



& Workers' Liberty

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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Labour goes for new public vote



LABOUR: BACK REMAIN!

On Monday 25 February the Labour Party leadership came out for a new public vote on Brexit.

Shadow Brexit minister Keir Starmer and shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry have said they would vote Remain in that referendum.

This is a great victory for the anti-Brexit left. We should clinch it:

- By mobilising on the streets to add pressure on Parliament. Labour should sponsor a big bloc on the 23 March "People's Vote" demonstration. Labour for a Socialist Europe, the anti-Brexit left group in Labour, has already started organising for that.

- By making it clear that Labour will vote Remain in that new public vote.

- By redoubling the call for a special conference in which the Labour Party sorts itself out.

On Monday 25th "a Labour spokesman", presumably from the Leader's Office, was telling Reuters that "a referendum giving a choice between May's deal and Remain would not be acceptable".

The Skwawkbox blog, known as an unofficial feed from the Leader's Office, branded the story that Labour was backing a second Brexit referendum as "'mainstream' fake news".

Labour members have to guard against backsliding, and against the referendum call being reduced to a "designed-to-fail" parliamentary gesture.

Brexit is in crisis. We can stop it.



All out on 23 March

See page 12



After the Umunna split

Sean Matgamna writes an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn, page 9; Editorial on the Umunna split and after, page 5

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New school climate protest 15 March

Alan Simpson discusses what we can learn from the 15 February school walk-outs

See page 7

Labour for a Socialist Europe National conference

9 March 11.30am-5.30pm

Camden School for Girls, London, NW5 2DB.

labourforasocialisteurope.org

Call a Special Labour Conference!

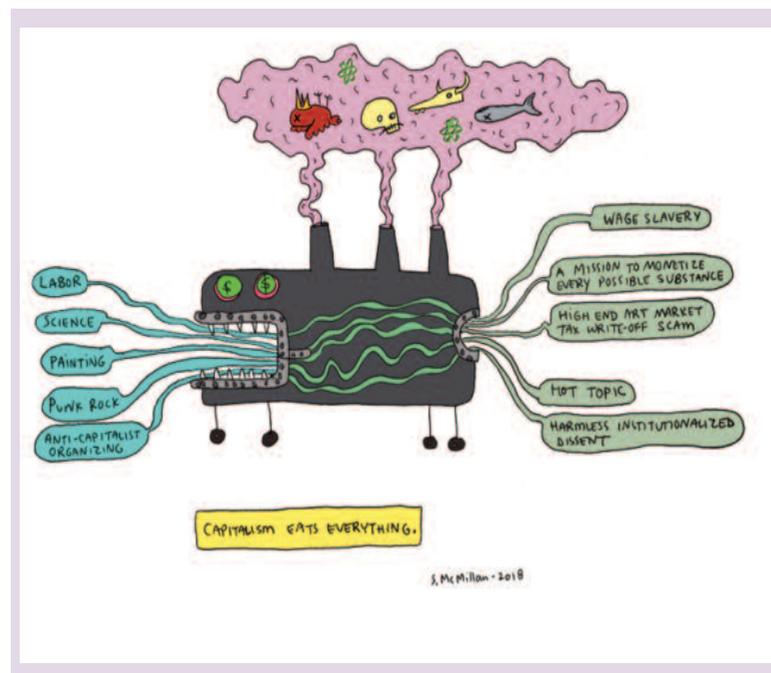
Solidarity in other formats

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

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

We now have volunteers to produce an audio version of the paper, at least experimentally. Links to the audio version on SoundCloud will be on www.workersliberty.org/audio.

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



Netanyahu woos far right

By Willie Sneyd

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has persuaded two far-right racist parties to merge in returning for offering them government posts if he wins the Israeli general election due on 4 April.

One of the two parties is Jewish Power, a scarcely-concealed continuation of the Kahane movement which has been banned in Israel since 1988 as terrorist and racist.

It advocates expelling Palestinians and Israeli Arabs who refuse to swear "loyalty", and an expanded Jewish state taking in the whole West Bank.

Netanyahu's move is designed to get the far right into the Knesset (parliament) by bringing the merged group above the 3.25% threshold for gaining seats which neither of the two separate parties could reach.

It has brought condemnation even from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a US lobby group which has previously gone along with Netanyahu throughout

his ten-year term of office.

Netanyahu has been under investigation on multiple charges of corruption since 2016. In December 2018 Israel's State Prosecutor recommended he be brought to court. As yet the Attorney General in Netanyahu's administration is blocking that, but that protection will disappear if Netanyahu loses the election.

Netanyahu draws strength from the big shift to the right in Israeli politics since the more-or-less complete breakdown over 2001-7 of talks for peace with the Palestinians.

According to Dahlia in +972 magazine, about 45% of Scheindlin-voters self-define as right wing, roughly one-quarter as centrists, and 20% as left wing.

Among Jewish voters, about 55% say they are right wing and only 15% left.

In the first decades of Israel, the Israeli Labour Party dominated politics and led every government. Now it is a demoralised rump.

The slightly-left social democratic Meretz survives, but is not

gaining ground.

The main rival to Netanyahu is the newly formed Blue and White party, differing mainly by being more secularist.

It has said that if it wins the 4 April election, it will make no fresh start. It will seek a coalition with Netanyahu's party Likud, on the assumption that Netanyahu himself will then be out of the game.

Blue and White stresses that whatever the parliamentary arithmetic, the party will not combine with Israel's Arab parties to form a government or to block Netanyahu from forming his own coalition.

Israel's shift to the right mirrors the rise of the once-marginal Hamas in Palestinian politics.

Elements for new politics which could win a democratic two-states settlement between Israel and the Palestinians exist in movements like Standing Together in Israel, but as yet are electorally marginal.

The growth of those elements depends on the bringing-closer of a settlement allowing justice for the Palestinians, and vice versa.

Essex J Soc ban blocked

By Simon Nelson

More than 200 students at Essex University voted against the formation of a Jewish Society. It's the first organised attempt to stop or ban a Jewish Society on a British campus for decades.

There has been no explanation from any group of "activists" or students as to why there was a vote against the society. The university responded to outcry about the vote by short-cutting the usual procedure under which all new societies have to be approved by student ballot. To that date, some 64% of votes had been in favour of allowing the new society.

The whole procedure of student

societies requiring a ballot majority is unusual and wrong. On top of that, sections of the left have a history of an "anti-Zionist" politics which refused to allow Jewish student societies to form unless they explicitly opposed Israel. It was an antisemitic campaign which *Socialist Organiser* (*Solidarity's* predecessor) vigorously opposed, especially around the banning of the Jewish Society at Sunderland Poly in 1985 (bit.ly/su-poly).

The public statement from the Student Union says "We are also reviewing the way that societies are ratified at Essex going forward, to ensure that all students have a safe and welcoming environment to meet with those of a shared experience and to celebrate their cultural

or religious identity."

Dr Maaruf Ali, an Essex academic who has now been suspended, vocally opposed the establishment of the JSoc. He has previously shared antisemitic and Holocaust-denying material on social media.

A rise in antisemitic incidents on university campuses and the ongoing crisis around antisemitism among the left show why a more vigorous educational campaign about the specifics of modern and particularly left antisemitism is necessary now more than ever.

• Workers' Liberty pamphlet, *Left Antisemitism and How to Fight It*: bit.ly/l-as



Hatton's no-glory days

By Gerry Bates

Derek Hatton used to be famous. In the mid-1980s he was the chief figure in Liverpool's Labour council, embattled against the Tories.

Formally deputy leader of the council, he was able to be the main public figure because he was promoted by the Militant group (forerunner of the Socialist Party), which then had decisive influence in the Liverpool labour movement.

His record was shameful. After a series of show mobilisations, the Liverpool council dialled down their campaign. At a crucial point in the miners' strike, the council left the miners in the lurch. Hatton did a deal with the Tories to postpone its financial crisis to the next year.

Shamelessly, Hatton recounted later how a Tory MP had told him exactly what the game was. "We had to tell Patrick [Jenkin, the Tory government minister] to give you the money. At this stage we want Scargill [the miners' union leader]. He's our priority. But we'll come for you later".

And the Tories did. After the miners were defeated in early 1985, Liverpool retreated. Notoriously it issued redundancy notices to all its workers, as a supposed "tactical manoeuvre". It borrowed money from Swiss banks at high interest rates and yet made cuts.

A crisis: but who will fix it?



By Mike Zubrowski

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), a broadly "Blairite" think-tank, has published a report, *This is a crisis* (bit.ly/ippr-c).

It considers not just global warming, but other severe and rapid environmental changes. Climate change will affect poorer and more oppressed people most, on a national and international scale. It has been driven by the richest.

The report advocates "just" and "sustainable" societies, and preparation for the impacts of climate change. Often reducing emissions also means improved quality of life, for example reduced consumption of red meat or increased public transport.

IPPR sees the inadequate response so far by governments to climate change as due to the complexity of the issue, "vested inter-

ests", and specific political barriers. The report favourably quotes Engels:

"In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the first, tangible success; and then surprise is expressed that the more remote effects of actions directed to this end turn out to be of quite a different, mainly even of quite an opposite, character" (*Dialectics of Nature*).

However, the report has no talk of overthrowing capitalism, and not much in the way of detailed piecemeal measures. IPPR promises more detail next year.

But really the report is another admonition that "something serious must be done urgently", without specifics about what and by whom.

Now aged 71, he has been readmitted to the Labour Party and then quickly suspended when someone found a loose-mouthed antisemitic tweet by him from 2012.

Whether Labour members should be suspended for one-off casual social media effusions is questionable.

Whether Hatton's readmission will bring any benefit to the Labour Party is no question at all: it won't.

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It does allude to "younger generations" as an agent of change. Ultimately, though, the working class organising for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is the only way we can bring about just and sustainable societies.

Macron, Salvini, and the left

By Joan Trevor

On 7 February, France recalled its ambassador from Italy, the first time this had happened since Italy's fascist leader Benito Mussolini declared war in 1940.

The recall was the latest act in a growing row between French President Emmanuel Macron and Italy's coalition government, formed of the populist Five Star Movement and the far-right National League.

Macron had criticised the coalition for promoting the "leprosy" of nationalism, and Italy's new policy of turning away migrant boats from its shores. The Italian government accuses Macron of hypocrisy for returning migrants in France to Italy, and, with the rest of the EU, failing to help Italy deal with the migrant crisis.

In January Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini posted on Facebook that: "In France they have a bad government and a bad president of the Republic". He told people not to vote for Macron's En Marche party. Salvini posted a photo of himself with far-right National Rally (former National Front) leader Marine Le Pen, captioned "Matteo + Marine, Macron's worst nightmare!"

Salvini is positioning himself as

head of a far-right coalition across Europe aiming to "save the real Europe" in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections. Others in the coalition include Poland's Law and Justice party, Hungary's Fidesz party, and the Alternative for Germany.

He also seeks to disrupt the France-Germany partnership that forms the heart of the EU. That explains a lot of the Italians' readiness to stir things with Macron. It plays to their crowd.

The row is less useful to Macron, whose domestic approval ratings are rock-bottom.

Italy's other deputy prime minister, Luigi di Maio of the Five Star Movement, recently accused France of creating poverty in Africa and thus fuelling mass migration from the continent to Europe. On 5 February he met in Paris with the gilets jaunes (yellow vests) movement that has been causing Macron so much trouble, and boasted that "the winds of change had now crossed the Alps". It was this act which prompted France to recall its ambassador.

Neither side in this row deserves support. It's right to point out Macron's hypocrisy, but the Italian government for its part represents an immediate threat to minority ethnic communities, migrants and the labour movement (see

bit.ly/rome-st).

Spain's *El País* newspaper said the diplomatic spat pits the "liberal and democratic values of the EU founders" (Macron) against "authoritarianism" and "insurrection" (Di Maio).

There are real differences between the two sides: Macron represents the more integrationist tendencies of big European capital, while Salvini's and Di Maio's government is more Eurosceptic and nationalistic. But both are pro-capital and anti-worker.

Socialists should support European integration, but seek to assert working-class interests within it and to use integration to build unity between European workers.

That approach that can stop the big business interests eroding popular support for lower borders, and prevent the far-right and nationalists benefiting from the growing dissatisfaction with the EU.

Against Macron and Salvini we must build a workers' voice!

In the European Parliamentary elections, 23-26 May, 751 MEPs will be elected to represent the 27 member states, not including the UK.

If Brexit is postponed, the UK could take part in the elections. According to shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry, however, that is unlikely: a postponement, or postponements, will be so arranged



Outsourced workers protest together

Outsourced workers from four trade unions united for a day of action on Tuesday 26 February. Members of the IWGB at University of London, UvW at the Ministry of Justice, and PCS at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy all struck to demand better pay and conditions, and direct employment. RMT London Transport Regional Council, which organises outsourced workers on London Underground, also supported the demonstration.

as to avoid Euro-elections in the UK.

Surveys currently suggest the far-right will not win a majority in the European Parliament but will increase their influence.

Sadly, working-class socialist candidatures will be scattered

and piecemeal. Even where they will be strongest, in France, there will probably be two rival revolutionary socialist lists, from the NPA and from Lutte Ouvrière: bit.ly/npa-lo

Venezuela: four dead in border clashes



By Eduardo Tovar

Juan Guaidó declared himself president of Venezuela on 23 January, disputing the position with the incumbent president Nicolas Maduro.

A month later, Guaidó continues to ask other states to consider "all options" for removing Maduro. Events on 23 February ramped up the risk of invasion, by the USA or a consortium of states.

On the 23rd, eight lorries carrying aid attempted to cross the border from Colombia. Three lorries reportedly made it into Venezuela, only for two to catch fire. Colom-

bian officials say this was deliberate incineration.

Venezuelan troops have blockaded the borders with Colombia and Brazil to keep out lorries carrying food and medical supplies. Maduro has denounced these aid shipments as a pretext for a foreign invasion.

We oppose any military intervention in Venezuela, or economic sanctions that will inevitably hit the poorest Venezuelans hardest. At the same time, we continue to support efforts to build an independent, class-struggle left that can provide an alternative to the Chavista mainstream.

Over the course of 23 February,

violent clashes erupted at the border as opposition-supporting protesters attempted to breach the government blockades and bring in the supplies. Venezuelan security forces responded with rubber bullets and tear gas.

One such crowd dispersal in the town of Santa Elena de Uairé left at least four dead and 18 injured. Although, so far, Guaidó has largely failed to draw the Venezuelan top brass from Maduro, there have been rank-and-file defections in the National Guard. At least 60 border guards are reported to have deserted and crossed into Colombia.

In a somewhat surreal turn of events, rival solidarity concerts were held on Friday 22 February on opposite sides of the Venezuela-Colombia border. In Colombia, Richard Branson hosted "Venezuela Aid Live" to raise \$100 million in funds for food and medicine.

The concert featured notable Latin American artists including "Despacito" singer Luis Fonsi. Defying travel restrictions, Guaidó made a surprise appearance to speak to attendees and reporters. Meanwhile, in Venezuela, Maduro supporters held a "Hands Off Venezuela" concert, broadcast on state TV.

An island-owning billionaire like Branson hosting a private fundraiser for a major humanitar-

ian crisis? Nevertheless, the situation in Venezuela remains bleak.

That same Friday, indigenous Pemon woman Zoraida Rodriguez died from her bullet wounds after her tribe clashed with Venezuelan

security forces in the Gran Sabana region near the Brazilian border.

The tribe retaliated by seizing the local airport, which acts as a gateway to Angel Falls, before being violently dispersed.



The deadline for super-earlybird tickets for Ideas for Freedom 2019, the Workers' Liberty summer school, passed on 24 February.

We've sold a lot more tickets four months in advance of the event than we have at this stage in previous years. Let's hope the pattern continues!

"Advanced" earlybird tickets are now available until 21 April: £30 waged, £17 low-waged and students, £7 unwaged.

Prices will increase in steps until

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

Venue: Camden School for Girls, Sandall Road, London NW5 2DB. Free creche. Overnight accommodation will also be available free.

• www.workersliberty.org/ideas

The importance of text



Letters

Janine's article on "Neurodiversity, capitalism, and socialism" in *Solidarity 494* was interesting and informative. I agree with most of what she advocates.

However, I'd like to query her implication that "text-heavy" newspapers are no longer very important, and that alternative media (videos, meetings) can replace them.

Those other media can't replace in-depth reading. Videos can and should play a useful supplementary role, and meetings are of course vital.

Text allows for in-depth studying of topics in a way that is often much more difficult or impossible in other formats. Text-based material also has an advantage in its ability to be distributed hand-to-hand. The generally lower barriers to the production and distribution of leaflets, newspapers, and pamphlets make text a more democratic medium than video.

Being dyslexic or neurodivergent can make some things more difficult. Not attempting or encouraging people to attempt those more difficult things is sometimes not the best response.

Sometimes adaptations we as a group can do can make activities easier, for example by making it easier to read it with a tinted background or particular fonts. We can support each other in using aides and developing techniques for reading and writing. Tinted overlays, reading guides and ergonomic pens can all be fashioned or acquired quite easily.

I am dyslexic, and a slower reader than many. At points I have struggled with attention span or felt daunted by the prospect of reading a long text in a limited time. There are techniques that can help many people to improve their reading speed. Taking breaks and reading in short intervals can help attention span.

Perseverance, recognition of the importance of reading, and confidence in the usefulness of trying, can help.

I read and write significantly more than many of my non-dyslexic friends. In compensating for my "disorganisation", I have put a lot of effort into organisational techniques, and end up in some ways more organised than many people who might "naturally" find it easier.

Supporting and encouraging, where possible, people to work on reading is an emancipatory approach. We should aim to make audio recordings and other versions of our own texts and of many Marxist classics. But for the foreseeable future, a large proportion of the extremely extensive body of socialist and other thought will remain in text format.

Where possible, we should seek not to be simply "gatekeepers", providing individuals with access to certain content. We should seek to empower them to be able to freely engage in the body of thought as a whole.

For some individuals this is not possible, or not possible as a first step. We should aim to support them as far as possible.

Mike Zubrowski, Bristol

Honda: don't mention Brexit!



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Rumours that Honda was about to announce the closure of its Swindon plant, with a loss of 3,500 jobs (up to 10,000, including the supply chain), began circulating on Monday 18 February. The next day it was all over the front pages of the serious bourgeois press.

Strangely, though, Britain's self-styled socialist daily, with close links to the trade unions, the *Morning Star*, didn't put the news on its front page.

Tuesday's *Morning Star* (19 February) carried one short piece, tucked away on an inside page and quoting the local Tory MP Justin Tomlinson saying the closure decision is "based on global trends and not Brexit, as all European production will consolidate in Japan in 2021."

The piece also quoted Unite national automotive officer Des Quinn, but not his comment, carried in most of the bourgeois press, that the car industry had "been brought low by the chaotic Brexit uncertainty."

The next day the *Morning Star* carried another not particularly prominent piece on an inside page, mainly about a (supposed) campaign by Unite to save the plant.

The report noted that "Honda did not mention Brexit as a reason to close the plant."

It doesn't seem to have occurred to the *Morning Star* that the company may have been deliberately polite, not mentioning Brexit for fear of antagonising future British car buyers and the government.

Only last summer, though, Honda warned that post-Brexit border checks could clog up its supply chain ("unprecedented impact", said the company's European Vice-President Ian Howells). Some 75 per cent of parts for Honda's cars are imported from the EU and assembly lines rely on these parts arriving hours or even minutes before they are needed.

We anti-Brexit people should note that Honda is also ceasing production in Turkey, which has a customs union with the European Union (though Turkey-EU border procedures are still laborious). And the EU has just struck a trade deal with Japan that will allow Honda to make its cars at home and ship them to the EU tariff-free.

But even the *Guardian's* pro-Brexit Economics Editor Larry Elliott has had to admit that "while Honda's decision is not simply about Brexit, uncertainty about Brexit played its part. Japanese policymakers —

from the prime minister, Shinzo Abe, down — have been pressing for a soft Brexit ever since the referendum, initially privately but recently more openly."

Honda's decision in Swindon is part of a pattern. Nissan is scaling back its plans for Sunderland; Toyota seems likely to leave Burnaston; the same with BMW in Cowley; Brexiteer Dyson has opted to build his new electric car in Singapore; Jaguar Land Rover is cutting 4,500 jobs.

One of the UK's few enduring industrial policies of the past three decades has been to attract and maintain investment in British motor manufacturing from Japan and Germany. From the time of the Thatcher's administration in the 1980s, Honda, and then Nissan and Toyota, were coaxed into making Britain their base for exporting within the EU.

Tata's investment of £5 billion into the revitalisation of Jaguar Land Rover's network of UK factories, engineering and design studios, mainly in the West Midlands, built up a British workforce of 40,000, levels of automotive employment not seen since the heydays of Dagenham and Longbridge.

The first new car plants in a generation were built: Jaguar Land Rover's engine facility in Wolverhampton, and a supercar factory in Woking for McLaren.

The British automotive sector employs nearly one million people and produced 1.7 million cars last year, of which almost 60 per cent were exported to the continent.

Now investment in the UK automotive sector has halved in the past six months, compared with the same period a year ago.

Investment in Britain has now fallen for four quarters as firms are delaying, cancelling or switching investment, with Japanese companies including Nissan, Sony, Panasonic and Hitachi leading the way.

Of course, socialists do not take our cue from what businesses want. We are independent. We are never yea-sayers. Neither are we nay-sayers who can economise on thinking for ourselves by always saying no when bosses say yes. The British labour movement made its start in politics with the Chartist movement, which organised alongside the bourgeois Anti Corn Law League against trade barriers on corn, but with its own independent slant.

Economic disruption, workplace closures, shortages, huge queues at ports, higher prices, are as bad for the working class now as they were in the days of the Corn Laws.

The reaction of the hardline-Brexiteers of the Tory right is shameful. "Nothing to do with Brexit whatsoever," say the ERG and Leave Means Leave.

Essentially, the *Morning Star* takes the same view but doesn't have the nerve to come out with it.

No vote for Sanders!

The justification for voting for the Labour Party has always existed: its trade-union links, mechanisms of accountability (however eroded), and the particular history of the UK (with no mass socialist or communist party), giving Labour a working-class base of activists and voters.

That remained true even under the successively right-wing leaderships of Wilson, Kinnock and Blair. It was always a workers' party of some kind. Of the most degraded kind to be sure, but the fact remains: it is a bourgeois workers' party.

No such justification exists for the US Democrats. Its only link to the unions is the demand for money.

It is unsurprising that people who joined Labour because of Corbyn drew the conclusion that the only thing that matters is elect-

ing a left-wing leadership, no matter the class make-up of the party or its program. If Bernie Sanders wins the presidential nomination for the US Democrats (as he has just announced his intention to do), many of those people will argue it is suddenly warranted to vote for the Democrats.

These people have drawn the wrong conclusions about how revolutionaries should relate to fundamentally different types of parties. The most pressing political task for the American working class remains the building of an independent workers' party, not sowing illusions in the left wing of the US ruling class.

I still maintain the same logic applies to the French presidency, and calling for a vote for Macron was deeply mistaken.

KM, South London

Ilhan Omar: the main thing in our statement was missed

Thanks to Barry Finger for citing the statement "Defend Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib" by the *Solidarity* (US) [no relation] steering committee in your 20 February (*Solidarity 496*) issue.

Our statement is posted at <https://solidarity-us.org> and I encourage comrades to read it — including Barry, who apparently missed one of the main points.

We pointed out that Rep. Omar was mistaken a few years back when she tweeted that Israel had "hypnotized" US and world political leaders. Quite the contrary, US imperial-

ism has a bipartisan eyes-wide-open policy of partnership with the Israeli state in the interests of its global empire. (Please read Jeff Halper's book, *War Against the People. Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification*, Pluto Press, 2015, on this absolutely central point.)

I'm sure that Barry Finger is in agreement on this issue. Surprisingly for a US observer, however, he dismisses the real, vicious and intimidating impact of AIPAC, and other Zionist lobby outfits like Campus Watch and Canary Mission, on US political discourse and in terrorising Palestine solidarity ac-

tivism.

AIPAC is a profoundly poisonous influence in American politics, even though it is not ultimately decisive in the formulation of imperialist policy.

The existence of actual antisemitism in US life is undeniable, but quite small in comparison to the Islamophobia and anti-Arab vilification that AIPAC and the rest of the Zionist lobby, above all the huge Christian Zionist movement here, feeds on. That's why we emphasise that the attacks on Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib are not a one-off thing. They

will only intensify as the USA enters our unbearably long electoral season.

The left needs to be vigilant about anti-semitism and all manner of retrograde expressions, but we need to be clear about "keeping the main thing the main thing," as a popular saying has it.

David Finkel
Solidarity-U.S.

Labour after the Umunna split

After a week when nine Labour MPs split away, citing Labour incompetence on opposing Tory Brexit and/or a scourge of antisemitism in the Party, Jeremy Corbyn has committed Labour to call for a second referendum on Brexit, with "Remain" as an option, against May's deal.

That's good news for those of us who oppose Brexit and support recognition of Labour Party policy and the views of the majority of Labour members and voters.

The shift may force a rethink among some Remain-supporting Labour activists who turned to supporting Brexit, not wishing to rock the Corbyn boat.

What does the commitment mean?

First and foremost it is a late response to the threat of splits in Labour, an attempt to ward off further splits. Since the formation of the "Independent Group" (which plans to become a party "gradually"), there have been rumours of further Labour and Tory defections. Talk of twenty or more from Labour.

On Sunday 24 February, Deputy Leader Tom Watson, announced the formation of a new faction for Labour MPs, those from its "social democratic tradition" as he put it. His meaning was clear. This faction will organise MPs inside Labour. It also threatens to take the same group outside Labour, if Corbyn does not respond adequately.

To underline the threat, Watson presented Corbyn with a dossier itemising some 50 claims of antisemitism inside Labour, saying Corbyn must take personal responsibility for these cases. Having the party leader rather than the regular committees deal with the cases would be completely irregular and undemocratic, but such are the demagogic methods of Tom Watson.

Responses to the split from within the Corbyn camp were mixed. John McDonnell talked about the "need to listen". Emily Thornberry (at a rally in Soubry's constituency of Broxtowe) talked (not unreasonably) about "traitors".

Momentum's Jon Lansman spoke out usefully on the need to tackle a "widespread" problem of antisemitism in the Party.

On the fringes, Chris Williamson MP, at a Momentum rally in Sheffield, said the opposite, claiming that Labour's response to the anti-semitism row had been too apologetic.

The mix of responses is explained by a lack of coherence in the Corbyn camp. Corbyn's office has been sealed off by his Stalinist advisors – Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray – in order to better control most of the day-to-day policy decisions and "spins" without much reference to other "leading lights" except a few chosen ones like Unite union leader Len McCluskey.

Unfortunately, therefore, Corbyn's declaration of support for a second referendum is not a commitment to a full-throttle campaign for that. Rather it fits into the principle-free, flexible strategy which Stalinist intellectuals like Milne et al prefer,

Principled socialists should want Labour to clearly and unambiguously oppose Brexit and not to "triangulate", in order to concede to institutional threats from Labour's right wing. We want support for a campaign for a second referendum as part of our opposition to Brexit, because it is a right-wing and regressive set of changes, pointing towards even less social regulation, more inequality, and the buttressing of nationalist political answers to the problems of capitalism.

Instead Labour's second referendum support will become part of a sequence of Parliamentary events, which will look something like this.

On 27 February, Labour will focus on moving a Parliamentary amendment for its own version of a Brexit deal (with a customs union). The amendment is certain to be defeated.

Labour will then support moves for a second referendum – via, for example, a modified version of an amendment from by Labour MPs Peter Kyle and Phil Wilson,



which in its present form, oddly, calls for Parliament to support May's withdrawal agreement but make its implementation conditional on a referendum – later. Maybe at the next "Meaningful Vote", not until 12 March.

Some commentators have said the effect of Labour support for a referendum may be to push Tory Hard Brexiters into supporting May's deal – a lesser evil for some than extending Article 50, which is also being currently pushed for.

In truth, because the Labour Party has "run down the clock" on backing its conference policy for a second referendum. As the proposal will not be debated in Parliament for another two weeks, there is a big question mark over whether Labour will meaningfully campaign for a second referendum at all.

Yet, if it does not, it will face further fractures and splits which will cost Labour ultimately at the polls.

It is down to Labour activists who oppose Brexit on principled grounds to build the campaign, and the openings for us to do that have now been much increased.

Come to the Labour for a Socialist Europe Conference on 9 March. Join the campaign and others on the "No Brexit, for a Socialist Europe" bloc on the People's Vote march on 23 March.

• <http://labourforasocialisteurope.org>

£11,518 so far,
£3,482 to go

£508 for the fund appeal this week, £500 of it in a special donation designed to free up one of our people to work next month on organising for the Deliveroo dispute and fixing glitches on our website while doing fewer hours of casual work.

£15,000

That's the sort of thing our fund drive is for. Our regular income from regular contributions and sales just about covers baseline operations – rent and utilities for our office, print and dispatch costs for Solidarity, stipends for those of our office staff who are paid.

To send organisers to do meetings and activities round the country, to print leaflets, to cover upfront costs of extra publications, we need your fund contributions.

In the last week we've found a possible channel to a video editor who may be up for working at a cheap rate on the technical editing needed in order to get online some of the video footage we have stacked up.

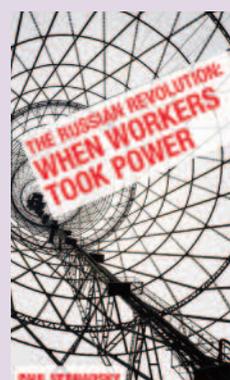
We've had a suggestion that we produce "autocollants" (10.5 x 16 cm stickers) for use on the 15 March school student climate strike.

To be able to take up options like that, we need your contributions.

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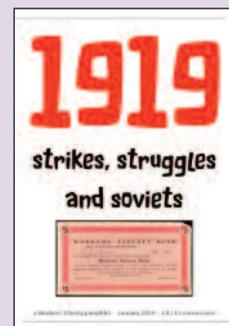
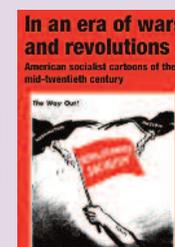
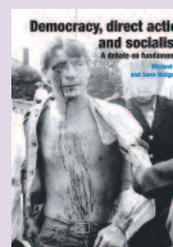
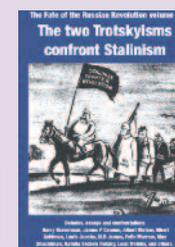
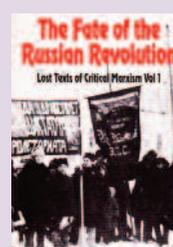
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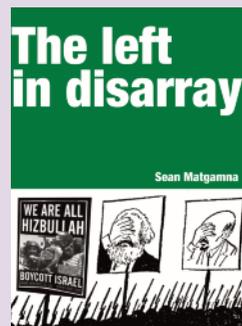
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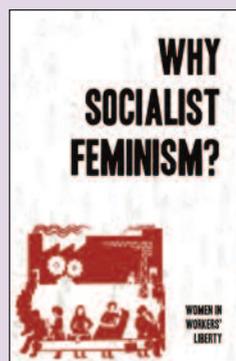
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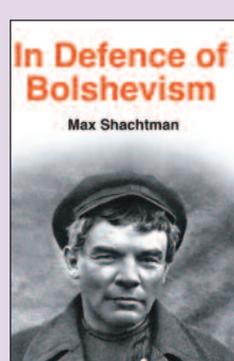
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Bolshevism, the civil war, and after



Review

Barry Finger reviews *In Defence of Bolshevism*

Mass socialist parties, trade unions, workers councils and organs of struggle are places for debate, discussion, deliberation and opposition, where, ideally, everything is openly evaluated.

Their functionality requires constituencies free to transmit their will to the administrators of power, not only within these organisations themselves but also to the broader institutions and arenas in which they participate.

The organisation is where members safeguard themselves by providing for the recall of those who fail to adequately represent the aspirations of their base; who fail, that is, to translate majoritarian rank and file understanding of social conflict into appropriate legal and organisational terms.

At least, that, to a large extent, was the Bolshevik viewpoint, the perspective of Lenin in *State and Revolution*. It was how Bukharin and Preobrazhensky explained the Program of the Communist Party in 1919. It is in part why socialists believe a workers' democracy, where all the in-built class obstacles that thwart the will of the people under capitalism have been removed — and which therefore actively encourages rather than suppresses the full flourishing of politics — is infinitely more conducive to attaining and securing a democracy more representative, protective of minority opinions, and operational than any previous form of democracy.

The socialist class dictatorship — a workers' democracy — exercises the organised coercive force of the revolutionary state against the property-holding minority only insofar as the latter attempts to resist the social revolution. The form and extent of its coercive measures are conditioned by the strength and effectiveness of that resistance.

Within that space, the revolution aims to secure the greatest possible degree of self-government and the least possible scope for the emergence of a distinct civil or military bureaucracy. The revolutionary class anchors its rule by ever-expanding the space for peaceful ideological combat and propaganda within the new order.

So runs a sketch of the revolutionary socialist tradition.

To continue and expand, coercive measures, unavoidable at a certain stage of the revolution, must be implemented in a self-dissolving manner, before they consolidate

themselves and create a permanent set of institutions capable of frustrating the organised initiative and autonomy of the revolutionary class itself.

A passing familiarity with the pre-1917 writings of the Bolsheviks and Trotsky indicates their full accordance with that tradition. They conceived of socialist power, along with Marx, as rising from the bottom up; a permanent empowering of the mass majority politically marginalised under capitalism.

They assumed, as did all socialists, revolutionary or reformist, not only the desirability and indispensability, but also and more importantly the centrality of democracy, at least in abstract principle, for socialism.

REFORMISTS AGAINST DEMOCRACY
We also know that the abstract commitment of socialists to the advancement of democracy was abrogated, violated and betrayed again and again in the concrete by reformist socialists who repeatedly sacrificed revolution for order, even when such order led to the chaos of war, by allying themselves with the established centers of capitalist power.

What then of revolutionary socialism? How did the Bolshevik party, unique in the annals of working class politics, that led a broad uprising of workers, peasants and soldiers — a revolution of the majority of the Russian people — and that mobilised these self-empowered masses against fourteen invading armies, transform itself in less than a decade into an all-powerful monolithic party-state that swallowed the revolution?

How did the party that spirited the soviets and breathed vigour into the trade unions and the Red Army transform itself into the vehicle for the imposition of the will of a narrow party bureaucracy over the people? How did it create a new class society based on collectivised property?

Those are the framework questions that Max Shachtman addressed in his polemical broadside against Ernie Erber, a leading militant, educator and activist within the Trotskyist movement associated with the Workers Party, who — upon his departure — called into question how the movement came to understand and evaluate that revolution.

Had Erber offered new insights? A more comprehensive revolutionary perspective based on previously untilled ground? Or — as Shachtman averred — was he merely repackaging in Marxist phraseology all the old social-democratic, reformist shibboleths of the enemies of the Russian Revolution and of socialist revolution as an engine of democracy itself?

The larger question for Shachtman was this. If democracy — the empowering of the masses as masters of their own fate — will not be advanced by reformist politics and cannot be advanced by revolutionary methods, is socialism itself doomed to failure indicting itself as a utopian project?

What case did Erber offer against the Bolsheviks? That it dispersed a counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly? That it outlawed parties and political organisations that took up arms against the revolution? That it put down political rebellions, such as Kronstadt, that were sustained by the forces

of reaction?

We don't have to look to Shachtman to understand the revolutionary dilemmas at play. The great Menshevik theoretician and critical supporter of the revolution, Julian Martov, laid it out for us with disarming honesty.

Our Party's influence began to drop uncontrollably, with no little contribution from the Seitensprünge (defection) of our comrades in Siberia, on the Volga, in the Caucasus, the Crimea, and so on, which enabled the Bolsheviks to represent us as allies of the Allies, of Kolchak, and so forth. Illegal agitation is infinitely more difficult under a regime like the Bolshevik, which after all had its roots in the masses, than under tsarism. ...

Insofar as we nevertheless did act, we ran into the lamentable situation in which any party finds itself during an intense civil war if it propounds 'moderate ideas' ... We had a sympathetic audience but it always turned out to be more rightist than we.

Following a healthy instinct all those who feel crushed by Bolshevism gladly supported us as the boldest fighters against it. But they... took in only what they needed — only the critical exposure of Bolshevism.

So long as we branded Bolshevism, we were applauded; as soon as we went on to say that a changed regime was needed to fight Denikin successfully... to eliminate speculation and facilitate the victory of the international proletariat, our audience turned cold or even hostile. We did not have our own masses of the proletariat and revolutionary intelligentsia.

That is, we only had their own decimated cadres. The new, younger elements, who have come to politics only now, are either irresistibly drawn into the Communist camp...- or despite their proletarian origin, into the camp of reaction, which rejects, along with Bolshevism, all socialism...

And there we have it. For what Martov concedes about Menshevism is equally applicable to the full gamut of democratic, anarchist and socialist opponents of the revolution. The war-consumed Bolsheviks did not disqualify and exclude other socialist parties; they disqualified, isolated and ejected themselves.

COUNTERREVOLUTION

They disgraced themselves in the manner that other reformist socialists had so recently done and will have done again in the post war aftermath, by aligning themselves with the forces of the status quo under the bad-faith banner of the "defence of democracy." If they expected to reap a working-class whirlwind, they found, to their utter disappointment and exasperation, only an audience for counterrevolution.

But when the exigencies of war dissipated, a battle-hardened, embittered and resentful Bolshevik party would not tolerate the return of yesterday's armed putschists back into the soviet fold. Lenin, Trotsky, Radek, Bukharin and Kamenev famously penned ad hoc justifications, unthinkable in content prior to the civil war, of a permanently unaccountable dictatorial power wielded by the one and true revolutionary party. Their writings began to incrementally upturn and violate every democratic norm and tradition that had long nourished and inspired them.

Belatedly, Lenin in his time and Trotsky later began to rethink and pull back from the brink of the abyss.

Space is too limited to detail Lenin's final misgivings or Trotsky's voyage from his New Course advocacy of a revived inner party democracy to his later championship of a full-throated multi-party soviet democracy.

Suffice it to say, in Shachtman's words:

One-party government, which is anything but abnormal in all countries at all times, and was just as normal and unexceptional in Russia, was transformed to mean: Only one party can enjoy legal existence in the country.

To this, Stalinism succeeded in adding: Only one faction can enjoy legal existence in the party.

The extension of full democratic rights...to all parties, without exception, would have strengthened the country and reinvigorated the Soviets themselves.

It should now be clear that without the presence of other political organisations capable of freely debating (debating, not shooting at) the proposals presented to the Soviets by the Bolshevik party, the Soviets would rapidly and inevitably deteriorate to the position of a superfluous duplicate of the ruling party, at first only consulted by the latter, then disregarded by it, and finally discarded altogether for the direct rule of the party alone (the bureaucracy of the party at that!).

In this process, the decay of democracy within the Bolshevik party and the decay of Soviet democracy went hand in hand, each having the same deleterious effect upon the other until both were suppressed completely, and along with them, all the achievements of the revolution itself...

(P)roletarian democracy cannot exist for long if it is confined to one faction or one party, even if be the revolutionary party, that it must be shared equally by all other working-class and even — under favourable circumstances — bourgeois parties and groups, for without it the proletarian party and the proletarian democracy both die and with them die the prospects for socialism.

CRITICAL DEFENCE

If we are to defend Bolshevism — and defend we must — we cannot do it as idolators. That is the lesson of Shachtman's polemic. There was a dynamic context that drove the greatest revolutionary tacticians since Spartacus to lead the slaves of capitalism from the depths of slaughter and oppression to the heights of a new order, a briefly lived experiment prior to the civil war among the freest and most democratic in history.

And there was also a reactive context of betrayal from within and from without by the paladins of reformist socialism that sought a reconciliation with capitalism on better terms. In the end, "the Russian workers lost power, because the workers of the other countries failed to take power." That is, the Stalinist counterrevolution has to be explained first and foremost by socio-economic events.

The Bolsheviks themselves — Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin — nevertheless "took the theoretical lead," in Hal Draper's words, "in gutting socialism of its organic enrootment in the mass of the people" paving the "juridical" framework for the counter-revolution in class power.

In Defence of Bolshevism

Max Shachtman



£12 including UK postage
www.workersliberty.org/idob



Climate: the kids are coming

By Alan Simpson

Occasionally, just occasionally, there are weeks full of silver linings. The one that saw Britain's first nationwide schools "climate" strikes was definitely one of them.

When Greta Thunberg began her lone climate protest outside the Swedish Parliament last August she was not to know that, within 6 months there would be 70,000 pupils a week, across 270 towns and cities worldwide, who would be joining her. Their message was simple: "Wake up! There's a climate emergency."

If you had followed the week's debates in Britain's Parliament you wouldn't have guessed.

Politicians had been given plenty of notice that pupils would be walking out of lessons, demanding recognition of the looming climate crisis. But barely a mention of the climate protests emerged within Westminster.

It didn't seem to matter whether Rome (or California, or South Australia) was burning, Brexit continued to fill the parliamentary corridors: 52% of voters have become "a binding obligation", whereas 98% of climate scientists remain a matter of opinion.

No wonder the kids are saying politicians are unfit to lead ... because we aren't. And as Thunberg bravely told world leaders: "When adults behave like children, children must step up and behave like adults".

What is both humbling and inspiring is that this generation grasps that, in a crisis, it is the fundamentals that matter, not the details. As I stepped out of my daughter's secondary school with her that morning, I realised that those joining her will still be in their 20's when the first "12 year" milestone of climate physics is reached. This will be when the shit hits the fan.

If we haven't cut current global CO2 emissions in half by then, all bets are off for what follows. This is the climate emergency that our kids are challenging us, first to acknowledge and then to act upon.

On current form, by the end of that decade, Davos will have built a Trump wall around itself, COP meetings will still be copping out, and the British parliament will still be debating Brexit. What passes for politics has become completely disconnected from the climate emergency. A moment that calls out for systems change is lucky to get more than loose change.

Look back across the last year and ask

yourself when Labour and the Conservatives went head-to-head over the climate emergency. When did it dominate Prime Ministers Question Time? When did it even figure? No wonder the kids are losing patience.

It has been left to Extinction Rebellion, and now school children, to lead the way.

Dozens of local authorities are trying to do their bit — passing local "Climate Emergency" resolutions, despite lacking the powers to follow them through.

If localities have any sense they will start to bring the kids into the conversation. Acknowledging a "Climate Emergency" is the starting point.

Don't expect young people to arrive with the answers. It is enough that they bring the questions. It is what follows that will turn everything upside down.

As things stand, no political party has grasped the scale of what this involves.

Eco-cide not class-divides

Rosa Luxemburg predicted that in this century we would face a choice between socialism and barbarism. Even she didn't see that it would be eco-cide rather than class divides that would drive the choice. Capitalism has been consuming itself (and us) to death.

Growth theories — based around ever expanding production, consumption and waste — will run out of species, soil, minerals, air and space to support them. Student placards calling for "system change, not climate change" nail the issue in one.

What the kids grasp — and most of the Left still don't — is that the "system change" needed involves a race into "circular economics". It is the only route into radical CO2 cuts, environmental security and a more inclusive politics.

Out of the conversations driven by our children will step tomorrow's Giants; those who will abandon a current politics that lives in thrall of growth delusions, carbon intensive production, and limitless consumption. For it is today's politics that sucks.

Just before the students took to the streets, I had a delicious sample of what tomorrow's alternatives might involve. Staff from the office of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) were in the UK to share some of the lessons of how their Green New Deal (GND) is shaking American politics to its core. It is anything but incrementalist.

The "Deal" builds upon the original Roosevelt plan which grabbed the US economy

by the scruff of the neck, dumped the Gold Standard (ruling out austerity politics) and turned huge sectors of industry into producing completely different goods.

Like Roosevelt, today's Green New Dealers are offering unlimited reconstruction finance. But this time round, what AOC and the Justice Democrats team insist is that everything must be "Green".

At its core, their campaign begins not by arguing about the voting age, but about how you get rid of crap politicians? Justice Democrats have been targeting the most conservative (corporately compliant) Democrats, and planning to replace them; actively promoting more radical voices who know how little time climate physics actually gives us.

Some Democrat incumbents are trying to reposition themselves as GND supporters. But acceptance comes with a price. No one receiving support from fossil fuel industries, commodity speculators, or environmentally destructive industries gets to join the GND. Corporate donations must be returned, sponsorships declined. No one is going to avoid the climate crisis without breaking their dependency on its causes.

Cutting carbon emissions by 50% within a decade requires upheavals, including immediate shifts in public subsidies from dirty to clean, and throwing support into "smart" systems that consume less rather than more. We must cut our carbon footprint of consumption.

Throw-away cultures, from clothing to plastics, must themselves be thrown away. Localised food and product markets will take precedence over globalised ones. We must tax-favour repair, reuse and recycling over primary production; constructing markets that put back into eco-systems far more than they take out.

We don't (yet) have to panic but we do have to disrupt and transform. This is what young people are shouting into our ears. It is what the Green New Deal is trying to turn from a negative to a positive.

At its core, tomorrow's Green New Deal will have to break the corporate grip on global economics. This is the space in which locality, democracy and accountability will meet climate security. And it is here that Labour faces its most difficult dilemmas.

Labour's Leaders — Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Rebecca Long-Bailey — grasp how little time we have. Those surrounding them may not. The Labour Leadership know that their "3 Ds" —

decarbonisation, decentralisation and democratisation — holds the key to taking the public with them. But around the Leaders, delay and dither hold greater sway.

Shadow Ministers, wanting to push more radical change, have found their ideas buried in corridor caution. References to a climate emergency get discouraged. Radical disengagement from fossil fuels never quite makes the shift from long term promises to short term guarantees.

Maybe Rebecca Long-Bailey's launch of Labour's "Green Transformation" conversation will change all that. Maybe it will open up the spaces that student "climate strikers" are calling for. Maybe it will push "system change" to the front of the political agenda. At the moment, the jury is still out.

Long before last year's Labour conference, Shadow Minister Alan Whitehead came up with a brilliant idea. Why not produce a book on "Local Energy" to map out options for radical change? Independent contributors were invited to outline plans of how Labour might race into this space. It was to form a backcloth to Jeremy Corbyn's "400,000 Green jobs" conference speech.

In the event, the book was ready but the politics was not. Caught up in corridor confusions between old-style nationalisation and radical decentralisation, the book was left to tread water.

After adding a "balancing" chapter on nationalisation, the book is ready to run again. The trouble is that those wedded to yesterday's economics would still prefer Labour to avoid addressing the system change that our kids (and the planet) demand.

In existential terms, this is not a negotiation, it is a choice. Labour will have to embrace wholesale change or miss the last opportunity to do so. Thunberg didn't mince her words in telling politicians they were "shitting on her future". If Labour ducks this one we should not complain when our kids denounce us in similar terms.

• Alan Simpson was Labour MP for Notting-ham South from 1992 to 2010, and is now an adviser on environmental policy to John McDonnell

The next international climate school walk-out is set for 15 March. Expect to see walk-outs in a couple of dozen countries, and many places across the UK

Richard Wright and Stalinism

By Dan Katz

Richard Wright, the American author of the novels *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, was born on a plantation in Roxie, near Natchez, Mississippi in 1908. He died of a heart attack in Paris, in 1960, aged 52.

For a while, especially in the early 1940s, he was an enormously prominent and important left-wing author. *Native Son* was a ground-breaking book with a young Black hoodlum, Bigger Thomas, as its anti-hero.

It was criticised by some activists at the time for not presenting a positive view of Black people. Indeed, *Native Son* is a gruelling read. Wright wanted to present Thomas, who murders two women, as a young man almost entirely imprisoned by his brutal environment.

Black Boy, however, is also interesting and easier, detailing Wright's own personal battle against hunger, backwardness and Jim Crow terror in towns along the Mississippi. *Black Boy* is an exploration of the limits placed on African-Americans by the extraordinarily vicious regime in the American South in the first decades of the twentieth century. *Black Boy* must have been shocking to whites, revealing the level of hatred many Black people felt for them; the book was banned in Mississippi.

Wright's grandparents were all born into slavery and were freed during the US Civil War. Both his grandfathers ended the war fighting for the Union, against the Confederacy. Wright's father, Nathan, abandoned the family, leaving them in destitution, when Richard was six years old. Wright only met his father again when he travelled back through Natchez on his way from Mexico to New York in June 1940.

Nathan Wright and his brothers were sharecroppers in the heart of the segregated lynch-law Southern states. Nathan Wright, barely literate, had attempted to move to the city, but had failed and reverted to what he knew, scratching a living from the land. The condition of Black people in Natchez dismayed Richard Wright – they were among the most downtrodden, poorest, badly educated and unhealthiest people in the US.

In 1910, two years after Wright's birth, the US census revealed that there were 9,828,000 Black people in the US, 10.7% of the total population. 89% lived in the South and only



Richard Wright

25% lived in cities. The average life expectancy of a Black man was 34 years, and women 38 years. In most of the Southern states spending on white school students was at least twice that spent on Black children.

Richard Wright had lived in the South until 1927 when he escaped to the Black area of Chicago, the South Side. Wright's education in segregated schools had been interrupted, and then curtailed at the age of 16; he had had only four years full of schooling. His home life had been dominated by extreme poverty and his puritanically religious and narrow-minded extended family.

Wright described the move from the rural South to Chicago as the most difficult step of his life; the buildings were towering and the traffic and noise were alarming. He and his disabled mother had joined the Great Migration of millions of Black Americans who moved from the South to the northern industrial towns between the First and Second World Wars. Although some overt signs of discrimination had gone – there were no signs in Chicago telling “White” and “Coloured” rail travellers which ticket windows and carriages to use – there were still staggering degrees of discrimination.

COMMUNIST PARTY WRITERS

In Chicago Richard Wright found his way to the John Reed Club, a Communist Party front for writers and artists where for the first time he met white people who were anti-racist. Manipulated by the Communists (by then Stalinists), he became the Club's leader.

Richard Wright's relationship with the Communist Party is – apparently – described in a twenty page essay which is contained in the book *The God That Failed* (1950). This essay was, in fact, originally part of *Black Boy*, edited out before publication.

This text suggests Wright joined the American CP in 1933 and left in 1936. In fact Wright only finally broke with the CP in 1942, and publicly left later than that.

A measure of the degeneracy of the Communist Party's politics is described by Wright in *The God That Failed*: a man called Young had joined the John Reed Club and had quickly begun to help run it. Young then launched a vitriolic campaign against another member, badly disrupting the Club. It turned out that Young had escaped from a mental hospital where he was undergoing treatment.

Wright commented, “What kind of club did we run that a lunatic could step in and help run it? Were we all so mad that we could not detect a madman when we saw one?”

Wright also reports on the political trial of an insufficiently-loyal Black activist – a mini-Show Trial – at a CP meeting; demagogic accusations of Trotskyism were levelled against

him when he became argumentative or oppositional. Wright says he had not read Trotsky, and his writing is notable for what he doesn't discuss – the Nazis coming to power in Germany, the mass strikes in the US, the terror in the USSR or the Spanish civil war. He seems to have had little interest in these issues. Wright's overwhelming concern was US racism.

In 1937 Wright was the Harlem correspondent for the Party's *Daily Worker* newspaper, producing scores of articles about the area where the CP had nearly 1,000 members. At this time Wright became good friends with the African-American writer Ralph Ellison, later the author of the very important novel *Invisible Man* (1952). Ellison was probably, at this time, also a CP member, like very many of Wright's friends and acquaintances.

Following the third of Stalin's Moscow Show Trials in March 1938, after which the 21 defendants, including Christian Rakovsky and Nikolai Bukarin – all accused of fantastical nonsense – were executed, one hundred US authors, including Wright, published an Open Letter defending Stalin and the Show Trial.

In August 1939 the USSR signed a pact with Nazi Germany. Stalin and Hitler then overran and split Poland. Later, in November, the Soviet Union attacked Finland. The events caused mass resignations from the Communist Party. Wright, however, denounced those who were “jumping off the Communist train”. In an interview in the *Sunday Worker* in February 1940 Wright described the Nazi-Soviet pact as “a great step toward peace.”

Richard Wright's breakthrough took place in early 1940 when *Native Son* was promoted by the Book-of-the-Month Club, a vast mail order business based in New York. 170,000 copies were printed and within a few days the book was reprinted. After three weeks 215,000 copies had been sold and the novel was still selling at the rate of 2000 copies per day. Wright became the first best-selling Black American writer.

BETRAYAL OF BLACK AMERICANS

Wright broke from the Communist Party because of the betrayal of Black Americans when the Stalinists turned to support the US war after Hitler's attack on the USSR in June 1941 and the Nazi declaration of war against the US in December 1941.

The Communist Party dropped its agitation against racism and segregation, and Wright did not want to fight “for democracy” as part of a Jim Crow, segregated army.

At various times Wright received notices calling him up to the army. He worked hard to prevent himself being drafted, even calling on support from the President's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt. At one point, in 1944, he wrote to the Brooklyn Draft Board, “The segregated units and quarters for Negroes in the armed forces violate my instincts and feelings to the degree that I feel that to serve in our armed forces is to fight in defence of such a system and to give my approval to it. And it is to make known my emphatic rejection to that that I make this statement.”

The FBI, who had been watching Wright, noted that he had broken with the Communist Party because it was insufficiently militant on the question of Black rights. He remained on their Security Index. Wright broke openly with the Party in 1945 with a



A CP presidential poster from the early '30s, when they prioritised fighting racism. That changed in 1941.

two part article; *I Tried to be a Communist*, printed in *Atlantic Monthly*.

Black Boy was originally called *American Hunger* and was written in seven months, being completed at the end of 1943. The first 300 pages, called *Southern Night*, became *Black Boy*; the final 150 pages, titled *The Horror and the Glory*, dealt with the racism Wright experienced in Chicago, and included a denunciation of the Communist Party.

Wright agreed to remove the final long section on Chicago in order to be accepted again by the Book-of-the-Month Club. According to Wright's biographer, Hazel Rowley, the original ending to *Southern Night* was: “This was the terror from which I fled,” and the editors exerted pressure on Wright to acknowledge the positive actions of white liberals and to end on a more positive note.

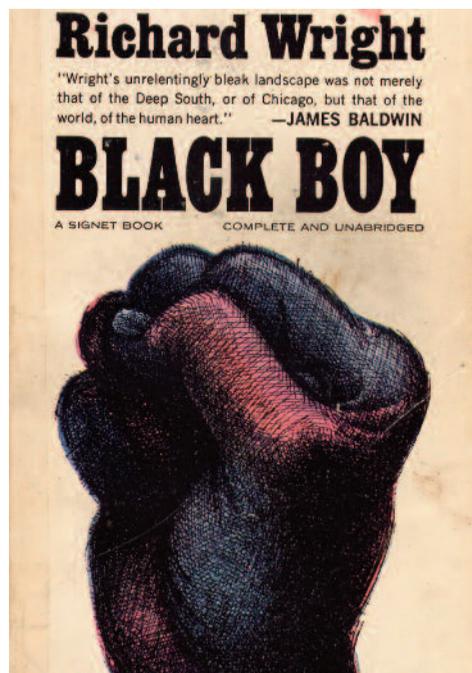
Wright did all he could to resist this pressure, writing, “I do not think the Negroes will be treated any better in this country until whites themselves realise that there is something dead wrong with the American way of life.”

Black Boy became a Book-of-the-Month Club best seller in March 1945. It sold twice as well as *Native Son* and by the end of the year half a million copies were sold. The book was published in Europe and won awards in France where Wright, and his white, Jewish, ex-Communist wife Ellen and first child moved in 1946. From 1946 Wright would spend most of his time in France. He lived there so that the continual grind of US racism did not dominate his life.

Black Boy made so much money that Wright and his family were able to live on the proceeds for years. He took \$6000 per year from the *Black Boy* account and still had \$25,000 left in 1951.

Wright never again produced a book as good as either *Native Son* or *Black Boy*, but those two novels helped to break Black writers into the US mainstream. As he says in *Black Boy* (about the US critic H L Mencken whom he first read, secretly, in Mississippi), “This man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as weapons... maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon.”

And that is what Richard Wright did. He used words as weapons against white US racism.



Labour's antisemitism crisis: an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn



Dear comrade Corbyn,

How has the crisis that grips the new, new Labour Party on antisemitism come about? How has it come to be the major scandal it is now?

Yes, the charge of antisemitism is now a weapon of the Tories, the Labour right, and the media against the Labour Party. The question that matters, though, is: are they right about it? Right about the essentials, not this or that incident or extrapolation?

If the charge is true, than it overshadows everything else. Antisemitism is not just a little political blemish. It poisons and warps and rots the mind, the integrity, the spirit and the humanity of everything it touches.

It puts those who let themselves be fouled by it in the same political and moral sphere — in however small a role — with those who perpetrated the greatest crime of the 20th century.

It is true, I believe, that the eight Labour MPs who have left the party over antisemitism and the Party's refusal to be firmly anti-Brexit are, in general politics, all Blair-Brownites.

Nobody who watched and listened to Luciana Berger's speech explaining why she left the Labour Party will doubt the sincerity of her account of the antisemitism that has driven her and the others, or most of them, out of the Party.

The alarm that has gripped the Jewish community about antisemitism in the Labour Party and the prospect of a government led by you and your close collaborators is real. It is what it seems to be, and not just a political posture to damage the Labour Party.

There is a long tradition in much of the Jewish community of support and involvement with the Labour Party. To the leaders of the Jewish community, and many Jews, including Jewish members or recent ex-members of the Labour Party, the "left" in the Party, or some of it, must appear as possible future anti-Jewish pogromists, as has much of the would-be "revolutionary" left for a long time now.

I am not jumping on anyone's bandwagon in saying this. *Solidarity* and its predecessor *Socialist Organiser* — in which you wrote frequently in *Socialist Organiser's* early years — have campaigned against antisemitism on the left for four decades and more. We have published pamphlets about it and recently dealt with it in books.

Where has the crisis come from? From five decades of political and moral ferment on the ostensibly "Trotskyist" left in which absolute hostility to Israel, to *any* Israel, has slowly built up in the political atmosphere like poisonous smog.

During the Blair-Brown epoch, that "revolutionary" left was excluded and self-excluded from the Labour Party. The "Corbyn surge" that recreated a mass membership almost overnight pulled into the new, new Labour Party a lot of people educated on the Middle East question in the kitsch left. With them they brought their political baggage, and a trolling and bullying culture. On a certain level, the Corbyn surge was also an anti-semitic purge.

Some of them were involved in the 1970s and 80s in campaigning in the National Union of Students and on campuses against the right of Jewish student societies to exist. We have recently seen a new case of that, the first for decades, at Essex University (see page 2).

There is, of course, an "objective" basis for all this in the festering Middle East conflict. There is an element of supporting the Palestinians, championing their rights which Israel often tramples on, smothered in it, somewhere.

But the activists of "left" antisemitism go way beyond that necessary support for the Palestinians.

Milk gone sour then "thickens" and changes its consistency. The long-existing absolute-anti-Zionist antisemitism dominant on the pseudo-revolutionary left has, on entry to the new, new Labour Party, on contact with it, thickened into something more virulent and poisonous.

There is joy and satisfaction in self-righteous hatred, a nasty mix of aggression and self-love. "Zionist"-baiting can become an agreeable activity. Antisemites are always perverted moralists.

One measure of the absolute-anti-Zionist antisemites is that they know that the Arab and Islamic states' anti-Israel propaganda involves wholesale dissemination of old Nazi antisemitism, unrecycled and recycled, but they are not troubled by it and do not treat it as what it is: a mirror in which to look at themselves.

TWO STATES

The absolute anti-Zionists typically do not support the Palestine Liberation Organisation policy (since 1988) for a two-states settlement, an independent Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel.

They are adamantly for a one-state solution, for an Arab and Islamic state incorporating the population of 1948-67 Israel, or those of the population whom it does not kill or drive out in conquering them.

The absolute anti-Zionists have not noticed that the one-state solution actually on offer is one now favoured by some of the Israeli right — a Jewish-Hebrew state ruling all pre-1948 Palestine, with a great Arab minority and for certain a long future of bitter conflict.

The absolute anti-Zionists typically support and advocate Arab and Islamic war on Israel. With placards, banners, slogans, and platform speakers, this alleged left has turned "peace" demonstrations into demonstrations for war on Israel by the Arab and Islamic states.

They have taken over the historical demonisation of Zionism created and spread by the Stalinist movement in Stalin's last four or five years, up to 1953. That is where all the nonsense, in Lenni Brenner's books for instance, about Zionist-Nazi affinity and alliance come from.

For some, such as your close comrades in arms of the *Morning Star*, this is natural enough. Called the *Daily Worker* in that period, it spread the absolute-anti-Zionist anti-semitic poison spewing out from Russia and Russia's satellites, where antisemitic show trials were held in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

In the mid-50s the Communist Party went through a period of self-criticism. They shed those attitudes for a long time. They have re-



gressed. In June 2018 a writer in the *Morning Star* proclaimed: "No amount of protestations about the symptoms of rising antisemitism or anti-Israel sentiment in Britain and elsewhere will end the problem until its root cause — Israel's criminal behaviour — is dealt with"...

An outcry led the *Morning Star* to formally retract that too explicit and candid statement of what, self-righteously, they really believe.

Your record shows that you are a man who has a principled commitment to a general socialism, and is freed of the occupational hazard of MPs, careerism, venal self-serving, and political scoundrelism in general.

But you, comrade Corbyn, have to my knowledge never drawn a political line between your present self and the antisemitism-fomenting publication for which you wrote a regular column until elected Labour Party leader.

I was agreeably surprised, after your 2015 election as Labour Party leader, when someone told me you were for a two-states settlement. I had seen you sharing platforms at gatherings with virulent absolute anti-Zionists such as George Galloway.

Many who pay lip-service to "two states" combine it with absolute anti-Zionist commentaries that imply not "two states" but the rejection of any sort of Israel. You?

Comrade Corbyn, a two-states program for the Middle East cuts against the prevailing absolute anti-Zionism, and against the demonisation of the living "Zionists" in Israel.

The absolute anti-Zionists are racists. That is a word that has lost much of its meaning and become the equivalent of a swear-word, expressing detestation and moral repugnance. It serves to obliterate all distinctions and gradations.

Here it is precise, literal. The absolute anti-Zionists are "gene-ists". They have a political theory based on genetics.

Their chief demand is a "right of return", meaning an organised movement to pre-1967 Israel of six million people designated as Palestinian refugees.

Only a small fraction of those six million are refugees. The rest are descendants of refugees.

Yet the six million descendants of refugees are deemed to have a right to displace six and a half million Jews in the territory where their parents, grandparents, and maybe great-grandparents have lived and built an advanced society that has little in common now with the rudimentary Israeli or Palestinian society of seven decades ago.

This "right of return" implies, and is meant to imply, the displacement of the Jews of Israel. By what standards do the descendants of the people who lived in that territory decades ago have the right to do that.

There is no possible answer other than that they have the right genes. They are genetic descendants of the refugees of 1948 or after.

The self-righteous absolute anti-Zionist hysteria, denouncing the very existence of Israel as "racist", blunder onto the territory of pure race-theory! Some of the most virulent "anti-Zionists" would translate this also into religious terms: Islam has precedence over Judaism.

They also, though I don't want to stretch what I am saying here, implicitly have a "racist" definition of those whom they want to see conquered and disarmed.

Blaming only Israel for the plight of the Palestinian descendants of refugees is also prejudiced nonsense. The Palestinians who fled or were driven out in 1948 did so during a war in which Arab states, most still British-dominated, some still with British officers in important positions in the invading armies, attacked the territory allocated to the Jews by the United Nations 1947 partition plan. The Egyptian forces, at least, moved under the slogan, "Drive the Jews into the sea".

REFUGEES

About 750,000 Arabs were refugees at the end. Perhaps 600,000 Jews were driven out of Arab states, their property confiscated, then or in the next decades.

Israel absorbed those Jews. In 1945, 12 or 13 million Germans were driven out of areas of Eastern Europe where German communities had lived for hundred of years, into an economically ruined and starving Germany which nevertheless absorbed them. Perhaps half a million died of hardship or were murdered during that process.

That many Arab refugees remained refugees for decades was the result of deliberate policy by Arab governments not to let them assimilate, become a general part of the population, or even work. In Jordan (1970) and Lebanon (1983), Arabs massacred Palestinian Arab refugees.

It is on gross historical misrepresentations such as on this question that much of the hysteria against Israel which is now a major factor in the life of the Labour Party was built over decades. Current conflicts are seen in the distorting light of this absolute anti-Zionist pseudo-history.

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

continued from page 9

The core and root of the main contemporary antisemitism is there in the falsified history and in the conclusion it leads to — that Israel is an illegitimate nation, that its state has no right to exist, and that Arab and Islamic states that want to put it out of existence should be supported.

Israel now acts from a position of strength vis-a-vis the Palestinians. There is a lot to criticise and condemn in Israeli policy towards the Palestinians — centrally, Israel's de facto opposition to a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

But at root there is a conflict of right against right here, to which the solution should be not the destruction of Israel but "equalising up" by way of the Palestinians getting their own state.

The Jewish nation that won independence in 1948 was built up around Jews indigenous to the area. There was already a Jewish majority in Jerusalem before the migration of Jews from Europe in the 20th century. The Jewish population was augmented by refugees from Polish antisemitism in the 20th century; by refugees from Nazism in the 1930s; and by Jews in

the 1940s fleeing for the lives (and pitilessly refused entry to Palestine during the war and for three years after by the British overlords, under pressure of the Arab world).

What is needed in the Labour Party is a drive to educate the party and politically beat down the ideologues of an absolute anti-Zionism that becomes barely distinguishable from antisemitism. That is what a responsible leadership should do.

The *Morning Star* which incites the antisemites (and in a moment of soon-retracted candour justified antisemitism as a proper response to what Israel does) is in theory for two states, but shares and propagandises for all the judgements that leads the raucous antisemites in the party to deny Israel the right to exist. So, it appears, do you.

Here the question is a variant of an old one: who is to educate the educators.

As well as an educational drive in the party on this question — which includes a candid discussion of the politics of the leadership — the party should declare advocacy of the destruction of Israel, by Arab or Islamic states or whomever, incompatible with membership of the Labour Party.

Encoded versions of that policy — via "right of return" for example — should not be tolerated in the labour movement.

Probably there is very wide acceptance that Holocaust deniers should not be in the Labour Party. Among the absolute anti-Zionists there is a direct descendant of that — Holocaust mitigation, the idea that the Holocaust happened but it should be treated as if it is of no consequence in history, especially for understanding how Israel came into existence.

On one level, a middle-aged woman saying that there have been many "Holocausts" might just be a piece of heroic ignorance or the result of an epochally thick skin. In fact, even if it comes from a misdirected urge to side with the Palestinians, it is part of Holocaust mitigation.

But things like that do not lend themselves to political warfare measures. Specific criticisms of Israel become lethal and should be impermissible *only* when they are used (as they too often are) to justify the conclusion that therefore Israel should not exist and that "we" should side with Arab and Islamic states that try to put it out of existence.

The Labour Party is the party of the broad labour movement, and therefore the concern of everyone who wishes the party well. The absolute anti-Zionist "left" are carriers of a lethal poison in the labour movement.

For the same reason, people should not leave the Labour Party over antisemitism, and those who have left in disgust at antisemitism should rejoin.

Fight the antisemites, don't abandon the party to them.

Sean Matgamna



Labour revolt in Birmingham

By Jim Denham

Back bench Labour councillors in Birmingham have condemned their own leaders in a letter demanding that the council leaders "step back" from confrontation with two unions.

The protesting councillors include several senior figures such as former council leader Albert Bore.

The letter adds to pressure on present council leader Ian Ward and his deputy Brigid Jones. Three days previously the Regional Labour Party Board voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion calling for Labour's National Exec-

utive to investigate their conduct of the council leaders' continuing disputes with Unite and Unison.

Striking refuse workers (members of Unite) are facing legal action by the Labour authority while Unison home care workers are also in dispute over cuts in hours and pay.

The last straw for many Labour councillors came in December when the Unison home care workers tried to deliver a card to Ward and were locked out of the Council House. The unedifying spectacle of low-paid women trade unionists being kept out of the Council's HQ was the final straw for many Labour councillors.

A letter signed by 23 Labour councillors asked the leadership to drop legal action against Unite and to end the 15-month dispute with the care workers.

The Birmingham council leadership claims Unite's action is illegal and plans to go to the High Court, using the Tory anti-union legislation to stop the strike.

The Labour group's chief whip, councillor Kerry Jenkins, has resigned, saying she "cannot, in good conscience, whip for policies and decisions that are anti-trade-union policies, and I will not support them". Labour's bins chief Majid Mahmood had already resigned

over the council's anti-union stance.

More than 300 refuse workers picketed at four depot sites on 19 February in what Unite's Howard Beckett described as "a last resort" after six weeks of talks collapsed.

They struck on 22 February against payments that were made to members of the GMB who did not take part in the 2017 strike.

It is clear that the present council leadership has no idea of how collective bargaining works, no understanding of basic trade unionism and no grasp of Labour's links with the trade union movement.

Officials are never wrong?

By Ann Field

“We, the lay members of PULS, stand in solidarity with our left officers and organisers. We know they will always do the right thing.”

So says a recent open letter recently from “Progressive United Left Scotland” (PULS), a faction in Unite the Union launched in 2016 because of the supposed demise of the existing United Left Scotland (ULS).

PULS purports to be an organisation committed to a lay-membered trade union. But if the bureaucrats are always right, who needs the rank-and-file?

Although signed off by the PULS chair, the letter is in the characteristic style of Mark Lyon, who set up PULS. Lyon is a Unite full-timer. 36 of the 39 Unite full-timers in Scotland are members of PULS, plus all employees of Unite’s Organising Department in Scotland.

PULS’s main effort has been focussed on ousting ULS activists from their positions on Unite’s constitutional committees, shutting down branches in which ULS activists are based, and barring them from holding office.

Its campaigning record reached a nadir with last year’s Glasgow City Council equal pay strike. Unite members were not balloted to take part in the strike. And there was no Unite presence on the biggest women’s protest in Glasgow since the Rent Strike of 1915.

The role of “rank-and-file” members of PULS is effectively that of nodding dogs. Its nominal office-bearers are little better than glove puppets for the bureaucracy.

Shamefully, the United Left national leadership has given PULS a free run from the outset. No matter how many decisions of PULS flew in the face of United Left requests, decisions and policies, members of the United Left leadership were always on hand to excuse their actions.

In mid-February a Great Re-Unification Meeting between PULS and the ULS was to have taken place, brokered by the United Left leadership. PULS and the ULS both agreed to the meeting. ULS suggested that Unite full-timers should not have a vote at the meeting.

A decision on that was to have been taken at a meeting of the United Left National Co-ordinators’ Committee. The mere fact that the ULS suggestion was to be discussed was seized on by PULS as a pretext for pulling out of the Great Re-Unification Meeting.

SINCE 2016

The PULS letter marked the latest and, hopefully, final chapter in the saga which has been underway since the summer of 2016.

But that is unlikely to be the case.

The creation and existence of PULS is inseparable from the question of The Succession – building a machine to deliver the vote for the bureaucratic-“left” candidate in the next Unite General Secretary election.

The ULS was too off-message to be relied upon to turn out the vote for McCluskey’s choice of heir (probably Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner). A bloc under the thumb of full-timers, on the other

hand, fits the bill.

At a national level the United Left has also been laying the groundwork for The Succession.

At the moment a candidate needs 50 branch nominations to make it onto the ballot paper in a General Secretary election.

But a model rule-change motion being circulated by the United Left for this year’s Unite Rules Conference proposes that a candidate will need 5% of the total number of Unite branches – amounting to around a hundred.

Another model rule-change motion proposes that where workplaces have a branch of their own, they can submit either a workplace nomination (like any other workplace where Unite is recognised) or a workplace-branch nomination (like any other Unite branch), but not both.

Both these proposed rule changes are aimed at keeping rank-and-file candidates off the ballot paper. In the 2017 election, for example, Ian Allinson was able to scrape onto the ballot paper with just over 50 nominations.

That wasn’t meant to happen. And the proposed rule changes will make sure that it won’t happen again. General Secretary elections will end up as a “choice” between different bureaucrats, with the size and effectiveness of their machine counting for more than their politics and election platform.

This is the exact opposite of what a real rank-and-file campaign should be advocating. Perhaps PULS and the national leadership of the United Left are not that far apart after all?

Guards’ jobs: nail down the deal!

From Off The Rails

The breakthrough in the big rail-workers’ dispute to save train guards’ jobs is a cause for celebration, but some caution must also be exercised.

No formal settlement has yet been reached, and the train drivers’ Aslef did sell out RMT members as well as its own members in the big driver-only operation (DOO) dispute with GTR Southern in 2016/17.

Aslef reps on the Northern Company Council have been acting to aid the company in pushing forward its DOO agenda.

In June last year, they deliberately bailed the company out from having the franchise confiscated by agreeing to sanction voluntary overtime for drivers, in return for a £1,000 cash payment to each driver.

They were roundly lambasted by their members soon after, when it

was discovered that they had mistakenly failed to check the wording of the agreement. Although overtime rates increased for longer-serving drivers, for newly qualified drivers they were actually lower under the new agreement than they had been the last time there was a rest-day working agreement in place.

Despite promising to rectify their mistake, they have allowed rest day working to continue for six months under this shoddy agreement, and recently recommended a further three-month extension.

It recently emerged that these reps have negotiated extra release from driving duty for themselves (but not local level reps), so that even if a meeting they were due to attend is cancelled, they are still given extra “staff side” time.

They recently recommended the union accept a training agreement for new rolling stock that includes

drivers being expected at certain times to check CCTV screens showing feeds from inside the train – something that a driver has absolutely no reason to do when operating a service that is also staffed by a guard.

Commendably, the Aslef Executive Committee refused to accept that agreement – presumably because they realised that the Company Council reps have gone rogue and are now willing to do more or less anything the employer wants them to do in return for the vaguest promises of future improvements to drivers’ salaries or terms and conditions.

So there is a clear and present danger to this hard-won victory. RMT must not allow secret talks between Aslef and the company.

They should fight to bring Aslef into joint talks.



Three top motions for NEU

By David Pendleton

Of the 18 sections into which the agenda for the conference of the National Education Union (NEU) is divided into, three have motions written by Workers’ Liberty members prioritised at the top.

Those three motions signpost the direction we want for the union.

The conference, the first one for the newly-merged NEU, is in Liverpool on 14-18 April. NEU, organising 450,000 workers in schools, is now the fourth largest trade union in the UK.

The first of our three prioritised motions is for the union organis-

ing and representing support workers. It seeks to commit the union to gaining negotiating rights for support workers and to recruit support staff.

The second commits the union to a vocal and active campaign to abolish all the anti-union laws, including by pressure on the Labour leadership.

The third demands a ballot of primary school members to organise a boycott of all high-stakes summative testing in primary schools. To end that testing would have a huge positive effect on the curriculum, work-loads, and the way schools treat children.

We will be continuing the fight up to, in, and after the conference in Liverpool.

Deliveroo anger grows

By Zack, Bristol Courier

On Saturday 23 February, while working as a Deliveroo meal courier, I came across the scene of an appalling crash between one of my colleagues and a car, a few minutes after it had happened.

The Deliveroo courier’s motorbike looked pretty smashed up, and the rider was lying at least five metres further down the road, possibly with broken legs and a head injury.

There were many people helping, and the ambulance arrived soon, so I didn’t stick around long and don’t know the eventual outcome. I think everyone probably lived.

The crash really brought home how vulnerable we, as couriers, can be. It brought back my anger with Deliveroo, even stronger.

I can’t comment on whose, if anyone’s, “fault” the crash was. However, I know that Deliveroo’s pay structure, and low pay in general, pushes us towards dangerous riding.

Deliveroo bosses earn much more than us, with stable incomes, and don’t face many of the risks that they daily push us into.

Many other risks are transferred to us besides the risk of road accidents. I don’t think that motorcyclist is going to be riding for weeks or longer – and his scooter looked likely written off. Under pressure, Deliveroo offer free rider insurance, which is good, and *should* partially

compensate the courier for injuries and pay lost.

However, the amount they offer is seriously insufficient, and the rider will be not be paid by Deliveroo for the time they are out of action, losing money, and possibly feeling forced to start working again before medically advisable.

The very high cost of a new or seriously repaired scooter adds an additional burden to someone recovering from a horrific ordeal.

The struggle for better pay from Deliveroo continues, locally and nationally, following the five strikes we’ve had in Bristol in recent months, and some in other cities. In Bristol we’re doing a serious organising drive, aiming to recruit large numbers to the IWGB union, and better “map” the situation with couriers in Bristol.

We’re planning another large meeting in a couple of weeks, bringing more couriers into planning the next series of strikes. In the meantime we will be discussing other protests, producing more bulletins, meeting the mayor about motorcycle parking bays, and more.

Nationally, couriers are getting more organised in many places, with strikes planned sooner in some.

The IWGB union is supporting and in dialogue with couriers in many of these places, and taking steps to increase national co-ordination.

• **Support our strike fund: bit.ly/deloo-s**



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Stop the Immigration Bill! Day of action 1 March

**MIGRANTS WELCOME
KILL THE IMMIGRATION BILL
DEFEND & EXTEND
FREE MOVEMENT**

Join the Day of Action // Friday 1 March

The Tories' Brexit Immigration Bill is set to exclude workers from the EU unless they have a job in advance at over £30,000, or come for a specific job only for twelve months.

In the second case, workers will be banned from reapplying until another year has passed. In other words, obstacles will be built to those migrant workers settling, integrating, and organising in the labour movement.

This Brexit Bill is an anti-migrant charter, and a cheap-labour, union-busting charter.

Despite all the conflicts over the Brexit deal, there is almost no Tory revolt over this Immigration Bill. And, last time it came to Parliament, on 28 January, the Labour front bench advocated abstaining on the Bill, until at the last minute labour-movement protest pushed it into voting against.

The Bill comes back to Parliament on 7 March. The Labour Campaign for Free Movement, with others, is organising a Day of Action against the Bill on Friday 1 March.

Some of the times and places for action:

- Windrush Sq, Brixton, south London, at 6pm.
 - Bonn Square, Oxford, at 2pm
 - Richard Hoggart Building, Goldsmiths University, London SE14 6NW, at 5:30pm (organised by Lewisham Deptford CLP)
 - Birmingham city centre, at 3pm
- Up-to-date details at:**
• bit.ly/1mar-ac



L4SE meets on 9 March

Labour for a Socialist Europe, the left anti-Brexit campaign within the Labour Party, has called a conference for 9 March.

The importance and the potential impact of the conference has been raised by Labour on 25 February coming out for a new public vote.

An opening plenary, with speakers including Julie Ward MEP and someone from Spoons Workers Against Brexit, will review and debate the position then, three days before Theresa May's promised date for a new vote on her formula.

Workshops will cover trade unions and Brexit; left coordination across Europe; building local groups; free movement and migrants' rights; and more.

A final plenary will debate motions and elect a new committee.

labourforasocialisteurope.org
11:30 to 5:30, Camden School for Girls, Sandall Road, London NW5 2DB.

Labour bloc for 23 March

Saturday 23 March will be the next big demonstration for a new public vote and against Brexit.

The Labour Party's switch to back a new referendum should make the demonstration bigger.

The switch guarantees nothing. With the Tories and rebel Labour MPs opposing the new public vote, it will not pass. Only pressure on the streets will tip the balance.

Labour for a Socialist Europe, with others, is organising a socialist labour-movement bloc on the demonstration. The assembly point will probably be in Old Park Lane, close to the main assembly in Park Lane, London, but distinct enough to make the bloc visible and accessible.

Book your transport, bring your banners!

Facebook page: bit.ly/l4se-23

Student left will meet 2-3 March

By Maisie Sanders

The Student Left Network's first national conference will take place on 2-3 March at Sheffield Hallam University.

Left wing students from campuses across the country are getting together to decide how we can link up and spread our campaigns, where we should take the student movement next, share experiences and skills and debate political ideas.

Workshops will include

- how to organise student-worker solidarity campaigns, led by University of the Arts London Justice for Workers' campaign
- Brexit and freedom of movement with Student Left Network's NUS Presidential candidate Justine Canady and Nottingham student and Labour activist Nadia Whitome
- International Students' rights with Manish Khatri, International Students' Officer for NUS Scotland and left candidate for NUS Vice

President Higher Education

- universities and mental health, led by Loughborough University activist group "Campus Care not Campus Cops".

The conference will discuss how to fight the cuts to liberation campaigns and the anti-democratic reforms in the National Union of Students (NUS), what a radical, fighting and democratic NUS would look like, and how we can build a movement to break the bureaucracy of NUS and student unions.

There will be a session with national committee elections, and plenty of time for planning and decision-making over the weekend.

The conference will debate motions on anti-Brexit campaigning, getting involved in the school strikes for climate, against antisemitism at the University of Essex, and linking up with UCU to join the "Free Our Unions" campaign initiated by the Clarion and Lambeth Union. bit.ly/SLN19.

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