking around the movement be dealt with?

FAR RIGHT

The left-wing anti-racist magazine *Ni Patrie Ni Frontières* has published a book of essays, "Gilets jaunes et confusion politique", with articles from a variety of far-left writers.

The best-known of the articles, from the "Collectif Athéné Nyctalope", claims: "Supporting the Gilets Jaunes means supporting a rightwing movement".

The writers highlight the involvement of far right groups like Action Française, and the ambiguous, deceptively "apolitical" populism which allows both left-nationalists like Jean-Luc Mélenchon and rightwing politicians like Laurent Wauquiez to offer their support.

An example:

"24 November, Champs-Élysée. A bar's terrace is wreathed in smoke. An anarchist 'A' is painted on the fronting, a few feet from where a couple of minutes before activists from the [far right] Bastion Sociale were yelling 'On est chez nous' ['this is our home', a widespread xenophobic slogan]..."

"Mélenchon, on his blog, after having spoken, like the far right, of a conspiracy aimed at putting a stop to the movement, calls on 'the people to come together against the liberals'. And he welcomes the presence at blockades of 'militants of all stripes'."

Another article by Collectif Athéné Nycta-



lope finds comments by the left-wing Italian collective Wu Ming on the politics of Italy's Five Star movement (M5S) to be relevant to the Yellow Vests:

"There is an 'honest' people (taken to be indivisible: no classes, no opposing interests) and a 'corrupted caste', described as foreign to 'the people'. To resolve Italy's problems, we have to elect 'honest folks', who will take decisions that are 'neither left nor right': they will take 'fair' decisions..."

"This is a very simplistic and consoling framework, which gets rid of contradictions, doesn't touch on the causes of the crisis, and offers easy enemies to identify."

Much of the book expands on the meaning of the "catch-all", "apolitical" anti-liberal politics which allow left and right to apparently co-exist in a cloud of vagueness.

Here we have "the opposition, largely spurious, between the provinces, homes of authentic workers, preferably who work on the land, and the capital, Paris, cosmopolitan, parasitic and corrupted. This idea is devel-

oped under the cover of being apolitical, which has never been the same as a critique of politics, but which has instead facilitated the rise of political demagogues..."

"So while some of the problems that the Gilets Jaunes are raising are new, because they are related to the way domination is changing today, the responses that they put forward aren't really. They have their roots in an old populism à la française..."

This vagueness, Athéné Nyctalope reminds us, was also a part of the Five Star Movement.

"Whether in terms of pay (minimum wage to raise and be linked to inflation), the vulnerable (lower gas and electricity prices, rent capping, support for the aged and pensioners), public services (reactivation of the railway network, re-opening local services like post offices, schools and nurseries), education... or jobs (creating jobs for the unemployed, more permanent contracts instead of temporary contracts), the Gilets Jaunes defend a melting-pot of originally left-wing demands."

"In Italy too, the movement carried ideas that were more left wing: a return to real policies for education and health, free internet for all, ecological demands etc."

"But the similarities also run to clearly reactionary demands from the Gilets Jaunes, who, in no particular order, want to see love for the 'forces of order' (proper funding for the judiciary, the police, the gendarmes and the army); the fatherland (a ban on selling property that belongs to France); and the nation (living in France must mean becoming French: French language lessons, French history lessons and a course of civic education with an exam at the end)."

"Too bad for failed asylum seekers or migrants: they have to go home. A similar idea was present in M5S in talk of "aiutiamoli a casa loro" (let's help them when they're home)."

Athéné Nyctalope point out that a major difference between M5S and the Gilets Jaunes is the lack of a charismatic leader holding everything together. Things in France are more "diffuse and volatile" than that. But Sonia, writing for lignes-de-cretes.org, raises an important point about the political implications of the "decentralised" structure of the Gilets



Luigi Di Maio, the Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Five Star Movement member (fourth from right), meets with "representatives" of the Gilets Jaunes

angers

Jaunes movement:

“There are trade unions, solidarity groups or collectives. That is, persons who have chosen to organise, to commit, to define or to join a common body where there are rules (for managing money, taking decisions, deciding positions, sharing out responsibilities and work, but also respecting minorities and equality). There is always more to be said on internal democracy in a group, on its demands, its forms of action or intervention. But in spite of it all, there is this framework, which decides everything.

“In the political world, for some years now, the idea of a direct link with ‘the people’ has been prominent. And in that frame there is no point in democratic debates, or common ways of functioning together. There is no point coming up with ideas or straining your brain thinking about solutions. There is someone who knows on behalf of everyone else, whether that’s a well-identified leader or that kind of surge whose source is hard to identify.

“It’s the opposite of an emancipatory mobilisation, because in reality you accept that others have decided, without being able to bring any of yourself, your experiences, your ideas, to bear. That has a very comfortable side, because it creates the illusion of an identity (in a photocopier way), which some are clearly looking for...”

COMPLEX

All these points should, at least, complicate the rosy view of the Yellow Vest held by some on the French and international left – including Arguments Pour la Lutte Sociale, whose material *Solidarity* frequently carries.

On 9 February ALPS wrote that the “broad masses” of the Gilets Jaunes are “a thousand times further ‘left’, or more accurately more advanced, than the vast majority of [left and trade union] organisations and militants”.

Some, like Sonia, argue for steering clear of the Yellow Vests movement altogether. In his contribution to the book, “libertarian communist” academic Alan Bihr argues that “waiting for a spontaneous popular movement to be ideologically pure before supporting it and intervening... are taking as a point of departure what can in fact only be a destination...”

“Moreover, it is arguable whether the tri-colour [French flag] and La Marseillaise [anthem] are only markers of the nationalist right or far right. We might also recall the revolutionary heritage associated with it, the only one available to populations who have been deprived of other revolutionary heritage.”

In the February edition of their journal *Lutte de Classes*, French Trotskyists Lutte Ouvrière [LO] attempt a balanced view.

Arguments Pour La Lutte Sociale see the demand “Macron out!” (popular among the Yellow Vests, with little indication of who should replace Macron) as the necessary next link in a revolutionary chain.

LO are sceptical of the slogan, saying that it “first and foremost unites the set of bourgeois politicians, from Marine Le Pen to Mélenchon and everyone in between, former and

future ministers, who have their eyes on the opening that Macron’s weakness has created for their respective ambitions.”

But, say LO: “it is the way of things that when the masses enter into a movement, their eyes will be drawn to the government, with all the wisdom and illusions that entails: wisdom because those who govern do so on behalf of the ruling class... illusions, because those who govern are largely interchangeable, and knowing to get rid of top servants at dangerous points has always been part of the political culture of any ruling class...”

“It is just as much in the nature of things that the movement of the Gilets Jaunes will mix many different social categories. Workers, pensioners who are barely surviving, unemployed people without a hope of finding work in their region, workers who have only found work dozens of kilometres from home and for whom the price of petrol is a vital part of their cost of living, nurses, single mothers, young people toiling in precarious employment in small jobs, labourers, salaried workers, technicians in small businesses.

“The anger of wage workers mixes with that of layers of the petty bourgeoisie who are having the hardest time of it. The mistrust of institutional parties, which often takes the form of a declared ‘apoliticism’, is rooted in the desire to preserve unity between the different components of the movement.”

Disrupting that “unity”, between left and right, workers and small exploiters, is surely the most important task for socialists intervening in the mass movement in France. Writing of the Italian M5S, Wu Ming said, “What we want is vertical and horizontal ruptures, on concrete questions. These will be specific fights which will face left-wing grillini with choices that they can’t put off.”

The intervention of the socialist labour movement, amplifying the specific voice and interests of workers, organised and unorganised, migrant and native, can create such ruptures.

The belated call by CGT leader Martinez on 5 February to bring the movement’s demands about wages and the cost of living into workplaces is good, although far from sufficient.

The self-assertion of the labour movement and a determined political fight for socialist ideas and the democratic values embodied in the labour movement can forestall an Italian-style evolution.

The Russian civil war, 1917-22

By Martin Thomas

Notice the dates: 1917-22. Jean-Jacques Marie, in his history, establishes that the conventional account, according to which the civil war was over by the start of 1921, and all the “emergency” measures by the Bolsheviks after that stemmed only from the Bolsheviks’ supposed lack of democratic understanding, is false.

In spring and summer 1921, the Bolsheviks faced huge peasant uprisings in Tambov and other areas, as well as the Kronstadt revolt.

And that in a country exhausted by years of war, with a total of maybe 14 million deaths since the start of World War 1, over four million in the civil war alone, seven million abandoned children, and raging drought, famine, and disease.

The Bolsheviks used ruthless force. Marie glosses over none of the horrors. He also shows that, for the Bolsheviks, force was the second resort, in cases where they had failed to convince, and always accompanied by attempts to convince. As the Red Army advanced towards towns, it would send forward teams with the risky mission of winning a majority by agitation, and rely on military force alone only those teams failed.

To try to “turn” the Tambov peasant rising in spring 1921, for example, the Bolsheviks printed 326,000 leaflets, 11 pamphlets, and 28 issues of a special magazine.

In that way they continued as they had started and conducted the civil war.

The Soviet government at first rested almost exclusively on the power of political agitation. The Russian army was officially demobilised by the Soviet government on 12 February 1918, but in any case could not possibly have been used by the Soviets as their instrument. Police, civil service, courts – all had disintegrated or were hostile.

As a military power, the Soviet government did not exist – not until such time as it managed to build up a Red Army, and a minimal apparatus of administration and supply, by convincing workers and peasants to join the Bolsheviks in that effort.

The early months of the Civil War went badly for the Bolsheviks mostly because of successive triumphs won by the Czech Legion – some 35,000 to 40,000 troops from the Austro-Hungarian Imperial army, taken prisoner under the Tsar, who, freed after the Revolution, decided to back the Whites.

Even such a small “regular” force could at



A discussion of Jean-Jacques Marie's book *La guerre civile russe, 1917-1922*

first overwhelm the improvised Red Guards.

The civil war was won only by heroic efforts of agitation – as when, a bit later, Trotsky single-handedly convinced 15,000 deserters in Riazan to adhere to the Red Army – but, as the war went on, it was coupled with increased ruthlessness.

The end result was a ruined, exhausted country, and a Bolshevik Party with its nerves wrecked and its culture warped. As Trotsky commented: “The three years of Civil War laid an indelible impress on the Soviet government itself by virtue of the fact that very many of the administrators, a considerable layer of them, had become accustomed to command and demand unconditional submission to their orders...”

“Stalin, like many others, was moulded by the environment and circumstances of the Civil War, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship...”

But the Bolsheviks had no choice about some constraining background facts: about the war, about the invasions by no fewer than 14 countries, or about the defeats and delays of the revolutions in Western Europe to which they looked for a way out, and which could have forestalled the Stalinist degeneration.

This is a book worth reading, even though the style is curiously distant, and you will have to draw “the lessons” yourself from facts presented in the manner of a “flat” narrative.

On our website: the events of 1989

In February 1989, thirty years ago, the Polish government initiated talks with Solidarnosc, the country's underground trade-union movement.

Solidarnosc had been founded in September 1980, and quickly become a mass movement before being driven underground by martial law in December 1981.

On 5 April 1989, a “Roundtable Agreement” would be signed in Poland, legalising

independent trade unions and calling partially democratic elections in June.

Also in February 1989, Hungary’s ruling Stalinist party repudiated its constitutional right to rule, and dissolved its Politburo. On 2 May Hungary would disable the electric alarm system and cut through the barbed wire on its border with Austria, starting a chain of events which would lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989.

Despite all the corruption, free-marketeering, erosion of social provisions, and revivals of Stalinistic forces or the nationalist far right over the 30 years since then, 1989 remains a landmark.

Read more about it on our website: bit.ly/1989-fall, bit.ly/1989-1, bit.ly/1989-2

And at: twitter.com/Revolution_1989

Alcohol is harmful. Dry January will not help



Letters

Alcohol [see Martin Thomas's article in *Solidarity* 494, and Stephen Wood's letter in 495] is the most harmful psychoactive substance we know in terms of overall mental and physical damage, addiction, crime and costs to the economy and communities.

It ranks just below heroin and cocaine for the physical and mental damage it does to the individual user. According to the WHO alcohol is a component cause of over 200 diseases. In 2012 3.3 million (5.9%) of deaths were related to alcohol use. Alcohol is responsible for 5.1% of the global burden of disease and injury.

Alcohol is a depressant that dulls the intellect and shuts down the more sophisticated parts of the brain.

Humans have been using psychoactive substances for a very long time. But it was the Roman empire and then the spread of Christianity that secured alcohol's position as civilisation's drug of choice.

The dominance of alcohol was legally enforced by global prohibition on most other

popular psychoactive drugs in the early 1970s.

Our choice to drink alcohol is influenced by a host of cultural, legal and ideological influences. To paraphrase Marx, people take mind-altering substances but not in circumstances of their own choosing.

A big part of the ideology of alcohol is how normal it is to take this addictive, toxic, socially corrosive depressant. Such narratives about alcohol pervade our society. Some have deep historical roots (see for example the Bible, Proverbs 31:6-7) and are passed on from generation to generation.

Most people are given their first drink in their teens by their parents, even if their parents are very conservative. Few are given their first bong or their first dose of MDMA by their parents although these substances are far less harmful and addictive.

We are bombarded from a young age with how normal it is to drink: to socialise, to relieve stress, to aid sleep, to alleviate fatigue, to make us more confident, to relax, to refresh us on a summer's day, to warm us on a winter's night... Those who drink find day-to-day life full of prompts to reach for another glass.

An estimated 22% of people who drink will

develop alcohol dependence at some point in their life (the same figure for cocaine is 21%).

So Stephen's too-sharp distinction between "normal drinkers" and "problem drinkers" is problematic. Walling off alcoholism as entirely apart from "normal drinking" is a key narrative that sustains high levels of alcohol consumption.

What is "normal" in a culture saturated with alcohol is still very harmful. And just a run of bad luck can turn many "normal drinkers" into alcoholics.

We live in very anxious times and alcohol gives an illusion of confidence. Ironically a recent study of young people found that many people "pre-load" before going to the pub because they find being in the pub too anxiety-provoking if sober. Alcohol can provide short-term relief from low mood, anxiety, and painful emotions. Long term it exacerbates these problems, leaving the user feeling that certain situations are intolerable without it.

In consumer capitalism, on the one hand we are commanded to "enjoy!"; and on the other we are bombarded with public health information about how we should resist temptation. Consumer capitalism's portrait of humanity is of fundamentally weak-willed

pleasure-seekers struggling against various addictions big and small.

I think that Dry January is a part of this depressogenic narrative. Deny yourself this pleasure for one month through an extraordinary act of will power, and then release the flood gates in February: "Enjoy!"

Addiction in its broadest sense is at the extreme end of consumer capitalism which is built on an unspoken narrative that life's problems can be solved by consumption – eat, drink, smoke, gamble, watch TV, play video games, shop til you drop.

Revolutionary socialists are not immune to the pressures of capitalist society but we do have an alternative to that soft narcosis. We believe that our short lives can be made meaningful through struggling to change the course of history and for human liberation. We believe in critical enquiry as a means to encounter the manifest wonder of the world.

Taking mind-altering substances is an innate part of being human. But compulsive pleasure-seeking habits are extremely harmful to ourselves and those around us.

We should seek to liberate ourselves of destructive habits and help those around us to do likewise.

Todd Hamer, Lewisham

Japanese language not more socialist

Janine Booth's article on neurodiversity and socialism (*Solidarity* 494) was valuable and interesting, but I want to query one (maybe unintended) implication.

Janine cites an individual "severely dyslexic in English and not dyslexic at all in Japanese" and takes that as showing that capitalism develops language in a form that "does not suit".

To build anything on a single case is dubious. So far as I can see from scanning the research, there is some indication that dyslexia may be less with ideographic languages (where symbols correspond to meanings rather than sounds), or with part-ideographic languages like Japanese, than with alphabetic ones.

But that does not necessarily mean (and maybe Janine did not mean to imply) that alphabetic languages are an evil twist of profiteering, and that socialism will have us all using Japanese or a similar language.

Japanese is difficult to learn to read and write for everyone, dyslexic and non-dyslexic. The learner has to acquire three distinct alphabets, or four if you count in the roman-alphabet bits often interpolated in modern Japanese text.

Hiragana and Katakana are taught from age 3-5, but young Japanese start learning

Kanji (the ideographic characters in Japanese, taken over from Chinese) only in elementary school (age 6-12), and by age 12 they reckon to learn only about 1000 basic Kanji.

Apparently you need to know 2000 to 3000 Kanji characters to operate everyday as a fluent reader or writer.

Alphabetic languages have great advantages for capitalism, but in the sense that they have great advantages for any society of large-scale, complex, and fluid cooperation.

Alphabetic languages with simple and uniform rules of spelling and structure, like say Spanish, are better than those with manifold irregularities like English or German, but so far as I can establish there's no clear trend for dyslexia (as distinct from bad spelling or such) to be worse in very irregular languages than in more regular ones.

Capitalism has also generated technologies, such as automatic production of audio versions from text, or e-readers which allow the reader to choose the font, font-size, line-spacing, and layout of any text, which help dyslexics and can be more widely used under socialism.

Colin Foster, North London

Nudging the drinking culture

As Todd Hamer rightly says, the bad effects of the alcohol culture on the working class and the labour movement are not only through the "problem drinkers".

Many "moderate drinkers" are harming their health, their household budgets, and their ability to contribute actively and financially to the socialist cause.

Like the eating of junk food, or the propensity to fall into depressed political passivity, alcohol-drinking is a product of social conditions. As I said in my original article, socialist organisations need to unite the activists willing to promote socialism, without being distracted or divided by lifestyle arguments.

But a caricature "determinism" is out of place. "Another round? We have no choice. It's capitalism, you know! Anyway, we can't cut down, because we have to save the brewery jobs".

Conversely, it's a real problem if people coming new to socialist politics see alcohol-drinking sessions as the only or main way they can socialise or get informal discussion with us socialists.

Alcohol Change UK cites evidence that Dry January leads to some long-term reduction in drinking, and not often to wild increases in consumption after the "dry" month. The charity does not claim that Dry

January fixes the social problems.

But if more people choose to reduce drinking even for a while — and more and more young people choose to drink little or no alcohol — that helps the life and health of the labour movement, in the same way as the success of official "stop smoking" campaigns helps.

Socialist organisations have often promoted sponsored "stop smoking" spells, or runs or cycle rides or such, as fund-raising efforts.

It's possible to nudge the culture along without being moralistic and divisive.

Martin Thomas, Islington

Mass job loss

Taken seriously, the call for people to become, all at once, teetotal vegans would, in the absence of any planning, also lead, pretty much immediately, to mass unemployment, amongst pub, brewery and restaurant workers, farm and fisheries workers, and no doubt shop and distribution workers too.

Matthew Thompson, Stockport

Hegel not straightforward

I agree with Les Hearn (*Solidarity* 494) that Marxism cannot offer advice to the physical sciences, let alone figure as a "super-science" able to establish scientific conclusions by a procedure bypassing the usual difficulties of scientific investigation.

The summary of Hegel on dialectics with which Les starts his article, however, I think, overstates the "straightforwardness".

Dialectics in the general sense is relatively straightforward. Plato's way of proceeding was dialectical because he constructed his in-

vestigations as dialogues, unpicking puzzles, reworking assumptions, making successive approximations. Aristotle's wasn't, because he proceeded in a more linear way from axioms or assumptions to conclusions.

Hegel saw it differently. For him, dialectics was not really "an art" of investigation. Insofar as it was a "method", it was a "method" inherent in the object of investigation.

For Hegel, dialectics was idealism and idealism was dialectics. The "finite" was unreal. Reality was the Absolute Idea, in its dialectical unfolding. "It is the inwardness of the

content, the dialectic which it possesses within itself, which is the mainspring of its advance".

In his later years, Marx, contrarian as ever, responded curtly to then-current German academic dismissal of Hegel as a "dead dog". But he did not renounce his earlier critique of Hegel's dialectical method, or his acceptance of Feuerbach's critique, which held: "The true dialectic is not a monologue of the solitary thinker with himself. It is a dialogue between 'I' and 'You'... Not alone, but only with others, does one reach notions and reason in general".

Hegel himself did not enounce super-scientific quasi-laws (as his later popularisers did), like the alleged "law of the transformation of quantity into quality". He was, however, confident enough about his speculative generalities to think that they could refute Newtonian mechanics:

"What Kepler, in a simple and sublime manner, articulated in the form of laws of celestial motion, Newton converted into the nonconceptual, reflective form of the force of gravity".

Not an approach to copy.

Rhodri Evans, London

The Omar Tweet controversy

By Barry Finger

“Because the attacks on Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib are certain to continue and escalate, it is essential that anyone who wants to be considered ‘progressive’ come to their defence now.”

So reads the statement from the Steering Committee of the US socialist group Solidarity on the recent controversy over Omar’s tweet implying that the US’s pro-Israel policy is “all about the Benjamins.” And not just Solidarity.

This is the pervasive take of the American revolutionary left, who have mobilised their lists, contacts and fringe arenas in support of the sentiments expressed in that tweet.

The remainder of the argument, if it is an argument, is an extended exercise in whataboutery. What about the Republicans who give Trump and Rep Steven King a pass? What about Democrats who seek to limit free speech by enshrining anti-BDS legislation into law?

This is particularly disarming, not least of all because it emanates from a corner of the political spectrum that has easily dismissed — and rightfully so — much pro-Israel contextualising as an extended exercise in hypocritical misdirection and special pleading.

Worse, it compounds this mistake by a not too subtle below the belt kick. “Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib are under attack for who they are — as Muslim Arab-American women, and as progressive critics of US foreign policy not only in Palestine but throughout the Middle East and in Latin America as well.”

Disagree with what they say? What they say is not your real concern. The real issue is their identity. Criticise them and you brand yourself as a racist and Islamophobe.

And this from comrades who are forever warning us — again with more than a grain of truth — that opposition to Israeli policies and Zionist dogma is not the same as anti-semitism; that you can criticise Jewish and Israeli political leaders, ideas, organisations and ideologies without being a Jew hater.

(Although it should be said, that this is often left boilerplate conjured forth to provide ourselves carte blanche inoculation against any and all pushback. The fact that criticisms of Israel and Zionism is not per se antisemitic, doesn’t mean that they can’t be even when those criticisms are accurate. The “framing” matters, just as it does when evaluating the responses to Omar’s tweets.)

If there were a political bookkeeping ledger, these accounts wouldn’t be in balance.



Ilhan Omar, a generally leftish Democratic member of the US House of Representatives, has been criticised for tweets on 10 and 11 February saying that US policy on Israel is “all about the benjamins” and that Congressmen back Israel because of payments from AIPAC, a pro-Israel lobbying group. Omar responded: “My intention is never to offend my constituents or Jewish Americans as a whole... I unequivocally apologise.” Most of the US left has aligned completely with Omar. Barry Finger raises some questions.

And that should be of concern to the left. And they don’t balance even if we acknowledge that Omar’s apology was sincere and the backlash against her was indeed fanned and amplified by people who are on some level anti-Muslim bigots, or at least prepared to exploit bigotry, and who have turned a blind eye to similar trafficking in antisemitic tropes by people on the right.

HYPOCRISY

But even if it were better balanced, concerns about hypocrisy and double standards are not the primary issue.

Socialists, in my opinion, failed in their basic task: to acquaint their audience with how we understand foreign policy to be fashioned and to place Omar’s tweets within that larger understanding.

AIPAC [the American Israel Public Affairs Committee] does not “purchase” foreign policy on behalf of Israel the way big Pharma, agribusiness or the oil lobby purchase legislation providing them with a market edge, subsidies, tax relief or tariffs. You would have to boggle your mind to believe that the executive functions of the capitalist state were run like a livestock auction.

Even more so if you believe that AIPAC’s relatively paltry expenditure of \$3.5 million

in the last election cycle is the determinant factor — or even a secondary or tertiary factor — for American foreign policy.

Foreign policy is determined by the standing state bureaucracy: the state department, department of defence and intelligence agencies that provide policy continuity above partisan politics. Its sole purpose is to advance American corporate power and influence around the world.

America’s alignment with Israel is based on a convergence and mutuality of concerns as negotiated from on high by the corresponding policy-making bureaucracies.

If Israel is to carry out its brutal settlement and annexation policies, policies that its military and administrative agencies believe are needed to secure Israel’s viability, it needs massive injections of American aid and support. Otherwise it runs the risk of taxing its citizens to death and jeopardizing its ideological hold on the Israeli masses.

America imperialism thereby subsidises a willing partner in the Israeli people, who are spared from an alternative reality more conducive to actively seeking security in reconciliation and regional integration.

In exchange for that support, Israel has in effect agreed to be one of America’s regional power surrogates — sharing intelligence, acting as a weapons depot and covertly exporting its military and technical expertise at the behest of American imperialism as its surrogate.

Israel hardly has the whip hand here. The US does not need the policy of Israeli annexation and settlement. Its support of Israel might be better served by maintaining a more convincing fiction of impartiality.

What the US needs is Israeli expertise, and as long as Israel pursues a policy of expansionism and exclusion, the US has a hook on the Israeli establishment that gives it leverage to bend Israeli foreign policy to its will, to act as America’s proxy — and to deflect fallout from the US — in a seemingly endless host of unsavory interventions.

That power over Israel is not total. Israel is a junior partner, not a vassal, and it is capable of mobilising and voicing disagreement — Obama’s Iran deal being emblematic.

AIPAC has a role in all this. It’s just not the role that Omar assigned to it. Its function is to police and secure the alliance between the US and Israel, so that the American electorate cannot inflict its democratic opinion on the American-policy making establishment and that thwart its operational leeway.

Were Omar and her congressional colleague to raise objections against Saudi intervention in Yemen, they would find themselves, for symmetrical reasons, on the receiving end of primary challenges financed by the oil and “Arab” lobbies, lobbies that can hardly be accused of trafficking in Islamophobia.

The upshot is this. Omar’s tweet was not just politically naïve, it was deeply flawed in ways that matter. The “well-heeled” Jews (and Christian Zionists) who fund AIPAC and the so-called Israel lobby do not determine American policy.

Israel is not the tail that wags the American dog. Jews are not the masters of the universe. Elite corporate interests, not Jewish money, shape American foreign policy.

By rushing uncritically to Omar’s defence, socialists squandered an important opportunity to enlighten the public about foreign policy, legitimised antisemitic tropes and repackaged this entire mess into a guilt-tripping defence of minority identity.



Super-earlybird tickets for Ideas for Freedom 2019, the AWL summer school, are now available at www.workersliberty.org/ideas.

They can be bought at half the price “on the door” — for £24 waged, £12 low-waged and student, £5 unwaged — until 24 February.

The 22-23 June weekend agenda will include presentations and debates on issues around Brexit, antisemitism, climate change, 1919, 1989, and more, and there’ll be a walking tour on Thursday 20 June and an evening debate on Friday 21 June.

Venue: Camden School for Girls, Sandall Rd, London NW5. Free creche. Overnight accommodation will also be available free.

• www.workersliberty.org/ideas



www.workersliberty.org/books

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lambeth fight continues after budget vote

By Katy Dollar

On Wednesday 13 February Lambeth Council voted through another cuts budget.

The document included a line in a table cutting £500,000 from Children's Services. Five children's centres are to be closed, seven more will have their service provision cut, and staff across the borough will lose their jobs.

Outside the Town Hall Labour members, trade unionists and families sung and chanted in protest.

A deputation of mums addressed the Council meeting to explain how much the Centres mean and to propose an alternative. They dis-



tributed a counter-proposal, A Better Plan, written by the Lambeth branch of the public services union Unison in collaboration with local families and professionals.

The plan asks councillors to use reserves to fund the continuation of the Centres, and to launch a campaign to demand adequate early-years funding from the

government. (Lambeth council has suffered cuts of £238 million since 2010).

Many Labour wards have passed motions against in support of the Children's Centres campaign and are getting involved. Activists in neighbouring Wandsworth have proposed a motion to Labour London Conference for Labour to com-

mit to restore local government funding to 2010 levels by 2022 and build a mass campaign against council cuts now.

We have received fantastic solidarity from campaigners in Tower Hamlets who attended our actions and give us advice based on the experience of fighting cuts to their Nursery Schools.

Building a campaign compatible with parenting babies and toddlers has been a challenge, but has produced creative actions.

Families have been holding stay-and-play occupations of the town. Peppa Pig attended our recent demonstration.

And we plan to hold messy craft placard-making days.

Another win for rail workers

By Ollie Moore

Workers on South Western Railway (SWR) have struck another huge blow against "Driver Only Operation", winning an offer that a safety-critical guard will be retained on all SWR services.

Guards in the rail union RMT had recently returned a resounding 84% majority in favour of further strikes, in a re-ballot forced on them

by the anti-union laws. RMT had planned a strike for 22 February. That has been suspended following SWR's offer.

The proposed settlement says: "On the introduction of any new or other modified rolling stock, each passenger train shall operate with a guard with safety critical competencies. Specific Safety Critical competencies shall be agreed by SWR and RMT."

There is still cause for some caution, as there is a risk SWR will attempt to use ongoing negotiations, no longer under the pressure of imminent strikes, to push for a radical downgrading of those safety critical tasks.

There is also a possibility that SWR could try to undermine the RMT by entering into separate negotiations with drivers' union Aslef, and cobble together a deal that transfers many guards' responsibilities onto the driver, possibly in exchange for drivers' salary increases.

If consolidated and made concrete, the SWR deal, which follows a similar step forward in the fight against DOO on Northern, would be one of the most significant victories for the trade union movement in Britain for many years.

A useful day in London

By Katy Dollar

On Saturday 9 February Dulwich and West Norwood Momentum and Labour Left hosted a day of discussion and debate for Labour Party members.

The event, in south London, drew together national speakers and local activists with panel discussions and workshops on the economy, anti-racism, trade unions, the NHS, the environment and local government.

Local government dominated the agenda. Lambeth and Southwark members grappled with how to build Labour in communities where Labour councils are the administrators of austerity and gentrification.

There were sessions on social care, children's centres, libraries, education, and housing, as well as an anti-racist session that focussed on institutional racism in councils and how to ensure our councils help migrants with "no recourse to public funds".

John McDonnell spoke in a panel on municipal socialism and gave the day's closing address. He was much welcomed, but pro-

voked heckles on announcing that the City had nothing to fear from a Labour government. Labour, he said, would respect the investors' wish for good returns on their investment, but the wealth should also be shared "amongst the many".

A lot of local Labour lefts should take a few leaves from the book of Dulwich and West Norwood.

The event was addressed by invited speakers from a range of backgrounds, traditions, and positions. Disagreement and debate were welcomed. The positions of the national and local Labour leaderships were challenged — or defended — from many of the "top tables".

The day wasn't perfect. A low point for me was when two speakers from the floor asked the municipal socialism panel what Labour was going to about the "smear campaign" by the "Israel lobby" against Corbyn.

But a chance to honestly debate the ideas in our movement, good and bad, is a better than a stage-managed affair where our mistakes and intentions are hidden from view.

The "Green New Deal"



Climate

Marxist ecologist John Bellamy Foster has commented on the "Green New Deal" proposed notably by the new Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

"I am impressed by some aspects of it. She calls for mass mobilisation, which is indeed necessary.

She also calls for innovative forms of financing, such as setting up a network of public banks to finance it directly, modelled after the

New Deal, and through much higher marginal tax brackets on the rich and corporations, going back to what we once had in the United States.

The revenues could be used to finance a massive shift toward solar and wind power. She connects this to a wide array of social issues.

But none of this will really work, even if it were possible to legislate it, given the system, unless it takes on the character of an ecological revolution with a broad social base.

Hence, a radical Green New Deal is, at best, just the entry point to

such wider, eco-revolutionary change, involving the self-mobilization of the population. If it does not spark an ecological revolution, its effect will be nil...

What kind of financial incentives could be given to energy companies when they own trillions of dollars in fossil fuel assets, and they have a vested interest in this system

Exxon-Mobil has declared they will extract and burn all the fossil fuel assets that they own, which are buried in the ground, because they own them and because they can profit from them — knowing full

well that this would be a death sentence for humanity.

There is no way that mere incentives are going to change that. So far, even the subsidies for fossil fuel exploration have not been removed.

Regulation won't work in the present system since corporations always capture the regulatory process.

To alter the present political-economic-energy matrix would require changes in ownership of means of production — in this case, fossil fuels.



Organise, organise, organise!

Interview

Deliveroo riders in several cities struck on 14 February. An activist in the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB) Couriers and Logistics branch spoke to Solidarity about the strike.

Bristol was again the best city in terms of turnout, but the strike was very effective elsewhere too. In Horsham, Deliveroo's business was almost completely shut down. Every restaurant was showing as "unavailable" on the app, except for one which uses the Deliveroo platform but hires its own private riders to make deliveries.

There are around 50 riders in Horsham, and we've built organisation basically from one activist talking to people face-to-face.

That's obviously less manageable in a city like London, where Deliveroo has thousands of riders divided between dozens of zones. In future we are looking to move to a zone-by-zone approach to organising there.

The Manchester action was also very impressive; workers there have been well supported

by Manchester IWW.

It was also significant that workers struck in York. This was their first time striking; activists there were a little disappointed that they weren't quite ready to join the strike on 1 February, so the fact that they struck this time shows that the campaign is spreading and organisation is developing.

Now we need to consolidate these actions and use them to build organisation at both local and national level. We need to seriously discuss the question of strike funds, as we all know this could be a long fight which will require sustained strikes.

We also know that, while Deliveroo may make small regional concessions here and there, which are obviously important and not to be dismissed, big changes will require national level negotiations with Deliveroo's central management.

If we get those negotiations, we need to have the democratic structures in place to ensure that the negotiators are accountable to workers and are properly reflecting the demands of the strikes, so we need to develop our organisation.

Strong strike on 14 February

Interview

Deliveroo meal delivery riders struck in six cities on 14 February.

A rider involved with the Bristol Couriers Network, affiliated with the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB), spoke to Solidarity about the strike in Bristol.

The strike was a success in Bristol. We were experimenting with a new tactic, a one-hour flash strike, which meant that between 30 and 40 strikers gathered in the centre of town for a picket that was more like a social gathering or party!

This meant that we were able to talk to each other in a better way than we might've been able to if we'd had a march or a more formal demo. That was good for building solidarity between people, and particularly between different types of workers such as scooter riders and bicycle couriers.

The strike had a national impact. There are now quite a few cities where Deliveroo workers are organised and able to take action.

We're confident that the strike will have a positive impact on developing our organisation. The form of action we took allowed us to have proper one-to-one conversations with people who may have come to one or two protests previously but hadn't necessarily stuck around.

Having a few beers and some food with them meant we could talk to them about getting involved in the committee. We're definitely expecting a higher turnout at our next meeting.

Building that organisation is key. We want to develop people who are currently prepared to strike and maybe come on a protest into people who see themselves as organisers and will take responsibility for building the campaign.

John Moloney for PCS AGS!

By Mike Chester

There are likely to be three candidates for the next Assistant General Secretary of PCS.

Incumbent Chris Baugh has defeated senior union employee Stella Dennis to win the nomination of the main union leadership faction, Left Unity.

But Baugh is strongly opposed by Mark Serwotka and the "grandees" of the union's leadership, including the acting President and majority of Vice-Presidents, who charge him with "conservatism", "defeatism", and "opposition to union and Left Unity policy".

In an email to all PCS Left Unity Members, the National Secretary of LU has explained that "Since the election... a number of individual comrades and political tendencies [have stated] they are not willing to support Chris as AGS given his different position on pay and among other things".

The increasingly tiny PCS Democrats, a centrist faction separate from Left Unity but in long-term coalition with it for the apolitical, opportunistic electoral



umbrella "Democratic Alliance" also refuse to support Baugh as part of the umbrella slate for national elections.

To maintain the electoral lash-up, the Left Unity National Committee has refused to include Baugh on any of their literature for the National Executive (NEC) elections, which run at the same time as the AGS contest. It has put out a separate, half-arsed leaflet asking for nominations for Baugh.

The SWP and other tendencies in LU have also said, privately at least, that they will not be supporting Baugh. They are likely to sup-

port senior union employee, Lynn Henderson.

From supposed Marxists who at least on paper stress the importance of a membership-led union and having full-timers on a worker's wage, this is hypocrisy and political opportunism.

Meanwhile, the only rank-and-file member of the union standing in the AGS election, John Moloney, continues his outward campaign to the membership.

John has now launched his full manifesto, a leaflet to members, and a number of videos on industrial and political issues, all at pcs-independentleft.com

He has publicly and directly challenged the other candidates to face-to-face, recorded debate. So far only Lynn Henderson has formally accepted. The first debate likely be at the DEFRA South Eastern AGM in late February.

PCS members should attend their AGMs and support Moloney and other Independent Left comrades standing in this year's national elections.

Nominations for the NEC and AGS elections close on 7 March, and voting will run from 16 April to 9 May.

PCS ballots on pay

By Mike Chester

The National Executive Committee (NEC) has agreed to re-ballot civil service members for strikes over pay.

The ballot will run from 18 March to 29 April. The union hopes to reach the 50% turnout required by the anti-union laws. It fell 8% short of that threshold last year.

The number of members to be balloted this year is slightly smaller at 120,000. Bargaining units that are not "core civil service" — and therefore not subject to the same pay regime — can choose whether to opt-in to the pay campaign.

At the NEC, the PCS Independent Left group made a number of

alternative proposals on the demands of the campaign.

As a result of our intervention, the union's claim of 8-10% will now be underpinned by a minimum pay claim of £10/h or £11/h in London. For the lowest paid in government this would mean a 28% pay rise.

This is an important improvement and brings the claim in line with the demands for at least the Living Wage from outsourced workers and the service industry campaigns.

Equally, the strategy that PCS Independent Left and Workers' Liberty comrades have long advocated, but which was adopted by the leadership only last year, of identifying areas of maximum industrial impact for targeted action,

continues.

The ballot this time round will also include a question on action short of a strike, in order to allow our members in places such as the ports and immigration to take action in the workplace to cause the maximum amount of disruption in the case of Brexit.

We hope the leadership have learnt the important organisational lessons of last years ballot. Independent Left and Workers' Liberty comrades have already been doing the work in our branches preparing the membership for the ballot.

We will seek a biggest turnout which can be translated into sustained and targeted action across central government departments and agencies.

Universal Credit workers to strike

By Gerry Bates

Universal Credit Service Centre workers, members of the PCS union, at the Walsall and Wolverhampton offices are the first to ballot for strike action over staffing levels and capacity within the Universal Credit operations in DWP.

Members have long standing grievances with DWP bosses over a horrific lack of staff (the demand is for at least 5000 new staff to cope with the workload), a reduction in the amount of calls per day each worker is expected to handle, and

an end to the draconian target-driven culture in offices.

The employer has finally accepted that staffing levels are too low and announced extra funding for 2019/20. That is too little too late and does not address the cultural and managerial changes needed to reduce stress and pressure on staff.

The wider political context is that Universal Credit is an underfunded, poorly-designed system which is creating significant hardship for claimants. Claimants which now include the very DWP employees tasked with administer-

ing it.

Once the ballot is won, the labour movement should swing wholeheartedly behind these workers. Winning more union jobs in the Service Centres and opposing draconian and stressful target culture will end up supporting claimants.

And that is will not be the end of the battle to fundamentally reform universal credit as a system into a true universal benefit, one which is substantially increased and free from discrimination, conditionality, and one where eligibility is instant.



Solidarity

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Schools climate strike: build now for 15 March!

By Maisie Sanders

Tens of thousands of young people joined the Youth Strike for Climate school walkouts on Friday 18 February in town centres and outside schools across the UK.

It was organised as part of the Fridays for Future school walkouts started by Swedish school student Greta Thunberg, which have now gone global (bit.ly/fff-15). Students from Australia, Austria, Belgium and Germany have also taken part. School students in France walked out on Friday 18th, too.

Over 3,000 people attended the London rally in Parliament Square, ranging from sixth-formers to primary-school-age children with their parents.

The atmosphere was very militant. Students blocked the road and some climbed on buses and traffic lights with their homemade placards. There were chants of "Hey ho, hey ho, fossil fuels have got to go" and "Fuck Theresa May."

VOTES AT 16

In Bristol few hundred students protested and blocked the road.

There were also large rallies in Sheffield, Brighton, Exeter and Glasgow. Most school strikers said that the protests were about raising awareness and demanding young people's voices be listened to, rather than this or that specific demand to confront climate change. Votes at 16 was a recurring theme.

Cody from Guildford County sixth form said "There's a whole group of us from our school. I first saw it happening on a meme account on Instagram. I put it in a group chat and nothing was really done about it until one of our geography teachers mentioned it to the A Level students, and then some of them decided it would be

a good idea."

"People under the age of 18 can't vote so this is the best way for us to express our opinions. We have until 2025 until climate change is almost irreversible.

"We're at breaking point and what's currently being done isn't enough to resolve this. We're still fracking. A large part of our power is still coming from non-renewable resources. We're funding Trident, a lot of money is going towards nuclear power instead of the future and we're spending a lot of our time on Brexit."

Daisy, Aggie, Hannah and Imogen from St. Cecilia's Southfields said around one hundred students had joined the walkout from their school.

ROADBLOCK

They said "We were part of the road block, we got up on the bus. It was amazing — you've got hundreds of people, everyone with the same belief as you."

If it takes us blocking roads for one day the government should realise that they need to listen to people.

"People think we're naive and lazy just because we're young. But people on the bus with us had come here from South London, East London, Essex... People do care. If the government see this and ignore it it's irresponsible of them."

Miel, Hana, Nell, Megan, Flo and Amelie from Camden School for Girls said: "We wrote a letter to our Head of Year saying that this is more important than one day of lessons. The teachers knew about it and some supported it.

"From our school, Year Nines to Sixth Formers walked out — overall about one hundred. I think we have to focus on renewable energy and against fossil fuels. We need more education too — everything about the meat industry, for exam-



ple, and its impact on the environment is hidden.

"We need drastic change. There isn't just one demand — we want to be heard and show that our opinions matter. We need things like lower bus fares so more people use public transport. There's too much blame on individuals from big companies. It's not enough to just stop using plastic straws. Companies need to be cleaner — in their use of water and transport, for example. The government have an institutional responsibility to educate people.

"Fifty and sixty year olds are deciding our future and it's us who will face the consequences, not them."

The forthcoming Youth Strike for Climate on Friday 15 March will be global. We can expect even more people to take part.

This time the walkouts were mainly built on social media rather than by organisation in schools and colleges, with students from the same school often meeting up at the rally rather than walking out of school together.

Next time, more students will be able to organise in their schools to build the walkout, holding meetings and placard-making sessions, and forming plans to continue organising afterwards.

NUS (the National Union of Students) should support school students taking part in the walkout,

producing guides on how to organise and seeking to use them to build lasting organisation in schools and colleges (sixth formers are members of NUS). Young Labour groups should help to build the next walkout and organise students involved.

The political demands of the strike, and the focus on social need over profit and the need to take on the power of fossil fuel capital, should make socialists very hopeful.

The terms of the debate have been set by the school strikers in a way that promises a real fight against the capitalists and their political servants who are paving the way to hell.

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