



**& Workers' Liberty**

# **Solidarity**

**For social ownership of the banks and industry**

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## **Challenge Labour leader candidates:**

# **BUILD A DEMOCRATIC LABOUR MOVEMENT**



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# Bernie Sanders, dangerous Trotskyist?



## Sanders campaign

By Eric Lee

In the hunt for dirt on Bernie Sanders, hostile journalists have come up with very little. He had his honeymoon in the Soviet Union. He wrote some dodgy stuff in an alternative newspaper as a very young man. And that's pretty much it.

It's hard to find anything really juicy in Sanders' past because his politics have been fairly consistent from the time he joined the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) in the early 1960s until today. It was in the YPSL that he learned to be a democratic socialist and he remains a democratic socialist even now.

But one story has recently surfaced which is getting a bit of circulation and it concerns Sanders' years as a dangerous Trotskyist.

The story, reported to a wide audience on 17 January by the Daily Beast website (which is edited by Noah Shachtman, apparently a dis-

tant cousin of Max), runs like this:

In 1980, when the Democrats ran Jimmy Carter for re-election as president, Bernie Sanders did not sign up to support him. Instead, he agreed to lend his name to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and was an official Elector for the party for the state of Vermont.

I should explain that in the American electoral system, the president is chosen by the Electoral College. Every party that competes for the presidency therefore must name their Electors. In the unlikely event that the SWP had won a majority of votes in Vermont that year, Sanders would have been an elector.

(In the event, Vermont had 3 Electors and they all voted for Ronald Reagan. The SWP candidate placed 9th out of 9 candidates, receiving just 75 votes in the state.)

Why did Sanders agree to be an Elector for the SWP? Most likely because he was sympathetic to their ongoing effort to challenge the federal government's decades-long attempt to infiltrate and destroy their small party. Sanders said as much at one of the very few SWP

events he spoke at. "For the last 40 years," Sanders said, "the Socialist Workers Party has... been harassed, informed upon, had their offices broken into, had members of their party fired from their jobs, and have been treated with cold contempt by the United States government."

There is no evidence that Sanders joined the party or supported its platform.

Four decades later, some of the right-wing media have jumped on the story, with the Daily Beast challenging Sanders' claim that he has been a "democratic socialist" all his adult life. "He has not always been the democratic socialist he claims to be," they declared.

"Sanders could have supported the Socialist Party, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, or Social-Democrats USA, the three leading democratic socialist organizations existing in 1980. He rejected them. Instead he embraced a Marxist-Leninist communist sect that proclaimed its solidarity with Iran."

One wonders where they collected that list of "the three leading

democratic socialist organizations," though I imagine the source was Wikipedia. Anyone who was around at the time, or did actual research, would have been unlikely to include Social Democrats USA in the list, for example.

Sanders not only lent his name to the SWP, but apparently spoke at one (maybe two) of their meetings. In 1984, it is reported that he said "at a time when the Democratic and Republican parties are intellectually and spiritually bankrupt, it is imperative for radical voices to be heard which offer fundamental alternatives to capitalist ideology." That's hardly a ringing endorsement of the SWP's particular brand of Trotskyism and actually reflects the view that Sanders has held for his whole life.

Other websites followed up on the Daily Beast's "scoop", including the Washington Examiner which revealed that in 1979, members of the SWP's leadership circulated a document that called for "the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus," arguing such an act "is a necessary prerequisite for the conquest of state power by the

working class." Their crack researchers also discovered that the "archives of the SWP's official paper, *The Militant*, demonstrate a devotion to what its writers believe was the 'true' purpose of the Russian Revolution, before it was supposedly corrupted by Josef Stalin."

The paper even found "an expert on 20th century communism" who told them that "one of the SWP's fans was Lee Harvey Oswald, who not only wanted to overthrow our government but actually assassinated our president, John F. Kennedy."

So, there you go. Bernie Sanders has now been exposed as a secret Trotskyist, a defender of the Iranian Islamist regime, and linked somehow to the Kennedy assassination.

Incredibly, none of this has seemed to impact on the Vermont Senator's campaign. The latest polls show him winning both Iowa and New Hampshire. □

• Eric Lee is convenor of "London for Bernie", writing here in a personal capacity.

## Gas deals and Libya's civil war

By Pete Boggs

Turkish troops, along with Turkey-aligned Syrian rebels, have now been sent to Libya.

They have been sent to defend Fayezi al-Serraj's government in Tripoli in western Libya. Russian forces are also in Libya — supporting General Khalifa Haftar's rival administration based in Benghazi in the east.

There has been continuous civil strife throughout Libya since the overthrow of Colonel Gaddafi in 2011. The most recent episode began in April 2019, when General Haftar launched an attack on Tripoli.

Haftar has been a central figure in Libyan politics for over fifty years, taking part in Gaddafi's coup as a young officer, and then serving as a senior army officer until being fleeing Libya after a failed attempt to oust Gaddafi. He returned during the Libyan Revolution, and has since been a prominent warlord in post-Gaddafi Libya.

While not necessarily a proxy war, the conflict has become intertwined with the rivalry between different global and regional powers. The government is being bolstered by the Turkey-Qatar bloc, whereas Haftar's forces are supported by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Russia.

Neither a summit between multiple heads of state in Berlin nor a summit in Moscow jointly brokered by Turkey and Russia have achieved much towards a ceasefire in Libya. Despite supporting oppo-

site sides of the conflict, Erdoğan and Putin have worked closely together, both in dealing with Libya and more widely.

Gas pipelines have further complicated the international relations in and around the Mediterranean. Through an agreement with the Libyan government, Turkey has gained access to drilling rights in a much larger part of the eastern Mediterranean bordering Libya's sea territory.

In addition to this, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (a disputed state controlling the northern half of Cyprus, recognised solely by Turkey) has been carrying out gas exploration missions in surrounding ocean areas which have been claimed as exclusive by the Republic of Cyprus.

Both of these actions have been opposed by the Republic of Cyprus, Greece, and Israel. They have set up the "East Mediterranean Gas Forum" and begun plans for a pipeline running from Israel through Cyprus and Greece into Italy. Turkey meanwhile has finally opened the TurkStream gas pipeline, jointly set up with Russia, in order to eventually give Russian gas a pathway to Europe which avoids Ukraine.

Amidst the brewing tensions over natural gas and the power plays between different imperialist powers is the reality in Libya: the slave trade of immigrants, the rickety boats full of refugees collapsing in the sea, and what is now nearly a decade of all-out civil war across the country. □

## The first victims of Brexit

By Josh Lovell

The Tory Brexit Withdrawal Bill went through the House of Commons this week with a series of amendments — one ending the right to family reunion for unaccompanied child refugees within the EU.

The so-called "Dublin regulation" is set to be removed with a majority of 96, a damning sign of what is yet to come and the callousness of this latest Tory government.

But none of this should surprise us. Only days after their victory in December, prominent members of the far-right took to social media to announce that they had now joined the Conservative Party. Be they Tommy Robinson or Paul Golding (and whether their memberships are fake or not) this was a signal to the racists and bigots of the EDL and Britain First: here is your new home. Since Brexit, the political base of the Conservatives had already shifted to the right, and these



latest far-right endorsements take it radically further.

With climate change obliterating local environments, and conflicts tearing societies apart, the UNHCR estimate that there are currently over 70 million people displaced from their homes — the highest figure on record. In that number includes 13 million child refugees under the age of 18. Every single one of these people deserves the same rights to healthcare, nourish-

ment, secure housing and basic support as anyone else, and yet they are being systematically denied this.

In the rush and chaos of fleeing war and poverty in the back of a packed lorry or an over-crowded raft, it should be no shock how frequently families are split up, either forcibly or by accident. Further eroding the right for unaccompanied children to escape the horrors of detention centres and refugee camps through familial reunion will only exacerbate their suffering and insecurity. Socialists must therefore argue against the border controls that restrict them from reuniting, and fight for safe and legal routes for this to happen.

In the Labour Campaign for Free Movement we have worked to raise the consciousness in the Labour Party on issues affecting migrants and refugees, and won major party policy changes in 2019, including the unconditional right to family reunion. Despite its omission from the Party's 2019 General Election manifesto, socialists must honour this conference decision, and campaign for the right to family reunion — and especially now, as that right comes closer to outright abolition.

Outside of parliament we're working now to build international links with those fighting the forces of global reaction — and to bring down the government as soon as possible to prevent more damage from being inflicted. □

• Josh Lovell is a member of the Labour Campaign for Free Movement Steering Committee, writing here in a personal capacity

## Two million not "settled"

The latest government statistics, published on 16 January, show 2.7 million EU citizens living in Britain as having applied for "settled status".

58% of applications processed have gained settled status, but 41% only the shakier "pre-settled status". Six applications have been refused outright.

Anything up to 900,000 people had not yet applied, and their status will be unclear after 31 January.

That makes a total of up to two million not clearly "settled".

Even those settled are demanding a physical document to prove their status, fearing that they may face troubles when citing only online credentials. The government is refusing.

The leading nationalities-of-origin for EU citizens living in Britain are Poland (512,300 applicants), Romania (435,700), Italy (291,000), and Portugal (231,000). □



## Recycling is on down trend



By Misha Zubrowski

Resource use has more than tripled over the last half century, while the proportion of the total which has recycled has fallen slightly over recent years.

"The Circularity Gap Report 2020", [bit.ly/ce-g-20](https://bit.ly/ce-g-20), published in January 2020, found that the total quantity of resources entering the global economy each year surpassed 100bn tonnes each year in 2017 (100Gt/y).

2017 is the most recent year for which data is available, one tonne is one thousand kilograms, and one billion is one thousand million. By way of comparison, to fit 100bn tonnes of water into a tank with an area the size of a professional football pitch, the tank would have to be over 14 thousand kilometres deep: a greater distance than the diameter of the earth.

Half of this input was "miner-

als", non-metallic, inorganic things like stone, clay, sand; one quarter "biomass", from forestry and farming; 15% fossil fuels; and 10% (metallic) "ores". Around two fifths went to housing, one fifth to food, roughly one tenth each to services, healthcare, and transport, and the rest to consumer goods and communication.

Just under one third of this goes into longer term infrastructure, and a similar amount, around 32%, into refuse; the rest lost to the environment or in emissions. Overall just 8.6% is recycled, or around 27% of the refuse; around 91% is "extracted".

The report states that "The negative trend overall can be explained by three related, underlying trends: high rates of extraction; ongoing stock build-up; plus, low levels of end-of-use processing and cycling." By "stock" it means long-lasting infrastructure, buildings, etc. There are several problems for an economy premised on such high levels of extraction and such low levels of recycling. The report does not highlight in detail what these

are and which are the most severe threats, but I sketch some below.

Emissions have various direct environmental impacts, most notably global warming. Other pollution into the environment, and disposal of refuse, have caused many additional problems. Extraction such as mining is often destructive of local environments, can deplete resources, and is particularly resource intensive.

The school-taught mantra "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" remains to first approximation a good approach (in the global north) when aimed for on a society wide level.

Infrastructure, food, goods, services, should be designed to be constructed and to function as efficiently as possible, with minimum waste or energy use.

An economy structured around collectivisation and sharing can radically reduce the quantities necessary to fulfil individuals' needs and desires. Infrastructure and goods should be designed to be durable, and last as long as possible; and be modular so that they can be repaired or upgraded with little waste.

Additionally, production should be planned to make recycling and composting easy and effective, at end-of-life.

A socialist society would broadly aim to do these things anyway, to reduce human labour expended. The core drives of a capitalist society — ever-increasing profit, through extracting surplus labour embodied in commodities — cuts in the opposite direction. To move towards a more rational, ecological society, we must fight for socialism.

Short of that, we can make serious gains. We should fight to socialise industries, taking them into democratic control and public ownership, to run them ecologically for public good, not private profit. We should campaign to expand the welfare state, to strengthen environmental legislation, to the same ends. □

"We want youth climate strikers to work with workplace activists to build a clear programme and mass workplace participation. We support youth strikers, and agitate for this perspective, in local areas and campuses; through the Student Left Network; and through activists in the leadership of UKSCN."

Readers of *Solidarity* should use 14 February as an opportunity to build such support. Get in contact with your local youth strikers, offer support, invite them to your union and Labour party meetings to talk. Plan something at work: even simply photo-shoots or videos with colleagues can be important steps. □

• Local events: [ukscn.org](https://ukscn.org) and [bit.ly/ys4c-e](https://bit.ly/ys4c-e)

## Next climate strike 14 February



By Misha Zubrowski

The next youth climate strike will be held on Friday 14 February. School students and young people from over 50 locations across the UK will walk out and protest at the government's continued inaction on climate change.

As Workers' Liberty voted for at our conference:

"We work for real union support for Climate Strikes: for grassroots union activists to bring delegations of workers to climate protests, or to hold their own."



## AWL delegation visits Paris

By Michael Elms

Since early December, France has been gripped by a mass strike movement over the Macron government's plan to reform pensions.

Workers' Liberty organised a delegation of socialists of all ages from across the UK to visit France 24-26 January to bring our solidarity to strikers, and to talk to and learn from striking workers and socialist activists about events.

By the time that we arrived in France, the movement was entering a new stage. After nearly 50 days of almost-uninterrupted strike action, transport workers were scaling back their action from an all-out strike every day to a series of one-day actions. Until this point, various sectors of workers had entered the strike movement — teachers, refuse workers, municipal workers, museum staff, dockers, and oil refinery workers to name but a few — but the transport workers formed the core of the strike, taking action day in and day out to stoke the fire of protest and confrontation.

Now other sectors are starting to move, including college and university students, and a lot depends on the ability of new sectors of workers to play a similarly leading role in keeping the disruption going day after day. Some education workers reported to us a stirring in the Lycées [FE colleges], as younger students plan to organise a wave of walkouts in solidarity with their teachers — an act that has been decisive in earlier strike waves.

We joined a demonstration of the famous Yellow Vests through Paris (which was followed by a very heavy police presence) and saw first-hand this still-live protest movement's mix of class-struggle ideas with confused liberal or nationalist solutions (like "Citizens' Initiative Referendums", or "Frexit", which some protestors were keen to debate with us).

We spoke to socialist activists who work in the railways, who told us about the various forums through which many thousands of workers have been drawn into action. On the one hand, Trotskyist activists in tendencies like Étincelle are trying to build what they call "co-ordinations" — representative

bodies made up of delegates from elected workplace strike committees, which they are building on an all-unions-and-none, all-grades basis as a means of bringing together an alternative leadership of the strike from below.

In contrast to this approach, which focuses on building workplace power methodically and is rooted in an insistence on delegate democracy, other activists are concentrating their strategy around what are called "interprofessional assemblies" — meetings open to any and all mobilised workers and activists. Although looser and less formally representative, these general assemblies form important forums for co-ordinating action by neighbourhood.

We spoke to student activists about how the recent years of repeated mass movements has created a large "active minority" of leftwing students on every campus, and how everywhere minorities of hundreds are finding ways to influence and mobilise broader layers of tens of thousands.

Finally, we discussed the political perspectives of the strike movement: if the strikes roll on and win the most ambitious of their demands — the fall of Macron's government — what is the French labour movement's perspective for replacing him with a workers' government?

More voices from the French strike movement will be published in *Solidarity* and on [workersliberty.org](https://workersliberty.org) in the coming days and weeks. □



# Rewriting history on Brexit



**Antidoto**

By Jim Denham

On 13 December, CWU general secretary Dave Ward was quoted in the front page lead story of the *Morning Star* as saying “Labour got it wrong on Brexit. Millions of people who know the economy, the world of work and politics in general isn’t working for them saw the move to a second referendum as a betrayal and final straw.”

Unite union general secretary Len McCluskey, in an article for Huffington Post, published on the same day stated “It is Labour’s slow-motion collapse into the arms of the People’s Vote movement and others who have never accepted the democratic decision of June 2016 for a single moment which has caused this defeat.”

Yet, as *Private Eye* has pointed out, Labour’s final policy – negotiating a new Brexit deal and putting it to a referendum without stating which side it would take, “was actually drawn up by none other than, er, Dave Ward and Unite leader Len McCluskey, in an attempt to [prevent] Labour backing Remain outright.”

And in a *New Statesman* article last November Ward and McCluskey declared “Labour’s policy on Brexit is not only clear – it could and should be a vote-winner ... its strengths



Stop the Coup demo, September 2019.  
Photo: Gemma Short @g\_for\_gemma

are obvious ... it offers both ‘leavers’ and ‘remainers’ what they want. It places Labour as the only party trying to speak to the whole country on this matter, looking beyond the binary division which so poisoned political life over the past few years. And it offers a democratic end to the national debater, putting people themselves in the driving seat.”

The confusion, hypocrisy and downright dishonesty of these “left” Brexiteers appears

to know no bounds. But, I suppose, if you want to re-write history (including your own political history), your natural home will be amongst the specialists in that particular subject – the Stalinists of the CPB and the *Morning Star*.

The 20 January *Morning Star* carried a stern warning: “Divergence from EU rules, as announced by the Tory government yesterday, could be welcome but is unlikely to benefit

working people unless a left-led government is elected, communists said yesterday.

“Communist Party of Britain general secretary Robert Griffiths warned that Prime Minister Boris Johnson will not have the interests of the people in mind when making key decisions after the country leaves the EU on Friday.”

Really? Stop the presses! And ponder the chances of a “left-led government” being elected before... Friday 31 January.

Meanwhile, Alex Gordon, the front-man for the CPB’s pro-Brexit LeFT (Leave-Fight-Transform) campaign, had fewer reservations: writing in the *MS* on Thursday 23rd, he felt able to quote (approvingly) Unison North West regional secretary Kevan Nelson saying that “the recent general election is not a zero-sum game: irrespective of Labour’s drubbing, the fact we are leaving is a case for celebration for all democrats.” You can’t help wondering, sometimes, what some of these so-called “Lexit” people actually did in the privacy of the voting booth on 12 December.

Another pro-Brexit contributor, Chelley Ryan (25-26 Jan) did at least give us the first time (in my recollection) that an *MS* writer has acknowledged that immigration played a significant role in the Brexit vote. Labour, she argued, should have “pledged to implement Brexit ourselves, just a slightly softer version which would protect jobs, while still giving us the freedom to control immigration, a strong driver for the Brexit vote.”

Case for celebration? Unless you’re a migrant. Or an internationalist. □

## Homeopathy and placebo



**Letters**

Exactly four years ago, you published my article on homeopathy, provocatively titled “Homeopathy: the one NHS cut we should support” [[bit.ly/hp-les](https://bit.ly/hp-les)]. In it, I examined the evidence provided by the Faculty of Homeopathy itself for the efficacy of homeopathic treatments and found it to be unconvincing and inconclusive.

The latest version of the FoH’s evidence [[bit.ly/hp-evi](https://bit.ly/hp-evi)], written by its then President, the late Dr Peter Fisher, cites the same reviews and claims these are conclusive evidence of benefit. However, “gold standard” systematic reviews of homeopathy [[bit.ly/hp-coch](https://bit.ly/hp-coch)] can find almost no convincing evidence of benefit (the terms “uncertain”, “no firm conclusions can be drawn”, “not enough evidence”, “no evidence of efficacy”, “low quality of evidence”, or similar, are common).

Where positive effects were identified, these were generally small and, in any case, needed replication. Curiously, the studies cited by the FoH itself frequently include similar caveats.

We can agree that homeopathic treatments are generally harmless because they are indistinguishable from placebos. Paradoxically, this is an argument against their having any effect since, if the water used to prepare dilu-

tions retained a memory of a substance’s beneficial effects, it would also retain a memory of all its other effects, good or bad. The ex-

### A federal Britain?

Keir Starmer has called for a new constitutional set-up “built on the principle of federalism”.

For a state like the UK, containing multiple nations, federalism makes sense, and indeed was advocated by Frederick Engels long ago. It’s not clear if Starmer advocates an English Parliament or, as Clive Lewis did in his campaign, separate assemblies for various regions.

Some questions are begged. Firstly, what is the place of Northern Ireland?

Secondly, what about the rebuilding and re-empowering (and re-funding) of local government, severely constrained from the 80s and gutted since 2010?

Thirdly, what about scrapping the House of Lords (raised by Rebecca Long-Bailey) and replacing it with a federal “second chamber”? And getting rid of the monarchy (not raised by any leadership candidate, except Clive Lewis, who then backed away from it.)

Fourthly, socialists need to link the fight for political democracy to the fight to re-empower workers by building a strong labour movement, with demands like repealing all the anti-union laws. □

ception to their harmlessness is where the homeopathic treatment replaces an effective treatment for a serious condition.

Can homeopathic treatments ever be beneficial? When compared with placebo, the answer is almost definitely “No” but, when compared with a harmful treatment, the answer might well be “Yes”.

This explains why Hahnemann’s patients fared better than those subjected to the conventional blood-letting. Even today, there are conventional treatments for which there is little evidence of benefit and indeed some evidence of harm.

It seems that homeopathic treatments are “just” placebos, but this is to dismiss something of immense importance. All living beings can mount a response to disease but the size of that response depends on external factors affecting the amount of energy available to the organism. The body is said to have a “health governor” which decides how much energy is available for healing, a theory developed by psychologist Nick Humphrey [[bit.ly/plac-ev](https://bit.ly/plac-ev)].

And, for a deeply-social species like us, the health governor is affected by how much social support we feel we are getting and therefore how much energy we can devote to healing ourselves. This support is exemplified by the deeply personal attention given by a homeopath in a consultation (or a GP with sufficient time), another argument for a well-resourced NHS. □

Les Hearn, London

## Council hubs



**Letters**

My article about Labour councils in *Solidarity* 530 was given the title Make Labour Council Resist by the editors. However, I gave it the title “Make Labour Councils Centres of Resistance”.

This may sound like a subtle distinction, but my intention was to propose that we go beyond calling on Labour councils to do the resisting on our behalf — that we also call on them to become “hubs” around which the community can mobilise. □

Janine Booth, Hackney

## Class struggle environmentalism

**Sat. 14 March, 10.30am-5.30pm  
Park View School, N15 3QR, L'dn**

Join this day of discussions and workshops! Buy tickets, or book a free space in the creche online.

Early bird tickets end 14 February: £18 high waged, £8 low waged, £3 unwaged. £1 for school students. Tickets and creche can also be booked in person or over the phone.

• [bit.ly/14-3-20](https://bit.ly/14-3-20)

# “More jail” will not make society safer

## Editorial

The Tories are speeding through plans to expand the prison population and strengthen state powers of control and surveillance, supposedly to tackle Islamist-inspired terrorism.

They cite the murder of Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt by recently released terrorism convict Usman Khan in London Bridge last November as justification.

Those convicted will face more time in jail, with a minimum term of 14 years and the abolition of automatic early release. There will be more funding for counter-terrorism police and probation officers. Lie detector tests will be introduced into the probation system.

Civil liberties have been curbed over and over for more than forty years, the prison population has soared for thirty, and for twenty we have had waves of authoritarian anti-terrorism legislation.

The US has five times more people in prison than England per head of population (655 vs 140 per 100,000). Simultaneously it has a homicide rate ten times higher than

England's and far more random acts of mass killing than any other country.

“More jail” policies do not make us safe. Particularly when they are pursued in conjunction with relentless destruction of the social fabric and promotion of ever-greater insecurity and inequality, and with nationalist and racist policies and politics.

Such measures the reservoir of social despair feeding the jihadists (and the racist anti-Muslim far right, whose terrorism is also a growing threat).

With more funding and more enlightened policy, the battered probation system could become more like a public service serving social need and drawing people away from death-loving militarist movements. Making it an appendage of counter-terrorism policing is destructive. Having more young Muslims inside prisons for longer will more likely aid than cut off rather than aid the spread of terrorist Islamism is surreal.

The Tories' approach is not based on evidence, but on a mix of right-wing ideology and desire to consolidate their electoral support base. No wonder they are rushing it through (Home Secretary Priti Patel promises legislation by mid-March, billing this as “within weeks”).

To counter and undermine the influence of Islamism, we need to rebuild sources of hope



Well Sarge, they're obviously a clear and present danger, so we've arrested them!

that we change society for the better. That starts with a fight against the Tories and their

exploitation of Islamism's brutality to pursue their own brutal agenda. □

# Challenge Labour leader candidates: build a democratic labour movement

## Editorial

Policy-making in the labour movement should be the property of conference and duly-elected committees, not of a designated “Leader” and their “Leader’s Office” handing down announcements.

Even when the announcements-from-on-high are left-wing — as they have been sometimes under the Corbyn leadership — that they are announcements from on high tells against the chances of the labour movement mobilising sufficiently to convince the electorate of the policies, or to get them enforced against ruling-class resistance.

What we want above all is a leader who will help vitalise a real democracy-from-below in the labour movement, and clear away the very large Blair-era elements still in the party structure. In hustings and nomination meetings, we will be posing our criteria, of which the “charter” below is a first draft.

### CONFERENCE SOVEREIGNTY

A democratic conference must be Labour's sovereign decision-making body. Conference should set the policy agenda, pass motions that determine policy and what is included in the manifesto, and decide the party's direction. Motions should be published as they are submitted, with regular updates. More conference time for policy debate, and contributions from delegates.

As in the past, there should be a rolling programme passed by conference each year as the basis for the manifesto and campaigning.

Party bodies, representatives and leaders

must recognise and implement conference policy and decisions. Abolish the National Policy Forum. Conference decisions should be published, easily accessible, and advertised.

### PLURALISM

Establish the right to diversity of opinion within broad Labour values. Establish the right to organise political groupings within the party. Amend rule 2I4(b) to remove the (confused and damaging) inference that groupings that are not official party bodies are a problem.

### DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Expulsions should be only for opposing Labour in elections; for gross anti-worker, racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory behaviour; and for abuse of power or sabotage of party functioning — and only after a hearing, with prior notice of charges, with the National Constitutional Committee. All those penalised should have a proper right to appeal. Cases should not be rushed or allowed to drag on without prompt resolution.

### ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Ensure adequate notice of and accessible information about all democratic party meetings. All conference documents, including reports, policy documents, motions, records of decisions, votes and proceedings, should be published as far in advance of/as soon after meetings as possible. NEC agendas, papers and minutes should be published, outside exceptional cases. The NEC should return to taking questions and comments on its annual report at conference; delegates should vote whether to approve it, with the

right to refer back any part of the report.

### TRADE UNIONS

Maintain the union link. Revive and expand the link at local level by getting more genuine union delegates to CLPs, rooted in functioning branches and workplaces. Support a drive for democracy in the unions.

### YOUNG LABOUR

A drive to establish CLP-level YL branches/groups — with representation in CLPs, but autonomous, with freedom to discuss, campaign and recruit new members. Give Youth Officers access to data for young members in their area.

Move as fast as possible towards a national YL conference based on delegates from local groups, and affiliates; and not made inaccessible by cost.

Let YL have its own democratic constitution, decided by its conference, and control the staff and administrative support it gets nationally and regionally.

Re-establish Labour Students, with its own democratic constitution decided by its conference. A conference based on delegates from Labour Clubs, not made inaccessible by cost.

### SELECTIONS

Automatic “open selections” for all parliamentary candidates before each election.

### RULE CHANGES

CLPs should have the right to submit both a policy motion and a rule change to each conference. The NEC should be allowed to submit rule changes only with the same deadlines as everyone else, not at the last minute as currently. □



## We've topped the £25,000

We've topped our £25,000 fundraising total, but don't yet have all the data to calculate by how much.

Thanks to contributors to the fund appeal at the Workers' Liberty conference on 18-19 January, making up a total of £7,374 that weekend.

Also to David Szervanszky, £34, and an anonymous donor, £10, for sponsorships for Hannah Thompson's and Dan Rawnsley's sponsored bike ride from Sheffield to Manchester, set for 15 February ([bit.ly/cycle4socialism](http://bit.ly/cycle4socialism)).

That makes £24,883. We've also had sizeable donations to cover part of the cost of a replacement printing machine for our office (for printing leaflets, bulletins, and so on), enabling us to take up a time-limited 36%-off offer on that machine and have it installed last Friday, 24 January.

It's already doing well: no more of the streaks impairing the output we had on the old machine.

A full report next week, and then we'll pause the fund-raising (other than the sponsorships for Hannah's and Dan's effort) for a while.

It'll be back soon, though. One of our decisions from the Workers' Liberty conference on 18-19 January was for more turning outwards, less reliance on finding audiences ready-assembled in labour-movement meetings. □

## 250 million strike in India

By Matt Cooper

The Hindu-chauvinist BJP Indian government is meeting serious resistance.

Trade unions have been taking action. The Modi government was forced to back off a series of economic reforms including privatisation and attacks on workers' rights after strikes in 2015, 2016 and 2019. Those issues have not gone away. Ten India trade union federations called a one-day general strike on 8 January against the government's economic policies (the eleventh federation is affiliated with the Hindu chauvinist movement and did not strike).

The workers were joined by farmers in their action. It brought out anything up to 250 million people, making it the largest strike in India's history.

Attempts to exclude Muslims from citizenship centre on the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) (currently limited to the state of Assam), which seeks to exclude marginalised individuals lacking adequate official documentation from citizenship, and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which offer those other than Muslims so excluded a fast track back into citizenship.

The BJP Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has denied that his government intends to roll this scheme out nationally. But last July's budget included funding for the NRC nationally, and the government has instructed all states to build detention centres to hold "foreigners", stipulating ten-foot high fences topped with barbed wire. One estimate of the cost of the register alone is 5 million lakh rupees (around £5 billion). The cost for the lives of those affected would be incalculable.

The government reacted to demonstrations in December with lethal force, but public reaction was of sympathy for the demonstrators. The government has now reined in the police and party-controlled thugs. The protesters too have shifted their tactics. A women's protest in the Shaheen Bagh district of Delhi has been blocking a major highway since mid-December, and the tactic is now being repeated elsewhere.

The protests against the citizenship laws are being joined by other groups. There has been conflict brewing in the university sector for some time, not least because the Modi government see the universities as reproducing a liberal elite which the BJP hates almost as much as it hates Muslims.

In early January students organising an on-going rent strike at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University were attacked by thugs of a right-wing student body affiliated to the BJP while police stood by. There were protests against the state-sanctioned violence across many of India's 800 universities.

Although the three movements are not directly related, they show the strengthening will to resist the policies of the BJP. The BJP has an impressive parliamentary majority, but in the 2019 general election it won only 37% of the vote (its coalition of right-wing parties, the NDA, totalled 45% of the vote).

The BJP's comfortable majority is a result of the fragmentation of electoral opposition and India's first-past-the-post electoral system.

Much of that support was based on the promise of economic growth that the BJP looks increasingly unable to deliver. □

## New decade, old approach?

By Micheál MacEoin

Three years after Stormont collapsed, following the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), power-sharing returned to Northern Ireland on 11 January and a new Executive was formed.

The general election on 12 December punished both the main parties, the DUP and SF. There was growing anger at the continuing deadlock, which saw a crisis in public services — NI has the longest NHS waiting lists in the UK and schools are under huge financial pressure — while legislators still received their salaries.

A well-supported health workers' strike for the restoration of pay parity with UK NHS staff (broken by the DUP in 2014) and action to resolve chronic understaffing focused attention at the crumbling state of the health service. The prospect of fresh Northern Ireland Assembly elections if they did not agree pushed the main parties into an agreement with the British government.

That the changed political context, rather than any special skill on the part of the new Northern Ireland Secretary, was responsible for this deal is clear as it does not markedly differ from a mooted 2018 deal.

As Suzanne Breen wrote in the *Belfast Telegraph*: "It is very hard for either the DUP or Sinn Féin to justify three years of no government — that has brought public services here to their knees — for what they've secured in this deal".

The bland "New Decade, New Approach" agreement promises £1bn for the health service. That is of course a step forward, but well short of what is needed.

## Irish poll on 8 Feb

By Micheál MacEoin

Voters in the Republic of Ireland go to the polls on 8 February. Fine Gael Taoiseach [prime minister] Leo Varadkar was pushed by dwindling support for his coalition into calling an early election.

The outgoing Irish government was a coalition of the centre-right Fine Gael and independents, with a confidence and supply agreement with the second largest party, the centrist Fianna Fail.

Varadkar will be hoping that his recent success in Brexit negotiations (from the perspective of the 26-county ruling class) to avoid a hard border, plus his record in delivering the abortion referendum in 2018, will be enough to reverse voter fatigue for his party, which has ruled Ireland since the post-crash election of 2011.

However, Ireland is suffering an acute housing crisis, with spiralling rents in cities and towns forcing people onto the streets and shelters, and workers often commuting long distances into work.

Ireland's health care system has overcrowded hospitals and a shortage of trolleys.

Worryingly for Fine Gael, an *Irish Times* poll on 21 January found that 75% of voters want a change in government. The latest Sunday Business Post/Red C poll saw just 12% of those surveyed trusting Fine Gael to solve the housing and rental crisis, and 14% to manage healthcare.

The same poll has Fianna Fail at 26% over-

all support, Fine Gael at 23%, and a strong showing for Sinn Féin at 19%.

On these numbers, a coalition is again likely — only led by Micheál Martin of FF rather than Varadkar.

Both parties have ruled out coalition with Sinn Féin. In a "change election" such as this, however, the attacks on Sinn Féin from the two main parties will boost its anti-establishment credentials.

Though the far left (the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Network and RISE) stand under the joint banner of their parliamentary caucus Solidarity-People Before Profit, they are nevertheless entering this election divided — for example, with the Socialist Party/Solidarity standing against its former member, Paul Murphy TD of RISE, in Dublin South-West.

At the 2019 local elections, Solidarity-PBP won 11 seats, a loss of 17 seats from their combined total at the 2014 local elections. They are currently polling at 2%, though their electoral interventions are targeted in urban seats.

On the centre-left, the still-discredited Labour Party are down two points on 4%, with the Social Democrats up one on 3%.

With the wane of the movement against water charges, the left has not been able to effectively channel anger against the coalition on housing and health and a pose a governmental alternative. The main beneficiaries have been Sinn Féin and the Greens, neither of whom are reliably left-wing. □

# Labour

By Mohan Sen

At the moment at least, I am not supporting any of the candidates for Labour leader. In hustings, I think, activists should ask pointed questions, and ask members to judge the candidates by their responses.

For example, no candidate has yet committed to work for wide democratic reforms in Labour's still-largely-Blair-made structure. None has backed the Free Our Unions call for them to respect the 2019 Labour conference decision for repeal of all anti-union laws. None has said that they will seek to lead on-the-streets and industrial campaigning against Johnson.

Rebecca Long-Bailey

Salford and Eccles MP (since 2015) and Shadow Business Secretary Long-Bailey is pitching herself as the Corbyn continuity candidate. She is backed by Momentum.

She is in a broad sense on the left of the party. She rebelled to vote against the Tories' Welfare Bill in 2015, nominated Corbyn the same year, and supported him against the right-wing MPs' rebellion in 2016.

However, Long-Bailey does not have a distinct left-wing record from her short time in Parliament, or from what little she did in politics before becoming an MP. Nothing like the record that, for all his drift towards the Morning Star, Corbyn did have before he became leader.

A large part of her political pitch — now, and back to 2015 at least — is about patriotism ("progressive patriotism").

Having voted against Trident renewal in Parliament in 2017, she has said during her campaign that she would be prepared to use nuclear weapons as Prime Minister. She has now signed a pro-choice pledge — along with the other leadership candidates — but the pledge was only written because she created a stir by indicating to the Catholic Church during the general election that she was sympathetic to limiting abortion rights.

Long-Bailey is associated with and makes a big deal about Labour's "Green New Deal" policy. But the policy passed at Labour conference was significantly less radical than the motions submitted, and left-wing delegates who were in the compositing meeting report that she played a key role, in alliance with the GMB, in making sure that was the case. What she has argued publicly since is in turn less radical than the final composite.

She has also positioned herself as broadly more pro-Brexit than Labour's existing policy, and despite some warm words about migrant rights (e.g. in *Tribune*) has made no commitment on the subject. Many of her backers have been key to the wing of the left arguing against free movement.

Long-Bailey has announced that she is in favour of automatic "Open Selection" for MPs. This is obviously good, though she and many of those backing her (including the Unite union) opposed open selection when it was a live issue at Labour Party conference in 2018.

Most concerning is who is behind Long-Bailey's campaign. She is the candidate of the Leader's Office, i.e. of Stalinist apparatchiks Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray.

A long-time figure in her operation is Alex Halligan, a well-known Stalinist who got in trouble in the national press for wearing a badge advocating the murder of Trotskyists. There are a number of similar figures involved too.

# Leader: the contest so far



More broadly, Long-Bailey has links to those on the left responsible for a deeply unpleasant and inhospitable culture and attacks on democracy in many parts of the party, for instance the shutting down of London Young Labour.

## Keir Starmer

Shadow Brexit Secretary Starmer has been the MP for Holborn and St Pancras since 2015. He has consistently polled at or near the top of potential future leaders, no doubt in part because he is widely perceived as more anti-Brexit than Corbyn.

Starmer nominated Andy Burnham for leader in 2015, abstained on the Tories' Welfare Bill, and supported the 2016 coup against Corbyn. He does not particularly seem to be a Blairite, and it may be the case that some of his left-leaning rhetoric in this election is genuine, but his voting record in Parliament is (by the standards of Labour since 2015, where there has been little differentiation except on Brexit) solidly right-wing. The only bright spot I could find when measuring him against Rebecca Long-Bailey is that he voted against Heathrow expansion when she, no doubt under the influence of the Unite leadership, abstained.

In the election itself, he has said remarkably little about policy. A lot of his campaign is leftist mood music and projecting himself as "statesmanlike".

On international issues, he is not all he seems. He was central to pushing the leader-

ship towards a more anti-Brexit position, for which kudos – but that doesn't mean his position was good. At the 2018 Labour conference he took the lead in facing down attempts to get a clear anti-Brexit line. Worse still, he made sure that a pro-free movement motion ended up in the bin. Around the turn of 2016-7 he advocated Labour support the ending of UK-EU free movement, encouraging Corbyn to cave in, as he eventually did.

Starmer has played up his work defending various campaigners when he was a lawyer. Immediately before he became an MP, however, he was Director of Public Prosecutions. His record there was mixed.

He refused to prosecute the police officers accused of killing Jean Charles de Menezes and Ian Tomlinson (though he later changed his mind on the latter when it became clear this stance was not viable). He followed this up by announcing that MI5 and MI6 agents would not face charges for torture and human rights abuses during the Iraq war. At the height of the Cameron-Osborne war on welfare in 2013 he also issued strengthened guidelines for prosecuting "benefit cheats".

Starmer has a very wide range of support from hard right to soft left and even further left. Many right-wingers are trumpeting his campaign as an opportunity to defeat the left.

His top campaign staff includes figures associated with Corbyn's first campaign, like Kat Fletcher and Simon Fletcher, but also notorious Labour First organiser and virulent left-hater Matt Pound.

## Emily Thornberry

Emily Thornberry, MP for Islington South since 2005 and Shadow Foreign Secretary, is in some respects not a million miles from Keir Starmer, but her history and record is more left-wing.

She is very much soft left, but she was a fairly consistent pain in the arse for the Blair and Brown governments. She nominated Corbyn in 2015 and supported him against the coup in 2016 (though she abstained on the Welfare Bill). In the past she has, unlike Starmer, been against nuclear weapons. But she abstained in the 2017 parliamentary vote – and now she has told the press that as Prime Minister she would retain Trident and be willing to use it!

She has previously pushed the party to be more anti-Brexit, but like Starmer has equivocated on free movement.

Thornberry has a record on some other issues which is quite admirable – for instance, abortion rights. She has also combined vocal support for the Palestinians with longstand-

ing and strong opposition to antisemitism on the left. (Like all the leadership candidates she has signed up to the Board of Deputies' ten proposals for tackling antisemitism, which in my view are not good, but at least in her case the decision does not seem totally opportunistic.)

Her other foreign policy stances have been a mixed bag – for instance she has been weak on criticising the Syrian regime.

She is campaigning not as any sort of left candidate, but on her claim to superior ability for confronting Johnson across the dispatch box.

## Lisa Nandy

Lisa Nandy, MP for Wigan since 2010, was once seen as a rising star of the soft left. Then she nominated Burnham in 2015 and in 2016 resigned as Shadow Secretary for Energy and Climate Change in to support the coup against Corbyn, co-chairing Owen Smith's leadership campaign.

With Clive Lewis failing to make the threshold of MPs' nominations, Nandy is the

only BME candidate in the election (her father is Indian) and would be the first BME leader of the party. Unlike the other three, all from some variety of working-class background, hers is pretty privileged: her maternal grandfather was Liberal leader in the House of Lords for twenty years.

Nandy's voting record in Parliament is mixed-to-ok; though she did not rebel on the Welfare Bill, she voted against both Trident renewal and Heathrow expansion. Like Thornberry, she combines a pro-Palestinian record (she is chair of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East) with strong opposition to antisemitism.

She has said Labour is too much a party of placard-waving, even though in fact it does barely any on-the-streets campaigning.

She has explicitly come out against Open Selections.

She caused outrage by citing Catalonia, subject to brutal Spanish state repression, as a model for dealing with nationalism in Scotland.

There is a fundamental contradiction in Nandy's campaign. On one hand she is the only candidate to come out explicitly in defence of free movement, also telling party members in Lewisham that for her the notorious "Controls on Immigration" mug was a low point for the party.

On the other hand she is pitching to a constituency in the PLP and the unions who clearly interpret her narrative about reconnecting to working-class voters in small towns as meaning moving further right on crime and immigration. And she voted in favour of the second reading of Johnson's Brexit deal.

Every candidate has something, somewhere, to recommend them, from the viewpoint of a class-struggle, internationalist left, but overall it is a poor choice. □

• For a longer version of this article, see *The Clarion* [bit.ly/37AaVlc](https://bit.ly/37AaVlc)

## The process

The deadline for people to join the Labour Party in time to vote in the leadership election passed on 20 January. Constituency Labour Parties and affiliates (primarily trade unions, but also e.g. a range of officially registered "socialist societies") have until 14 February to nominate candidates. Then members will vote on the successfully nominated candidates 21 February-14 April.

Under new rules agreed since the last leadership election, to get on the final ballot paper candidates need nominations from 10% of MPs plus either 5% of constituency parties (33) or 5% of affiliates by conference voting strength, two of which must be unions.

For regular updates on who has what nominations, see [twitter.com/CLPNominations](https://twitter.com/CLPNominations). □

## Leadership candidates' contempt for conference

In a speech billed as advocating democratisation of the Labour Party, Rebecca Long-Bailey said this, and only this, about Labour's conference:

"On our policy making. I have always believed that it is our members and trade unions who should shape our vision, but there has to be a more open and democratic way of developing our vision.

"Trying to clunkily mesh together the wording of various motions from constituency parties in a sweaty room at conference is not dynamic and it is not using the vast wealth of talent our members bring."

The reference is to "compositing", the process by which hundreds of motions from constituency parties and unions are combined and sorted into a manageable number of options for full conference debate.

It is a necessary process for a large conference where motions can come from hundreds of sources. The left has never opposed compositing as such, nor should it want to.

The big problem in compositing is that Labour Party and union officials use it to bamboozle and pressure delegates into "losing" the more radical policy points in their motions.

Long-Bailey had a hard time in the Green New Deal compositing at Labour Party conference 2019. Constituency delegates were

more stubborn than usual about not losing key policies (and so the compositing went on much longer than usual).

Solving that "problem" would be a step back, not forwards.

It's not just Long-Bailey, of course. Keir Starmer has played the same role in compositing, for instance on Brexit and free movement in 2018.

In a recent interview for the *Mirror*, Emily Thornberry said that she did not support ending "Right to Buy". She made no reference whatsoever to the fact — in fact she may not even know — that the last conference voted overwhelmingly to end Right to Buy.

The bit about "sweaty rooms" was the only comment on the role of conference in Long-Bailey's speech. Only the most naive could interpret it as a wish for better-ventilated compositing rooms.

Long-Bailey's whole wing of the left that has a clear record of disparaging the role of face-to-face democratic discussion and decision-making in order to replace it with a tightly controlled system of online "consultation" (for example in Momentum).

We should fight to make conference the genuinely sovereign decision-making body of the party. □

# Bob Sutcliffe 1939-2019

By Martin Thomas

Bob Sutcliffe, a well-known Marxist economist for over fifty years, and at one time a comrade of ours in the Workers' Socialist League of 1981-4, died on 23 December 2019, aged 80.

I last talked with Bob about 10 years ago, when I was seeking interviews and discussions with Marxist economists about the 2007-8 crisis and its aftermath. Bob explained that his health was bad, and he couldn't contribute, but he was, as ever, friendly, helping me with introductions to other economists. He was then, and had been for some years, working as a university teacher in the Basque country of Spain.

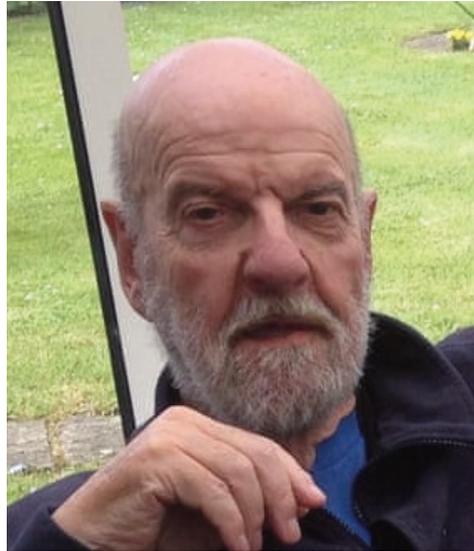
When I first met Bob, in 1981, I was overawed. Educated at Oxford and Harvard, he had been a big figure in Marxist economic debate since at least 1972, when he published *British Capitalism, Workers, and the Profit Squeeze* (with Andrew Glyn) and *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (with Roger Owen).

The first issue of the magazine of the "new" Workers' Socialist League was a special on the world economy written by Bob (later republished by Pluto under the title *Hard Times*: [bit.ly/fore-run](http://bit.ly/fore-run)).

I was trying to pull myself up by my bootstraps into economics — just finishing an evening-class economics course at Birkbeck, which then had a cluster of Marxists in its economics department.

Bob, however, had none of the airs of the Great Marxist. He was open, keen to discuss. I remember him advising me on the best sources for international economic statistics.

Bob came into the "new" Workers' Socialist League from the "old" Workers' Socialist League of Alan Thornett, which had then, in 1981, merged with the group I'd been in, known for the publications *Workers' Fight*, *Workers' Action*, and *Socialist Organiser*.



He was untypical of the political culture of that "old" WSL, which was still (though decreasingly: otherwise the merger would never have been on the cards) dominated by declamations round the words "crisis" and "alternative leadership". It was like walking through a workshop where people were slamming hammers and axes, and finding someone in a corner quietly operating precision tools.

On Friday 2 April 1982 the Argentine military junta invaded the Falklands, islands 400 miles off the coast of Argentina inhabited since the 1830s by a small community of British settlers. The next morning, Saturday, I was sitting next to Bob in a coach going from London to a demonstration.

Clearly, Bob said, we could not back the junta. The positive response had to be self-determination for the Falkland Islanders. Of course we would oppose the Thatcher government going to war over the invasion, as it immediately decided to do.

Everyone from the "side" of the merged organisation that I came from had pretty much the same reaction. We and Bob managed to

persuade most of the old-WSL people. And others: the next issue of our paper had a front-page article by an Argentine Trotskyist in Britain, a "Morenist", denouncing the Argentine conquest.

In May, though, the old-WSL core swung over to a pro-Argentine position. A furious faction fight erupted, and continued long after the war ended on 14 June. Those who stuck by the new WSL's almost-unanimous initial principles were denounced as "pro-imperialists" and worse.

## PRINCIPLES

Bob stuck by his principles. He wrote well on the issue, though with a sort of pretence that he was just offering individual opinions, not taking sides against his old-WSL comrades.

The faction fight wounded him politically, and by the time the merger finally broke down in early 1984, he was long gone. He moved to the USA, then to Nicaragua, then to Spain. As far as I know he was not again involved in organised revolutionary politics.

I think that when a student and a young academic at Oxford he was impressed by the old Workers' Revolutionary Party of Gerry Healy (from which the old WSL was a splinter). His 1972 book on imperialism paid tribute to Tom Kemp (a Healyite academic) for his book *Theories of Imperialism* (actually hackwork) and to Bernard Reaney, who in the early 1970s led a small group from the Mandelites into the WRP.

It was more common then than now for left-wing academics to feel that they should be involved in activist revolutionary politics. But some of them, and maybe Bob too, felt that the only way to do that was by a sort of arranged disunity of theory and practice, deferring to activists on practical day-to-day politics and reserving their theoretical knowledge for background.

His 1972 book with Andrew Glyn on

British capitalism was Bob's most influential and most controversial. Although it, too, name-checked Reaney, it was far from the stereotype-quotes-from-Marx style of the WRP (and, less crassly, other groups too). It said, essentially, that the Tory ideologues who blamed British capitalism's profit slump on workers pushing up wages were right — but a good thing too!

Bob did little polemic against critics of the book. His 1981 survey carried only a muted version of the 1972 thesis (after all, wage militancy had dwindled, but capital was still troubled). He continued to resist those who attributed all crises to the supposedly scriptural "tendency of the rate of profit to fall". He was credited by Philip Armstrong, Andrew Glyn, and John Harrison as having offered help and comment to their 1991 book trying to rework the 1972 thesis as part of a general account of *Capitalism Since 1945*, but was not a co-author.

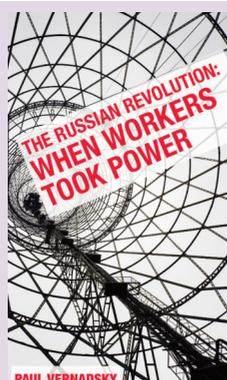
Robert Brenner's *The Economics of Global Turbulence*, in 1998, carried the most detailed factual refutation of the 1972 thesis, showing that it relied on a romanticisation of the wage militancy of the late 60s and early 70s. Oddly, though, Brenner's rival theory, "ruinous competition", was in its inner logic close to the 1972 thesis. Both relied on a scheme of profits being squeezed between international competition and domestic wage militancy, only each stressed a different side of the squeeze.

I've argued (in *Crisis and Sequels*, 2017) that the common scheme was faulty, and changing structures of world markets explain more about the phases of capitalist development. But that world-structure approach can also be found, cautiously and undogmatically advanced, in Bob's 1981 work.

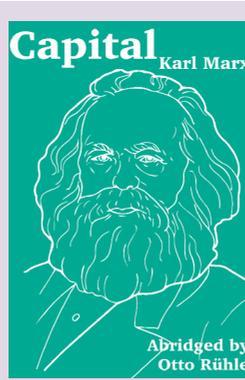
I wish we'd found more time in the mêlée of 1982 to learn from Bob and maybe convince him that there is another way to be both an activist and a theorist. □



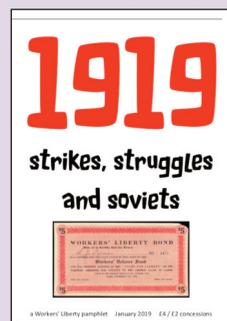
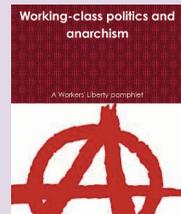
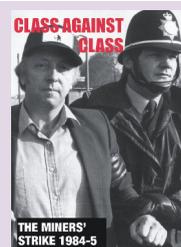
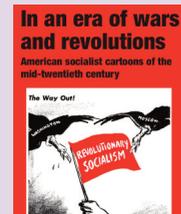
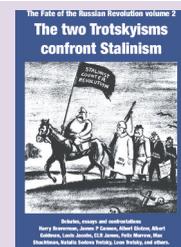
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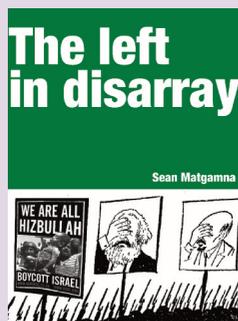
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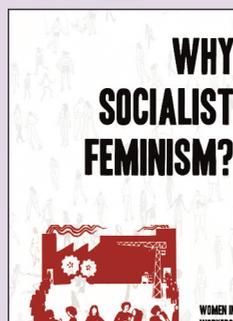
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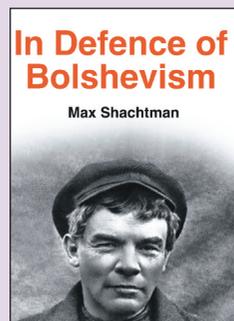
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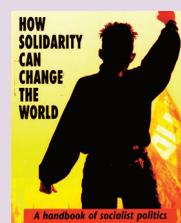
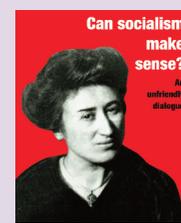
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Left: Trotsky at his desk, c. 1920.

Right, separated by a faultline: a militaristic mourning parade for Stalin, Dresden in East Germany, 1953.



# Trotskyism and Stalinism in Labour

By Daniel Randall

A Times article of 21 December reported that Rebecca Long-Bailey had appointed “self-proclaimed Stalinist” Alex Halligan to organise her campaign for the Labour leadership; the article highlighted in particular a badge worn by Halligan appearing to celebrate violence against “Trotskyites”.

Since then, Jon Lansman has been named as front-person for Long-Bailey’s campaign. Maybe Long-Bailey’s inner circle always thought Halligan not presentable enough to be upfront. Without question, though, Halligan (who also has good connections in the Unite union) has been a key figure “behind” Long-Bailey in Salford ever since she became an MP.

On 27 December, Owen Hatherley in the Guardian asserted that the anti-Brexit wing of the Labour left is “dominated by members or ex-members of Trotskyist groups”, and referenced Paul Mason’s argument that “Stalinists” such as Andrew Murray and Seumas Milne must be “forced out”. Do these terms have any contemporary use? How much of a feature will ideological conflict between Stalinists and Trotskyists be in the unfolding battle for the Labour Party’s political future?

## CONTESTED LABELS

Like almost all political labels, especially those associated with the name of an individual, both terms — “Stalinist” and “Trotskyist” — are deeply contested. Although Hatherley is right that Trotskyists were central to the anti-Brexit Labour left (if not quite, in his term, “dominant”), Britain’s two largest Trotskyist organisations, the Socialist Party, formerly Militant, and the Socialist Workers Party, are both outside the Labour Party and both strongly pro-Brexit. That political distinction alone tells us that organisations and individuals claiming the label “Trotskyist” might differ politically as much as they converge.

And “Stalinist”? While Hatherley appears dismissive of the idea that it might be an appropriate label for Milne and Murray, anyone serious about accurate political nomenclature must conclude that it has some explanatory value in their cases: both were members of “Straight Left”, the most orthodox of the factions emerging from the collapse of the offi-

cial Communist Party in the early 1990s, a political heritage neither has ever formally repudiated.

Whatever one makes of his assessments, unlike many commentators on the factional landscape of the Labour left, Hatherley writes as a participant and actually knows the terrain. For most, however, the deployment of terms like “Stalinist” and “Trotskyist” serves principally to provide a sense of political pantomime, casting the Labour left as marginal extremists obsessed with theological squabbles over the writings of “dead Russians” (or, in fact, Georgians and Ukrainians).

Many grassroots Labour members and activists resent the framing of debate within the party in these terms. The vast majority identify with neither label, and reactions along the lines of “why can’t we leave these irrelevant ideologies in the past?” are common. But behind the dramatising, there are real issues that will indeed play a substantial role in shaping the debate about Labour’s post-Corbyn direction.

## FAULTLINE

It is a fact that there is an ideological faultline on the contemporary Labour left between, broadly, a more top-down, statist wing, more sympathetic to nationalism, or at least prepared to appeal to it; and an internationalist, broadly anti-statist, and more libertarian wing. The former is pro-Brexit, the latter against it. Under Corbyn, the former encouraged a stance of uncritical loyalty to the leadership, playing machine politics in alliance with the bureaucracy of Unite, while the latter attempted to build an insurgent rank-and-file culture, advocating for greater grassroots democracy and frequently criticising the leadership from the left on issues like immigration policy and policing. Like any taxonomy involving human beings, complicated and contradictory as we are, there is some fluidity and blurring at the edges. Some activists may sympathise in general with one bloc, but agree with the other on a particular issue of policy. But in several debates within Labour under Corbyn, it has been this broad conflict within the left, as much as the conflict between left, right and centre, that has been central.

No-one is compelled to use particular la-

els, and it would be inaccurate to suggest that these broad wings can be seen to any full extent as Stalinist and Trotskyist, as such. But many of the central ideological differences trace their roots to conflicts between partisans and fellow-travellers of the Communist Party tradition on one hand, and its anti-Stalinist opponents on the other.

On Brexit in particular, the pro-Brexit position on the left descends almost directly from the anti-EEC left-nationalism of the Communist Party in the 1970s, which was influential on Bennism, and the accommodation of many would-be Trotskyists to that position descends similarly from the organisational antecedents of the SP and SWP attempting to tail the CP. Conversely, the theoretical underpinnings of the anti-Brexit position, seeing the erosion of borders and national division as progressive, even if it takes place under capitalism, have their origins in the “United States of Europe” position developed by the early-20th century revolutionary left, a development to which Trotsky was central in the period around the First World War.

There have been both Stalinists and Trotskyists in the Labour Party for as long as these terms have meant anything – roughly the early 1930s – so attempts by those on the party’s centre and right to paint both as entryist interlopers who should simply be expelled have little historical grip. The debates have to be confronted head on. And the issues involved extend well beyond Brexit.

It is fashionable on some parts of the left to dismiss the question of how one analyses historical or contemporary Stalinist states as a matter of obscure pedantry. But it is not. It is a matter of elementary political morality. If one idealises and hails as progressive totalitarian police states based on brutal hyper-exploitation, that cannot but have some impact on the kind of socialism one aspires to build in the here-and-now, even if they are only held up as sources of historical inspiration rather than models to follow directly.

## PEDANTRY?

Such questions also have a bearing on how Labour might intervene in contemporary world politics. Party activists of all hues, and however they feel about the labels “Stalinist” and “Trotskyist”, should ask themselves whether they want people in positions of

power and influence within the party who are more inclined to whitewash China’s oppression of the Uyghurs, for example, than to oppose it, as the Morning Star has been.

For the right-wing press, Milne and Murray might serve as convenient bogeyman. But debate over their role is perfectly legitimate, and necessary. The issue involved is not merely whether we want apologists for Putin and defenders of Stalinist Russia at the heart of the Labour leadership, but a question of elementary democracy, which also speaks to the fault line within the left. Should a Labour left which aspires to the democratic empowerment of the party membership, and a radical expansion of democracy in society, tolerate a situation where a significant degree of power and influence is wielded by unelected bureaucrats, entirely beyond any recall or direct accountability, paid salaries vastly in excess of the majority of the people Labour aspires to represent?

However we label them, it is these issues that must be made central in the leadership contest, and the wider debate over Labour’s future: should the party grassroots be meaningfully empowered, via a properly sovereign conference and open selection of candidates, or should the leader’s office, run by unelected staffers, continue to hold sway? Should the party’s policy on Europe remain broadly internationalist, advocating as close-as-possible a relationship with EU states and opposing greater barriers, whether via tariffs or border controls, between nations, or should it advocate a statist approach that might be best described as “social-democracy-in-one-country”? Should we respond to a rise in nationalist, anti-migrant feeling by launching a counter-offensive for international working-class solidarity, making a positive case for free movement as a human right, or attempt to triangulate with nationalism? Should Labour be a clear voice for universal human rights, including when they are being trampled by nominally socialist or “anti-imperialist” states, or should apologists for Assad and Putin shape Labour’s foreign policy?

Labour activists keen to advance the cause of internationalist socialism within the party should not allow frustration at being labelled a “Trot” distract them from the necessary task of openly pursuing these debates. The future of the left in this country is at stake. □

A memorial outside the Tree of Life Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh, to remember the victims of the mass shooting three days before



# The politics of Jewish victimisation

By Barry Finger

Orthodox Jews in the New York metropolitan area alone have been the victims of no less than a dozen attacks in the last few weeks.

Women have been smacked across the face, spat upon, and had their wigs ripped off. Men have been assaulted with chairs and one whacked so hard with a brick that he lost all his teeth. A woman and her child were pelted with eggs, another mother beaten with her child in tow. Jews have been harangued and baited on public transportation. Jews have been targeted in the streets, in their houses of worship and online.

And in the most dramatic attacks, three people were murdered in a Jersey City kosher supermarket, just below a Jewish school, suspected to have been the intended target, where 50 Hasidic children were hiding under tables. In the village of Monsey 35 miles north of New York City, a Hanukkah party was broken up by a machete-wielding intruder, leaving one man without fingers and another in a coma from which he is unlikely to emerge.

This, after last year's massacre at a Pittsburgh synagogue by a white supremacist gunman which left 11 people dead, followed six months later by a fatal shooting by a similarly motivated killer in a Poway, California synagogue. A July shooting again targeted a Miami synagogue.

Individuals with white nationalist and extreme right-wing ideologies committed 73% of all extremist killings, and not just of Jews, in the past decade. From 2014-2017 reported hate crimes against Blacks, Arabs, Latinos, and the LGBTQ community have been on the rise, with the most dramatic increase occurring in 2017. Trump campaigned on vilifying Latinos and Muslims and, having exploited hatred as a tool of political advance and consolidation, he and his enablers undoubtedly reduced the social barriers against all expressions of intolerance.

Attacks on Jewish people in New York — particularly Orthodox Jews — have been on

the rise in the past two years. And in the third quarter of 2019, hate crime incidents aimed at Jewish people made up over half of all the hate crime complaints logged in by the NYC police.

But of these violent attacks, white supremacy was largely a nonfactor. The random street assaults have been committed seemingly in sport by young African-American and Latino kids whose motivations, beyond the sadistic schoolyard joy of harassment and humiliation inflicted on a seemingly timid, unworldly and outlandishly attired community, are unknown and perhaps unfathomable. But they too cannot be considered immune from the subterranean ideological and cultural currents that swirl around their own communities.

## IDEOLOGY

The deadly metropolitan attacks, in contrast, were in both cases ideologically motivated. And this is something the Left often cannot wrap its collective head around. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib initially reacted to the Jersey City killing with the tweet, "white power kills," before the facts were known. But this also highlights the shallowness with which the Left engages antisemitism.

When the culprits are white power advocates, the Left characteristically falls over itself in heart-felt solidarity with the Jews. Rarely is the issue what the Jews do to trigger these neo-Nazi rampages. There is, thankfully, little tolerance for this puerile contextualisation in the midst of a crime scene. It is implicitly understood that what needs to be contextualised is not Jews, but the social existence of the Jew-haters.

But much of the Left has an uneasy ambiguity with the larger issues at play. For it is also beyond the imagination of many progressives to see white supremacists as themselves oppressed and powerless, adrift in a vanishing world that they cannot control, improvising a grand explanation for what they cannot understand. For many on the Left, all American whites have colonial-settler privileges. And so Jew-hatred is reduced to an ex-

tremist hate-filled ideology in service to the dominant racial order. Jews are often seen as incidental — collateral damage — in pursuit of a larger target: the quest to check black aspirations and reclaim a mythical past where no whites were disempowered. The focus of Jews on Jew hatred is often criticised on that basis for centering and prioritising the plight of Jews above those of oppressed people of colour.

Beyond being callous and unjustified, this also misses something vital. Antisemitism is reaction's time-honored liberation theology. Whether Christian Identity, Black Hebrew, Nation of Islam or its multiple international neo-Nazi and fascist incarnations and counterparts, antisemitism embodies the emancipatory promise of a hatred capable of jumping firewalls and uniting diverse racial and national chauvinisms otherwise at dagger points. It charges Jews with being imposters, spawns of the devil and whites or Blacks or Arabs with being the authentic lost tribes of the Bible. Jews are neither a people, nor an ethnicity, nor a religion, but a subterranean conspiracy.

It is when Jew-hatred takes root in minority communities that this charge of centering and prioritising reveals its more toxic side and where this suggestion of conspiracy is given tacit affirmation by elements of the Left.

## LEFT APOLOGISM

Unlike white supremacists, with whom the Left has no sympathy, Black nationalists here and Arab and Muslim chauvinists abroad — many of whom traffic in the same antisemitic tropes as white antisemites — are celebrated as stalwarts of the anti-imperialist resistance. All the sophistry previously off bounds when dealing with white Jew-molesters is now fair play. Deplorable as these Jew-bashing and killing incidents are, we on the Left are often implored by our comrades to put this lamentable hatred... in context. It's really about gentrification — about squeezing poor people of colour from their neighbourhoods.

It's a riff on a recognisable theme — the

Jewish occupation of territory that belongs by right to others, the colonialist assertion of a white Jewish privilege. It's a revolt — sometimes characterised as unfortunate, misguided, even wrong-headed — of the noble uprooted, that is, of the very powerless communities that are seen as the Left's natural allies from Palestine to San Francisco and on college campuses both elite and modest.

This in the case of Brooklyn is particularly risible. There, the well-heeled hipster residents, catered to by upscale coffee shops and boutique speciality stores inhabiting renovated coops and condos, don't seem to suffer similar waves of assault against life and limb.

It is also peculiar given the fact that 55% of the Hasidic community falls below the poverty line. But conceding this gives rise to the ever-useful pivot. Hasidic families, it is pointed out, compete with other poverty-stricken communities for Section 8 (government subsidised) housing stock. And with this we come full circle: Jews still occupying someone else's rightful home.

On the first Sunday in January a massive march against hate was held in New York City. To her lasting credit, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez joined the 25,000 marchers who stood against antisemitism. But where was the organised Left? Did the Democratic Socialists of America endorse or even acknowledge the march? If so, I can't find the evidence. Did it deign to offer the usual time-tested weasel word excuses for not marching in a cause, with which in truth they can't find their footing — a refusal to lock arms with establishment apologists? Did they, like French socialists of the recent past, call for an alternative demonstration?

Can democratic socialists — and by that I don't only mean DSA members — who never raised any righteous howls against the participation of Stalinists, Assad supporters, and Islamists at the anti-war rallies of the past, or for the ones that will surely come, even raise such objections without shaming themselves? □

# The uprising in Iraq

By Muayad Ahmed

Iraq is in a constitutional limbo. Adil Abdul-Mahdi has resigned as prime minister, but he is still in office, as a caretaker. On 26 December Barham Salih, the president, refused to accept the nominee of the ruling bloc of Islamist parties. Salih threatened to resign himself.

There is deadlock, and both Abdul-Mahdi and Salih are still in office.

The entire ethno-sectarian political regime of Iraq is in a deep crisis though the power is still in their hands. The ruling Shia political Islam parties and their militias and intelligence forces have so far killed hundreds of the people of the uprising and injured thousands of them. In their ongoing terrorist campaign against the activists they have so far assassinated, kidnapped and arrested hundreds of the activists.

From the beginning of the protests in October, we've faced a contradictory situation. The movement has called for the overthrow of the regime; but the people are not ready for taking power.

With the progress of the uprising this issue has become more urgent to be resolved.

There is majority support for the uprising, even if not majority participation.

In Mosul and Samarra and Ramadi, there is no movement on the streets, because people see it as too dangerous. I would assume they aren't sure as what the consequences will be if they rose up; but they support the uprising.

Despite all the repression, the movement is still strong in almost all the central and southern cities of Iraq. The movement is strong, and mixed, in Baghdad, which is a mixed city. The population of Baghdad has grown again, after dipping at the worst time of the sectarian violence in 2007-8.

## SLOGANS

We have raised the slogans: all power to the people of the uprising, and for the formation of councils (majals) everywhere. We had until recently a 30-metre-long banner on the Turkish Restaurant in Tahrir Square, in Baghdad, with our slogan.

We have also put out a platform on the way forward, including a 20-point program of demands and objectives.

We say this movement has created a deep crisis and huge crack in the rule of political Islam in Iraq. It has opened political space.

The people on the streets are male and female young workers, workers with precarious jobs or unemployed, or young graduates who don't have jobs and students.

They have a logistical capacity to communicate and coordinate, but they don't have committees or councils.

We, as the Organisation of the Communist Alternative in Iraq, go regularly to Tahrir Square in Baghdad, where there is a permanent protest camp, and do "debating meetings". We do the same in other cities, for example Diwanayah and Shamiya.

People of the uprising say this regime must go; so the immediate task is for the people to organise themselves for power. And to organise not just in Tahrir Square, but in all sections of society.

The workers must organise round their demands and political objectives, the women, the young people, the students, to build up



Demonstrations in Baghdad, Oct 1, 2019. CC BY 3.0 [bit.ly/bdad-19](http://bit.ly/bdad-19)

from the base.

Sometimes we get more than 100 people at those meetings, and many people agree with our message.

We have tents in Tahrir Square, and we're working with other groups.

I've been in a big popular movement like this twice in my life — now, and in 1991, when we succeeded in forming a council's movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, in a situation created by the collapse of Ba'hist authority in Kurdistan.

Then, we had been preparing from January 1991 to when the uprising began in March 1991. And we had had seven years of preparation and clandestine political activities as a communist organisation. This time, it's only one year since we split from the Worker-communist Party of Iraq.

Activists close to us have done sixty issues of a bulletin called *Voice of the Uprising* and distributed between 600 and 1000 copies each day in Tahrir Square.

## WOMEN

Women activists who are close to us as well have put out a newspaper called *Women's Uprising*, which has had a very good response, with 600 copies distributed twice a week.

In the earliest stages of the uprising young women were quite active. As the killings increased, fewer women came out. But now more women are coming back on the streets.

So, in Tahrir Square on an average day there might be 20% women, but that increases to almost 50% for some special festivals. Women struggles for achieving equality and freedom and raise demands for putting an end to violence against women and so called "honour killing" and for abolishing Iraq's anti-women laws, for example the laws permitting polygamy, child marriages, etc.

Among young women in Tahrir Square, I would say about half are not wearing the hijab. Some come to the square wearing hijabs and then take them off once they are in the square. Hijab-wearing is more enforced in Basra and the southern cities.

In the square, I believe that there are three sections. There are the reactionaries: the Sadrists and some people linked to the old Ba'hist or Arab nationalists. There are the reformists of various kinds — the Communist Party of Iraq, and groups of reformist intellectuals.

but the third main section, the core of the action, is the young people, aged from 17 upwards, who have fought on the streets and continue to fight even though hundreds of them have been killed.

Our strategy is to help that core be organized, and to make them aware of their class interests and adopt a political agenda that is compatible with their emancipatory objectives.

The reformists want to find a compromise with the regime, and focus on arguing about things like early election, changing election rules and appointing an independent person as prime minister.

The Sadrists play a reactionary role and want to control the uprising (intifada) from inside. They say they want to change the government, but they lie as their aim is to abort the intifada. They participated in electing Abdul-Mahdi as prime minister.

They try to lead prayers in the square five times a day. Most of the young people aren't interested in that. They tried to ban singing in the square under the pretext of faithfulness to the victims of the uprising, but they were unsuccessful.

One day the activist's bulletin had an article criticising Sadr. The Sadrists tried to grab the bulletin from our distributors, but they failed.

On another day there was fighting between the Sadrists and some of the young people. They attacked one young man, but he came back with more than 70 friends and fought them off. We had a meeting that evening. Sadrists came, carrying metal pipes to threaten us. In fact, they did nothing just stayed watching us.

Iraqi flags, and the slogan "I want my country back", are popular in the uprising. Another slogan is "Iran, get out! Iraq is free!", or "Baghdad is free!"

They reflect patriotic feeling. The flag is seen also as anti-sectarian, as opposition to Shia-Sunni divisions.

At the same time, the flag-waving and so on is influenced by nationalists and Ba'hist and by the media financed by UAE and Saudi Arabia.

There are "Sunni" sectarian trends in Iraq with a pan-Arab nationalist agenda, but they don't present themselves openly in this uprising. They operate under cover of Iraqi patriotic slogans.

The reformists have a slogan "I have come to claim my rights". There are also slogans against corruption.

## COMMUNIST PARTY

The Sadrists have a bloc with the Communist Party in Parliament.

The Sadrists are strong in the Thawra City suburb of Baghdad. That's due to their suppression of the people and the control they have on the streets, and the access they can offer to economic resources like jobs, rather than coming through the mosques and religious beliefs.

The Communist Party's alliance with the Sadrists has alienated many young people. But often the mood is "against all parties". The bourgeois international campaign against "communism" has weight among young people.

The mood in the uprising, I'd say, was neutral on the Islamist militia attack on the US Embassy. Some of the young people have illusions that America will help them get rid of the Islamic parties, but in any case, they don't support that militia attack. The common view is that they want a country free from intervention both from Iran and from America.

In general terms, the movement is socially left-wing. It has the potential to deal a blow to political Islam across the region. We have to take responsibility for doing our best to develop the movement and change the direc-



A protestor and a police officer, 13 January 2020, Baghdad. CC BY-SA 4.0 [bit.ly/bdad-20](http://bit.ly/bdad-20)

tion of it, to help define the meaning of victory for the movement and work hard to help the uprising triumph and fulfil its emancipatory and progressive aims and objectives.

The demonstrators have called for strikes, and there have been some, in government services. But that's limited.

## WORKING CLASS

Although the struggle of different layers of the working class for immediate demands are taking place continuously even in the circumstances of the uprising but the moment has not come yet for these two sides of the movement to be consolidated in one working class mass action. The trade unions are weak, and the working class is not strong enough politically and organisationally.

The major union federation has a regressive leadership, linked to the Sadrists and ex-Ba'hist. It has tents in the square and declares itself part of the movement, but its leader has met Abdul-Mahdi to seek a compromise.

We have links with other trade unions like the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq, but they face many restrictions in organising working-class masses.

Street-market traders and people like that have some sympathy for the cause of political reform but are not engaged in the movement.

The oil workers in Basra are potentially powerful, but they're highly controlled. They may join the movement later, but in the absence of a real alternative to the government, most workers may still prefer waiting over participation.

Students strongly support the uprising and engaged in it. Every Sunday tens of thousands of students from the universities, schools and polytechnics in Baghdad come to Tahrir Square to support the uprising. Similar kind of support and engagement takes place by the students of other cities in the south of Iraq.

Many universities including University of Baghdad have still not opened since October, and many lecturers support the students.

I remember Lenin's slogan from 1917: "patiently explain". We have to convince people. We've convinced some, many are doubtful, some oppose us.

We've had some good results for enrolment to our organization — new activists who are not just isolated individuals but have influence on others.

The Worker-communist Party of Iraq are in Tahrir Square, too. Their evaluation is different from ours. □

• Muayad Ahmed is an activist with the Organisation for the Communist Alternative in Iraq. He talked with Martin Thomas from *Solidarity*.



## Moving forward, turning outwards

By Micheál MacEoin

On 18 and 19 January, Alliance for Workers' Liberty members from across the country met for our annual conference to debate and democratically decide upon our programme and priorities for the class struggle ahead of us, and elect our committees.

The conference opened with a discussion on a document which provided a comprehensive Marxist analysis of the climate crisis. It argued for a socialist environmental transitional programme, fighting for worker-led "just transitions", and for a united front approach to campaign on issues such as fracking, new fossil fuel plants, and the Socialist Green New Deal.

Trade union activists emphasised the necessity of scrapping the anti-trade union laws to fight effectively in our workplaces, and the importance of linking unions and workplace activism to the inspiring climate strike movement. One point of difference was on the argument that phasing out almost all animal products will be necessary to allow adequate reforestation and reduce carbon emissions: the conference decided to remit it for further discussion.

### REGROUPING

Our second debate, about regrouping the socialist left and building our own organisation, registered the setback of the 12 December 2019 general election. It fits in with the rise of a new radical right internationally, of which Johnson is a UK variant.

Much debate focused on the long-term changes in the working-class movement as a result of four decades of ruling-class attack and neoliberalism. Though the Corbyn movement saw a large membership boost for the Labour Party, much potential was squandered. Many members remained atomised

and passive supporters, without becoming consolidated into an activist force that could remedy the profound democratic deficit in the party.

The surge of a political left found no equivalent echo in the trade unions, which for now remain bureaucratised and usually with a stagnant and ageing membership and a low rate of strikes.

Our agency for tackling all these challenges is the building of a Marxist organisation, critical, sceptical, principled, and strengthened by a culture of political education and working-class solidarity. Even on 12 December, young people mostly voted left-wing, but that youthful leftism mostly remains atomised. Our task is to turn outwards, to make ourselves visible and accessible to interested young people, and persuade young radicals to become active socialists and workplace agitators, and to transform the labour movement to make it fit to fight for socialism.

### LABOUR LEADERSHIP CONTEST

A discussion on the Labour Party leadership contest brought some vigorous debate. The majority vote was to support none of the candidates for the time being: we see no sufficiently clear differentiation that marks any one out as the "left candidate". Rebecca Long-Bailey's record is meagre: her most distinctive themes have been "progressive patriotism", and close ties to the Unite union bureaucracy, which has been a force for equivocation on free movement, Brexit, and climate politics in the Labour Party.

Our stance will be an active, interventionist, one, promoting a charter of democratic demands on the Labour Party, including open selections, democratisation of the trade union link, a culture of open and free debate and political education in the party, and an end to the exclusion of socialists simply for their beliefs. This will be necessary to build

and empower the rank-and-file of the movement to hold any leaders to account, and return Labour to its labour movement roots.

### FEMINISM

Other key debates at our conference included a socialist feminist document which re-stated our Marxist analysis of the roots of women's oppression. We resolved to further develop demands for the labour movement against discrimination and sexism, including interventions into Labour Party structures, and will consider organising further reading groups, public meetings, and even a conference.

We also discussed the situation in Israel/Palestine, with the increasingly chauvinist Israeli government counterpointed by some signs of hope with organisations such as Standing Together. We resolved for renewed campaigning for Two States, as well as further discussion on the nature of left antisemitism and racism.

We were all agreed on the need for universal secular education, and a push back against the pressures on children from reactionary religious elements within communities and families, but the conference rejected a proposal to make propaganda for a ban on the hijab for children in primary schools.

As well as written statements from a number of supportive organisations in France, Italy, Iran and our sister organisation in Australia, we also received greetings passed on from the L'Étincelle faction in the NPA in France, reporting on the wave of struggle against the Macron government.

These greetings, together with a rendition of the Internationale, left comrades inspired to throw ourselves into the struggle ahead, to fight for solidarity, for hope and for the socialist future. □

• All motions debated: [bit.ly/awl-20](http://bit.ly/awl-20)

## Exclusion first, politics second?

By Martin Thomas

Labour Transformed, launched apparently by some of the backroom people of The World Transformed (TWT), held its second meeting at Westminster University on 25 January, after a first meeting on 14 December.

We saw about 30 people go in, and are told the numbers later rose to maybe 50.

TWT, a spin-off from Momentum, has organised "festivals" of debates and workshops on the fringe of Labour Party conference since 2016.

LT has made no mention of the second meeting on its website or social media.

People claiming to speak for the (anonymous) organisers — for example in urging the staff of Westminster University to chase us off the steps of the building — told Workers' Liberty people (and others, from the Red Flag group, for example) that they were establishing a "democratic centralist" group, and so would exclude members of other organised groups, even those who had received a ticket for the meeting by email.

Quite a few of those arriving, however, told us that they had come expecting a broad Labour left get-together, and were puzzled by the exclusion. LT has so far published no political basis other than a bland text which almost all Labour left-wingers would nod along to.

We're also told (but can't check) that the SWP splinter groups RS21 and Counterfire were invited, and RS21 attended.

As far as we can make out, no full political text was decided by the meeting. There was discussion of setting up a limited liability company (the better to secure contact data), and there were working groups.

Conflict between left groups with big political differences is inevitable, but is best conducted by open debate, combined with cooperation where possible.

Deciding on exclusion first, and without even telling many of those you want to bring inside your exclusive group who you've excluded or what the political basis is, is the wrong way round. □



Urte Macikene

## More online

### Where now for "Labour for a Socialist Europe"?

Interview with Urte Macikene

• [bit.ly/urte-i](http://bit.ly/urte-i)

### Socialist Worker and antisemitism

Learning nothing over three decades

• [bit.ly/sw-as-3](http://bit.ly/sw-as-3)

### Problems with the Board of Deputies' 10 points

• [bit.ly/bod-10](http://bit.ly/bod-10)

### Clive Lewis's last-minute manifesto

• [bit.ly/cl-manif](http://bit.ly/cl-manif)

# The Washington No Show Trial

By **Barrie Hardy**

For all Trump's talk of witch hunts and show trials, impeachment proceedings against him in the US Congress have turned into one big no-show trial.

No new evidence allowed. No witnesses permitted. No documents released.

The suggestion that if they were to hear witnesses it would have to be behind closed doors, for fear of what the American public might otherwise learn, reeks of the kind of behaviour expected in Putin's Russia or Saudi Arabia rather than the USA's supposed beacon of democracy.

The impeachment trial has become a travesty. All parties know Trump is guilty as sin, but also expect him to be acquitted because the Republican majority in the Senate won't convict. It's like a white supremacist being tried for the murder of a civil rights worker and finding more than half the jury are members in the Ku Klux Klan. Such an analogy isn't too far from the truth in the current climate.



Azar Majedi

## Call for "third front"

On Saturday 11 January 2020 Workers' Liberty hosted a public meeting in London on the conflicts in the Middle East following the USA's 3 January assassination of Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian state's "Quds Force".

The speakers were Morad Shirin (Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency), Noori Bashir (Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan), Azar Majedi (Worker-communist Party of Iran Hekmatist), Muayad Ahmed (Organisation of the Communist Alternative in Iraq), and Martin Thomas (Workers' Liberty).

Aman Kafa from the Worker-communist Party of Iran Hekmatist Official Line sent apologies for being unable to attend.

All the speakers, with different nuances, stressed the need for what Morad Shirin called a working-class "third front" against both the US and Iranian states.

Following the meeting, Muayad Ahmed led a supplementary discussion in which he reported on the uprising in Iraq. □

Yet additional evidence has leaked from the cesspit of criminality and corruption that has hallmarked Trump rule.

Evidence from the administration's own accountability office says that Trump's decision to withhold funds to Ukraine violated the law. The Ukrainians themselves have opened up an investigation into the illegal surveillance of the former US ambassador there, Marie Yovanovitch, believed to have been carried out by goons in the employ of Trump's deranged lawyer, Rudy Giuliani.

One such hireling, Lev Parnas, has continued to spill the beans in the hope of a lighter sentence on fraud charges. His latest claim is that Trump knew exactly what was going on regarding bullying tactics to make Ukraine declare the opening of investigation into baseless allegations against Joe Biden and his son and a discredited conspiracy theory that it was Ukraine not Russia which interfered in the 2016 election.

### AUDACIOUS LIES

Trump, of course, doesn't know who Parnas is, despite boasting he has "one of the greatest memories of all times." There are plenty of photos of Parnas with Trump and his odious offspring to prove otherwise, and audiotape of a conversation between them, but "I never knew him" is one of the standard responses whenever Trump minions get caught out.

Another argument goes that anything Parnas says can't be trusted because he's a crook and a liar — the assumption is made that anyone in Trump's of close associates fits that description!

"I didn't know him all that well" is applied to jailbirds Michael Cohen and Paul Manafort, shortly to be joined in a couple of weeks by Roger Stone. Pardons for a least two of these reprobates will probably be among Trump's first acts should he get re-elected.

What is the prospect of Trump winning in November? What effect will his extremely unlikely impeachment have on that?

Senators trying Trump have all sworn an oath of impartiality, but nobody expects any



of them to abide by it. A recent CNN poll found 51% wanting Trump impeached and removed from office, with 45% against. Whether these numbers shift significantly as the trial progresses or there's an outcry against blatant Republican rigging attempts remains to be seen.

### REACTIONARY CONSTITUTION

Despite an increase in the anti-Trump vote, Trump could still win in November. The reactionary bias of the 18th century US constitution — drawn up at the time for the benefit of the southern slave owning class — is a major roadblock to radical social change now.

In his native New York 80% of the population hate Trump's guts (hence his recent change of residency to Florida), yet votes piling up in the big cities on the East and West coasts will count for little. The Democrats may double the three million lead Clinton got in the popular vote in 2016, but the swing states of middle America are the vital battlegrounds. They are won or lost on very nar-

row margins. The Democrat have yet to decide who they'll put up against Trump, but all the likely candidates are clocking up similar poor poll ratings to the ones Trump presently enjoys.

It is difficult to see how Biden — the "safe" choice — will energise the largest section of the American electorate, namely the 45% of the adult population who didn't turn out to vote last time. Biden will have a predictably uninspiring political programme which doesn't provide a lot of confidence for those wanting Trump out of White House.

Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders will doubtless face hysterical "red scare" tactics from the right, but with a focus on promoting universal health care policies stand a better chance of energising voters.

Hostility to socialist ideas in America is still formidable, but is weaker now than any other time since 1945. Notwithstanding, these are dangerous times given the way the Trump Presidency has emboldened the far right. □

# Salvini down, but Meloni up

By **Hugh Edwards**

The outcome of Italy's regional elections on Sunday 26 January in Calabria and Emilia Romagna was markedly contradictory.

In Calabria the combined forces of the reactionary bloc of the country's CentreRight, capitalising on the freefall of the Five Star Movement since it became Italy's leading party in the March 2018 election, romped almost casually to victory.

It defeated a candidate of the centre-left bloc, led by the Partito Democratico, an outfit, like its opponents, long mired in the dead-eyed exercise of cynically serving the needs of the rich, powerful, and criminally corrupt of the Mezzogiorno and the islands.

In Emilia Romagna, however, there was a massive turnout in the election, especially from the major cities, Bologna, Ravenna,

Modena, Rimini, etc.

The gap between the winner, the PD-backed Bonnacini, and his opponent the centre-right-backed Borgonzoni, in terms of experience and institutional credibility was huge.

Sections of Berlusconi's Forza Italia, along with three of the "radical left" groups, backed Bonnacini. Significant strata of former left supporters, long inactive, were reactivated.

Crucial to that was the role of the Sardine movement. For more than two months previous, it campaigned in all the major cities and towns, with mass demonstrations against the electioneering of Salvini and his supporters.

It underlined again and again its opposition not just to Salvini and La Lega but also to the racist and anti-working-class security laws introduced by him under the previous Conte-led coalition with Five Star, and still on

the statute book under the current PD/ Five Star government.

Electorally, his hegemony remains intact, especially in the countryside and the small town peripheries long vanished from the programmatic radar of the centre-left forces that for two decades had remained in power in Emilia Romagna.

Politically, however, the Emilia Romagna result is a setback for Salvini.

Both the party and Salvini's own personal ratings have declined, nationally. But Giorgia Meloni, leader of the openly-declared neo fascist Fratelli d'Italia now tops him. And in Emilia Romagna, in some of the areas contested, her party out scored La Lega.

The Fratelli d'Italia now stands at about 11% in national opinion polls, up from below 5% until April 2019. □

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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.

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- 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.

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# Free Our Unions challenges Labour leader candidates

By Daniel Randall

The Free Our Unions campaign has made plans to renew its activity in 2020, following an organising meeting in London on 8 January.

It is circulating a new statement, calling for united resistance across the labour movement to the threat of new anti-strike laws.

Signatories include Michelle Rodgers, president of rail union RMT, Ian Hodson, president of the Bakers' union, UCU general secretary Jo Grady, Labour MPs Nadia Whittome and Clive Lewis, and three RMT branches (Bakerloo, Finsbury Park, and East London Rail).

The Public and Commercial Services union also backed the statement, following a vote at its National Executive Committee.

On the basis of this statement, Free Our Unions plans to approach other campaigns and groups active around similar issues, including the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom, Institute for Employment Rights, the Trade Union Coordinating Group, and the National Shop Stewards Network. Free Our Unions is working with other



labour movement bodies, including Islington and Lambeth Trades Councils, to organise a broad organising meeting on 11 February at the Lambeth Unison offices.

Free Our Unions has also written to all Labour leader and deputy leader candidates, requesting that they commit to supporting the policy passed at successive Labour conferences, for the repeal of all

anti-union laws, not just the most recent, and to supporting resistance to the Tories' new anti-strike law. Only Clive Lewis committed to the pledge, prior to dropping out of the contest.

The campaign is also cosponsoring a Trade Union Bloc on the 14 February youth climate strike, called by the PCS branch at the Department for Business Energy, and

Industrial Strategy (BEIS). BEIS is a key department in terms of climate change policy, and is also the government department where the Tories' new laws restricting strikes will be developed. Outsourced workers at BEIS recently struck to win living wages and greater equality with directly-employed staff.

Free Our Unions has previously issued joint statements with the UK Student Climate Network emphasising the links between the fight against climate change and the need for free trade unions, able to strike over political issues.

Free Our Unions supporters working in the transport industry, targeted by the Tories' proposed ban on "all-out strikes", as well as workers in other "essential services" to which such a ban may be extended, will also be writing testimonies about their experiences of striking, and what the effect of the new laws would be on their ability to defend and improve their conditions. □

• Daniel Randall is RMT Bakerloo branch assistant chair, writing here in a personal capacity.

## FCO dispute renewed



**John Moloney**

Our members at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who are employed by Interserve, are striking for a month, throughout February.

This is an ongoing dispute; the workers are striking to win living wages, union recognition, and greater equality. Ultimately the demand is for direct employment, they should be employed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

on civil service terms and conditions.

We want to build maximum support for the strike. There will be picket lines every day, and we're trying to persuade the TUC to launch the "I Heart Unions" month, which runs throughout February, from the picket line. That's what the month should be for: highlighting active strikes and struggles.

We're making a major effort to mobilise other PCS branches to support the picket lines. We're also building political pressure, and expect various Labour MPs, includ-

ing leadership candidates, to visit the picket line.

Our branch at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has called a Trade Union Bloc on the 14 February climate strike. We hope the Foreign and Commonwealth Office strikers will march from their picket line to join the bloc at BEIS.

BEIS is a key department in terms of climate change policy, and it's also the department that will develop proposed new laws restricting strikes in the transport industry. The branch has rightly drawn these links in the publicity for the climate strike bloc; the fight against climate change needs free trade unions, able to strike legally over political issues.

Fighting anti-union legislation is something the whole labour movement needs to take more seriously. Our National Executive Committee recently voted to support the Free Our Unions campaign's new statement, calling for united resistance across the labour movement to the threat of new anti-strike laws.

BEIS has also recently been the sight of inspiring strikes by outsourced workers, which resulted in big victories against outsourcing giants Aramark and ISS.

As a union we want to organise and empower outsourced workers

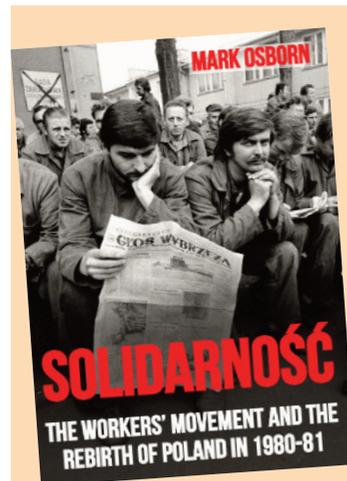
across the civil service. In the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the biggest single department in the civil service, G4S, one of the largest outsourcing firms in the world, currently has the contract for security staff. GMB has a recognition agreement with G4S on that contract.

Our preference would be to have a joint dispute alongside them, but unfortunately we recently discovered via a Freedom of Information request that their recognition deal includes a no-strike agreement.

That is obviously a significant impediment to organising and action. Tim Roache, the GMB general secretary, has said that if GMB members in DWP vote to take action, they won't be blocked from doing that, which is obviously encouraging. It would be better, however, if GMB formally repudiated the deal and found a way out of it. We are happy to work with other unions with members in the civil service; but we want that work to be on the basis of joint disputes and industrial action.

This is not about intra-union rivalry, it's about what's best for workers, and what best enables them to take on their employer. □

• John Moloney is Assistant General Secretary of PCS, writing here in a personal capacity.



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# UCU strikes to restart

By a Cambridge UCU member

Although the action is yet to be announced, the next round of the university and college union (UCU) dispute appears set for the second half of February.

Where strike ballots exist, they are either related to action defending the USS pension scheme, or over casualisation, pay, workloads and equalities (the “four fights”), however in most universities live ballots exist for both disputes simultaneously. A further 37 branches are currently being re-balloted, which alongside the live 98, would significantly enhance the strike’s impact, which in November and December saw thousands of UCU members take action over 8 consecutive days.

Support from UCU members to escalate the next round of action is building. In December, at a special Higher Education Sector Conference (HESC), UCU branch delegates from across the UK met specifically to discuss future action over the USS aspect of the dispute. This conference backed a motion [bit.ly/3aN1ozx] supporting a further 14-day walkout in February and March spaced over four weeks,

split into 2, 3, 4, and then 5 day periods.

Although the HESC has no technical authority to decide on the length and timings of any strikes, there appears to be a majority in favour of this position on the body that does (the HEC).

There has been a debate more widely amongst the union membership about whether the two separate disputes should be de-coupled, with proponents offering little more than technocratic reasons (e.g. the disputes may end at different times, or that they’re being negotiated between different bodies). None of these should convince us though, given what these strikes are about more fundamentally — an attack on the basic rights of workers in universities, a drive to marketise and privatise the higher education sector.

Without a long-term stable pension, university workers are being forced out of the sector through fear of poverty in retirement — and without a decent wage or a stable contract, there is little more convincing them to stay. Higher Education institutions have been using both of these battering rams to smash working conditions for decades; ignoring how these are

rooted in the same attack would break the solidarity built between those involved in these struggles which have so far been taken together.

Basic class solidarity means it is our duty to fight the oppressive structures — that embed gender pay gaps, strip us of our pensions, and force us to work longer, with less, for less — all with equal force.

Locally in Cambridge our branch met recently to discuss the above, unanimously supporting a position consistent with the HESC conference motion, and that all escalated action on USS should be taken simultaneously with the Four Fights. An additional statement submitted by myself passed in part; with the branch making clear that the transparency of the negotiations must be improved, supporting the need for daily reports from the negotiators, but rejecting the notion that such negotiating meetings should be live-streamed.

Although local members were rightly eager to build our next strike, we must also make sure we can hold our negotiators to account as our actions intensify — we don’t want to repeat the same de-escalation episode that we suffered in 2018. □

# Setback on testing

By Duncan Morrison

The indicative ballot run by the Lewisham (south London) district of the National Education Union (NEU) to boycott high stakes testing in primary schools closed on 20 January.

The result was an 87.7% vote to boycott, which is the highest “yes” vote in the recent campaign for a boycott. But, disappointingly, the turnout was only 25.5%. This means that we will not be able to progress to the formal ballot.

The fight to boycott this toxic testing system will now have to go back to the national conference of the union in early April. We hope to get that conference to discuss a motion from Lewisham District calling for a new national indicative ballot — and to amend the motion, in light of Lewisham’s latest result, with proposals to ensure that the leadership of the union cannot

squander a promising national indicative ballot result, as it did last year. We aim to open up the possibility of a formal ballot with the widest disaggregation (to open the way to boycotts in areas meeting the legal thresholds even if the overall national result falls short).

The turnout in this latest ballot was disappointing. It obviously reflects the lack of confidence among trade unionists across the board and the passivity and conservatism of the national leadership of the NEU, which has chosen to not lead this campaign.

That school workers had to go through another indicative ballot, having successfully beaten the anti-union thresholds on the exact same issue in June’s indicative ballot, did not help either.

There were also a myriad of secondary factors: the total lack of support from either the national union or London region to build turnout; that we had to do the bal-

lot in the first two weeks of term; that the ballot emails came from an unknown company, on the day after the District expected them to arrive, and then often went in to members’ “junk mail”.

Lewisham NEU activists have begun discussing how we build the union locally to ensure we can deliver successful ballots despite and in the face of indifference from the bureaucracy.

We also will continue to seek ways to push the leadership and change the leadership so that the union responds to potential fights not timidly but by building members’ confidence and belief that they can win.

Despite our disappointment, we know we were right to fight and push this as far as we could. We may have lost this battle, but we haven’t lost the war. □

• Duncan Morrison is Assistant Secretary of Lewisham NEU, writing here in a personal capacity.

# CWU says reballot soon

By Darren Bedford

Postal workers’ union CWU plans to reballot its members in Royal Mail, after a previous ballot was injunctioned by the High Court.

A message to members from the union’s postal Deputy General Secretary Tony Pullinger on 17 January said, “We will now re-ballot our members — this dispute is far from resolved.”

Despite the apparent immediacy of Pullinger’s message, no firm

plans for the ballot have since been announced.

The dispute centres on Royal Mail’s plan to restructure parcel deliveries into a separate company, creating the possibility the less profitable letter delivery arm will be run down, leading to job cuts. Workers are also demanding Royal Mail honour a previous agreement to reduce the working week.

The previous ballot returned a 97% majority for industrial action on a 76% turnout. □

# SWR guards vote to continue strikes

By Ollie Moore

Guards on South Western Railway (SWR) have voted for the sixth consecutive time to continue strikes in their battle to resist the imposition of Driver Only Operation (DOO).

The guards, who are members of the RMT union, voted by an 82% majority to continue strikes, and by a 92% majority for action short of strikes, on a 56% turnout.

They previously struck for the entirety of December, the longest single strike in British railway history. The Transport Secretary Grant Schapps has recently commented that SWR was “not sustainable in the long term”, but the government has so far held back from taking the franchise over.

It is an open secret that Department for Transport interference led to SWR bosses pulling out of a deal that would’ve settled the DOO dispute, and for which

strikes planned in September had been called off. While public ownership is clearly preferable to the franchise remaining in private hands, there is little doubt that, should SWR be taken over by the government, the DfT would prove a determinedly anti-union employer.

Guards’ reps will now discuss naming further action. A continuation of sustained strikes will let both SWR bosses, and their potential Tory ministerial replacements, know that the workers remain determined, whoever controls the franchise, to see their fight to defend the role of the guard through to the end. □



# Security guards defy police attacks

By Ollie Moore

Outsourced security guards at St. George’s University in south London struck again on 27 and 28 January, in defiance of continued attempts by the Metropolitan Police, in direct collusion with bosses, to break up picket lines.

During a previous set of strikes, from 13 January, police arrived at the picket line carrying letters from St. George’s demanding that the picket be moved. When United Voices of the World (UVW) union lawyer Franck Magennis enquired about the legal basis for the demand, he was arrested.

Although Magennis was later released without charge, police returned to the picket line the following day, insisting the picket was causing a “nuisance” on NHS property (the university is linked to a hospital).

A UVW statement said: “ongoing campaign of repression by the Metropolitan Police and management at both St George’s University London (SGUL) and St. George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust who have repeatedly sought to criminalise lawful trade union activity by misinterpreting Section

119 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, something which on 13 January led to SGUL management being roundly condemned after it resulted in the unlawful arrest and false imprisonment of Franck Magennis Head of Legal at United Voices of the World (UVW), on secondment to the union from Garden Court Chambers.

“The level of police repression increased [on 27 January] as workers and trade union officials were not only threatened with mass arrest under Section 119 but threatened with arrest prior to picketing and whilst also being off site. These harsh tactics have increasingly drawn condemnation from other trade unions, community groups, Constituency Labour Parties and individuals.”

The security guards are employed by outsourcing company Noonan, and are striking to win improved sick pay and pension arrangements, and, ultimately, direct employment. Further strikes are planned for 10-13 and 24-28 February.

To sign an open letter in solidarity with the strike, visit: bit.ly/uvw-stg □



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## AGAINST TRUMP'S PLAN: FOR "TWO STATES"!

By Gerry Bates

Donald Trump, side-by-side with Israel's right-wing prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is announcing his long-touted "plan" for Israel-Palestine as *Solidarity* goes to press on Tuesday 28th.

Trump talked of it as a "two states" plan, but his pointed dissociation, in the run-up to the announcement, from the USA's long-standing formal commitment to "two states", was more apt.

Israel's left-wing Jewish-Arab social movement Standing Together tweeted: "The 'deal of the century' is not a peace deal, and there is no good news or hope in it. What's in it then? Lies".

The internationalist left will mobilise in solidarity with movements like Standing Together, against the Trump plan, and for an authentic "two states" settlement allowing democratic self-determination to both the Israeli-Jewish and the Palestinian peoples.

Trump talked of his text as a "deal", or an "agreement". But unlike previous international plans, this is not a framework for seeking agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. It is a formula for US support for Israel imposing annexations unilaterally on the Palestinians.

The West Bank still has an 80% Palestinian majority (bigger proportionately than the Jewish majority in Israel), and much of the Jewish population in the West Bank is in border settlements which might be assigned to Israel in marginal land-swaps for a democratic "two states" deal.

But Trump's outline is to put the label "Palestinian state" on an ex-

panded version of the 30-odd% of the West Bank where the Palestinian Authority now has some administrative powers, plus Gaza, and to have Israel annex a large chunk of the West Bank round the Israeli settlements and the roads connecting them.

### ENCLAVES

The area annexed would include most of the Jordan Valley, thus making the "Palestinian state" a series of enclaves entirely surrounded by Israeli power, except perhaps at the Gaza border with Egypt.

The Palestinian Authority's current territory in the West Bank is made up of 165 disconnected patches of land. Trump officials said that the plan provides for connections between them by "roads, bridges, and tunnels". There is also talk of a land bridge between Gaza and the West Bank Palestinian Authority areas.

The plan calls for Gaza to be "demilitarised", which can only mean a licence for Israel to invade Gaza to impose that demilitarisation and then keep tight control against the manufacture or smuggling of even low-tech weapons.

"Independence" in such conditions, where the Palestinians would depend on Israeli cooperation for trade and travel with other countries and even between the fragments of Palestinian territory, is hardly more than the powers which the Palestinian Authority now has (mostly to distribute aid money and to police the population).

The suggested "compensation" is promises of US economic aid for the Palestinian territory (Trump



had previously cut off long-standing US contributions to UNRWA), an Israeli settlement freeze for four years (in the areas designated as Palestinian), and a Palestinian capital in "part of Jerusalem" (but elsewhere Trump speaks of Jerusalem being Israel's "undivided" capital).

### GANTZ

Netanyahu's main rival in Israel's general election coming up on 2 March, Benny Gantz, has already welcomed Trump's scheme and pledged to implement it. On 21 January he came out for annexing the Jordan Valley, describing it as an "eastern defensive wall in any future scenario", "an inseparable part of the State of Israel."

On the left of Israeli electoral politics, the left-Zionist Meretz party has announced a coalition with Labor, now a mainstream, centrist social-democratic party which has previously participated in centre-right coalition governments, and Gesher, a centrist lib-

eral party.

Meretz contested the last elections as part of a more left-wing bloc which also included the Greens, led by former Labor MK Stav Shaffir. Shaffir's Greens are not participating in the new Labor-Meretz alliance. The move represents a rightwards lurch for Meretz, who had previously been emphasising the need for Jewish-Arab unity, with suggestions that a new, Jewish-Arab leadership of the party might emerge.

### ISRAELI LEFT

What remains as any sort of left option in the 2 March election is Hadash, the electoral front of the (Stalinist) Israeli Communist Party, which participates in the Joint List of Arab parties.

The Palestinian Authority has already rejected the Trump plan, and almost all Arab states are likely to reject it too.

West-Bank Israeli-settler organisations have also rejected it, on

grounds of the settlement freeze and the talk of even a nominal Palestinian state. Quite likely the plan as such will never be implemented. The Israeli government will use it as license to annex a lot of the West Bank and then tell the Palestinians they can either accept the Trump terms or stew in the status quo.

### INDIFFERENCE

Sadly, much of the left in Britain has been indifferent and unconcerned about the Israeli right wing's annexation plans, announced by Netanyahu in April 2019.

Since those sections of the left reject "two states", and believe only in a full-scale erasure of Israel from the map, they see annexation as making no difference.

In fact annexation will erect great new barriers to a settlement respecting the right to self-determination of both peoples. Mobilise against it! □

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