



& Workers' Liberty

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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Labour: no more delay

NEW PUBLIC VOTE NOW!

As *Solidarity* goes to press on 22 January, Labour has put down an amendment in Parliament which at first sight seems to call for a new public vote on Brexit.

It seems to cut through the messing-around with rival Brexit formulas, all of which have a majority against them in Parliament, in the electorate, and especially in the labour movement.

It seems to say, at last: Brexit is no good. We need a new public vote which can reassess with what we now know, and vote firmly to remain in the EU, with the understanding that Labour will work with the left and labour movements across Europe to change the EU.

It seems to say that. And surely it shows that Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour leadership are feeling the pressure on them from Labour's ranks to say that. But it doesn't say that.

Turn to page 5



Rosa Luxemburg and imperialism

See pages 6-7



Food couriers strike for pay

Bristol Deliveroo workers shut down deliveries on 19 January.

See page 11



Mary Queen of Scots

'Sex in the City' goes to Holyrood.

See page 9

Renew Labour

Dig down to the base

See page 8



Labour: call a Special Conference!

2018 set carbon records



By Mike Zubrowski

The US government shutdown has meant that many leading agencies such as NASA and NOAA have yet to publish their climate analyses across the key global datasets for 2018.

Despite that, *Carbon Brief*'s latest report shows that 2018 set a number of records.

Record levels of greenhouse gas concentrations were reached for CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide. There are still serious net global emissions of all these gases, and they decline slowly: it takes several decades for CO₂ concentrations to decline to 50% of an initial level, around seven years for methane, and the best part of a century for nitrous oxide.

CO₂ *emissions* themselves were the highest on record.

The consequences, too, set

records. Last year was the warmest on record for ocean heat content, a significant rise since 2017.

Ocean heat content is a better measure of warming or climate change than surface temperatures, either locally or globally. The ocean acts as a heat sink and fluctuates much less year-to-year.

The land surface temperature was the fourth highest on record, despite being dragged down a bit by a modest La Niña event [a cooler phase of a global climatic cycle] earlier in the year.

Already this year we're seeing damaging weather effects from climate change. Australia has just faced at least five of its ten warmest days on record, causing wildlife deaths, bushfires, and a rise in hospital admissions due to overheating. There have been mass deaths of native bat colonies, spoiling of fruit orchards. Up to a million fish having died along riverbanks.

Australia has relatively developed infrastructure, making it better able to deal with such extreme

weather than the many poorer countries with warm climates which are facing it at one speed or another.

When climate scientists want to make predictions of future climates, they use "representative concentration pathways", or RCPs, a set of four standard scenarios. Each is assigned a number predicting the climate in 2100: higher is worse. The best-case scenario is RCP 2.6, the worst RCP 8.5. Rob Jackson, an Earth scientist and chair of the Global Climate Project, has warned that we're "a lot closer than we should be" to RCP 8.5.

We are already in a climate emergency. It is still possible to avoid and mitigate the worst outcomes, and adapt to those that we face. Yet we have seen the monumental failures of the ruling class to take any serious action against climate change.

It is down to the working class, organised and armed with socialist and environmentalist ideas and strategies, to bring about that change.



Action in Sheffield

By Michael Elms

On Saturday 19 January Extinction Rebellion (XR) held an open organising meeting of its Sheffield group.

The mostly-young crowd of 30 people was a diverse mix of left-wingers from across Rotherham and Sheffield: students, trade unionists, members of the Labour Party or the Greens...

The discussion was more concerned with "politics" in the sense of policy, motions and advocacy

than you might expect, given XR's national profile has centred on just "trying to get lots of people arrested" in order to drive climate change up the agenda.

The meeting discussed possibilities for direct action but more attention was paid to council policy. Bristol and Manchester have voted to declare a "climate emergency" and bring forward deadlines for decarbonisation targets (to 2030 and 2038 respectively), and the meeting talked about how to get similar policy through in Sheffield City Council.

I argued that there should be a drive to involve the labour movement in this effort, which would include inviting trade unions to make proposals for decarbonisation via a "worker-led just transition".

Plans were discussed for joint activity with local fracking campaigns and for school walk-outs as part of a Europe-wide wave of young people's climate direct action.

The next day of action in schools is set for 15 February.

"No deal" Brexit and the Irish border

By Micheál MacEoin

In response to Theresa May's defeat in her EU Withdrawal Agreement in the House of Commons on 15 January, and the looming prospect of a "no deal" Brexit, Irish transport minister Shane Ross told reporters at a press conference that he "would anticipate that there would be checks" on lorries coming from Scotland to the Republic of Ireland via Northern Ireland.

Afterwards, speaking "privately" to Foreign Minister Simon Coveney (so Ross thought, but his words were caught on microphone), he asked whether or not he should have revealed that fact.

Coveney responded: "Yes, but we can't get into where they'll be at this stage. They could be in the sea, they could be ... But once you start talking about checks anywhere near the border, people will start delving into that and all of a sudden we'll be the government that reintroduced a physical border on the island of Ireland."

During leader's questions in the Dáil, Fianna Fáil leader, Micheál Martin, said: "It seems there is a private understanding and knowledge of a border in the aftermath of a no-deal Brexit, but at all costs that private understanding must not be shared with the public."

Taoiseach [prime minister] Leo Varadkar, insisted: "The preparation for checks are being made at



ports and airports. There are no preparations for checks along the land border."

Foreign Minister Simon Coveney insisted, however that it "remains our view that the only way to secure an orderly withdrawal is to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement".

The Irish government says that the Agreement, especially its "backstop" provisions to avoid a "hard border" by keeping Northern Ireland under EU economic rules even if the UK moves away from them, should not be up for renegotiation.

The only way this makes sense is that the Irish government is betting on any "no deal" scenario being a short-lived interval until a "deal" can be cobbled together between the UK and the EU.

The Irish cabinet met on 16 January to agree memos on the Common Travel Area (CTA) between

the UK and Ireland, transport, and medicine supplies. 60 to 70% of medicines in Ireland either transit the UK or come from the UK.

Moves are underway to recruit customs officials, expand facilities in sea and air entry points, and advise businesses on preparation.

The majority of legislation required for Brexit preparations is to be contained in an "omnibus" bill, and the Fine Gael government is keen to consult with the Fianna Fáil opposition to ensure its passage through the Dáil.

What if there is a "no deal" Brexit? The Dublin government has made detailed preparations for secondary issues in that scenario but, for domestic political reasons, is desperate to avoid being seen to facilitate a physical border in Ireland.

On 22 January, Margaritis Schinas, a European Commission spokesman, admitted that: "If you like to push me and speculate on what might happen in a no-deal scenario in Ireland, I think it's pretty obvious, you will have a hard border."

Yet "no deal" means the UK reverts to trading on World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. One expert has suggested recently that simply failing to apply tariffs on goods entering Northern Ireland from the Republic would leave the UK open to challenge from other countries under the WTO's core "most-favoured nation" rule.

That rule outlaws such preferential treatment.



Fascists on a "Yellow Vest" demo, with a "Celtic Cross" neo-Nazi flag.

Far right in Leeds

By Luke Hardy

The far right organised a "Yellow Vest" pro-Brexit demo in Leeds on 19 January.

Since it was also a RMT strike day on Northern Trains, a special effort was made by the Leeds labour movement to turn out for the city centre picket.

In Manchester recently, fascists on a "yellow vest" demo abused and threatened a picket line.

About 100 turned out to back the RMT: Labour people, various flavours of socialists, Momentum, Young Labour, and Leeds Anti Fascist Network.

A couple of fascists turned up to

jeer and film, but the main yellow vest group stayed clear.

The far-right protest was called by Antifa Public Watch, the same people who tried to break up a Socialist Party meeting in Leeds on 7 January. Their demands paid some lip service to economic issues, but were classic fascist: "close the borders", "put British people before migrants", oppose the "globalists".

There were about 180 of them. There was a neo-Nazi British Movement flag and some of the marchers threw Nazi salutes.

Videos show them jeering at BAME police officers and threatening shop workers who opposed them.



Nottingham left-wing anti-Brexit protest on 15 January



Sheffield L4SE Stall



L4SE outside Parliament on 15 January

Cross-class?

By Ben Tausz

The “Final Say” meeting in Westminster on 14 January, co-hosted by the left-remain campaign *Another Europe is Possible*, the liberal remainers *Best for Britain*, *Hope Not Hate*, and the TSSA union, pitched as a discussion on how a new public vote on Brexit might be won, highlighted key questions for anti-Brexit left-wingers.

It was welcome to see key Labour MPs from the party’s left – Marsha De Cordova, Clive Lewis and Lloyd Russell-Moyle – publicly indicate their support for a new referendum in which Labour should campaign to “remain and reform”. Russell-Moyle said that “there is no good Brexit, it doesn’t exist” and De Cordova said she believed we could and should “change hearts and minds”.

Over the coming weeks, left-wing remainers will have to decide what kind of alliances we can make. Workers’ Liberty has previously made the case that we must not form cross-class lash-ups with organisations of the liberal wing of the capitalist class, but fight an independent, left-wing, working-class campaign (see bit.ly/cr-c).

In the meeting, Clive Lewis offered comradely criticism of Green MP Caroline Lucas (also speaking) for joining centrists and Tories in the People’s Vote organisation. She countered that at least she had been fighting more forthrightly against Brexit than the Labour MPs present.

The AWL made the case against *Another Europe* forming any front with *Best for Britain*, who were also represented on the panel and among the audience. Left-wing commentator Paul Mason responded that on this issue he would work with anyone, and cited arch-reactionary Winston Churchill’s offer during WW2 to unify Britain and France as a supposed example of the long-standing strain of “progressive conservatism” that he wished to tap into. *Another Europe* organiser Michael Chessum suggested that potentially a compromise could be found to work together without sacrificing political independence.

Mason’s long-standing position that remainers should concede ground on free movement also came up and was echoed by IPPR think-tank chief Tom Kibasi. Chessum, Lucas and the AWL all argued that it would be wrong from both a pragmatic and principled perspective for the left to brook any such compromise.

As a referendum becomes more likely, the left will come under increasing pressure to make concessions.

It must have the courage of its convictions, stick to principled alliances within the left and labour movements, and build a credible voice for remaining in the EU to be part of a fight for socialist transformation across the continent.

On the streets against Brexit

NOTTINGHAM

Ralph Peters writes: On 16 January, 30 supporters of *Another Europe Is Possible* and Labour for a Socialist Europe took to the cold streets of Nottingham at rush hour to protest against Brexit.

We called for a General Election and a referendum to stop Brexit.

We met a number of activists that we hadn’t seen since the demobilisation of the local Momentum group, and spoke to dozens of new people keen to get involved, including many migrant workers.

Everywhere we go we find new people wanting to get involved in the campaign against Brexit.

We expect many new people at our next meeting with Alan Simp-

son, former Nottingham South MP and now an adviser on climate change for the Labour leadership, and Ana Oppenheim, Polish socialist and from Labour for a Socialist Europe.

We will be organising more street stalls and protests in the weeks ahead.

SHEFFIELD

Michael Elms writes: Supporters of Labour for a Socialist Europe, the socialist anti-Brexit network of Labour Party members, took to the streets in Sheffield on Saturday 19 January.

We got a good response from passers-by, with dozens signing up to our mailing list. I was struck by the fact that most of those who came to the stall to express support

were older white working-class Labour Party members.

Labour for a Socialist Europe will hold a meeting in Sheffield on Sunday 27 January: bit.ly/SheffLSE.

On 15 January, about 50 people joined an anti-Brexit street protest in Sheffield.

It was a mix, Lib-Dem, Green and Labour. All EU flags and the Ode to Joy until we got out our Labour for a Socialist Europe placards.

We did well with *Solidarity* and leaflets for our public meeting, and I got about a dozen Labour members signed up to the L4SE mailing list. The presence of our slogans deeply upset the Lib-Dem parliamentary candidate there, so it was worth it if only for that.

LEEDS

Luke Hardy adds: There were about 70 people on a Leeds For Europe demo on 15 January.

They included Greens, Lib-Dems, and a few Labour people. There were only five on a Lexiteer protest called by Leeds TUC for the same time.

Labour for a Socialist Europe and AEIP stuff went down well.

LONDON

On 15 January Labour for a Socialist Europe went to the protest outside Parliament with its own placards.

The big crowd was mostly Lib-Dem-minded, but we registered a working-class socialist presence.

Left should unite to save NUS

By Maisie Sanders

The “Board” of the National Union of Students (NUS UK) voted on Wednesday 16 January to abolish the NUS Trans Campaign’s officer, committee and campaign budget.

The Society and Citizenship Vice President post has also been abolished, alongside International Officer, LGBT Women’s Place, and all of the Nations’ Vice Presidents.

NUS Liberation Officers have broken their silence over the democracy cuts and financial crisis to release a statement stating “The secrecy with which NUS has chosen to conduct the process of deciding which officer position is worthy of funding suggests that this is a political rather than a financial choice [...] the Trustee Board should not be setting the political direction of the organisation.”

NUS Trans Conference, on 30-31 January in Manchester, will vote on a motion of no confidence in President Shakira Martin, who voted to scrap the Trans Officer. The Student Left Network will distribute a bulletin and Workers’ Liberty students will hold a fringe meeting on Brazil and the far right. Activists attending plan to hold

unofficial elections for a Trans Campaign committee at the conference.

The NUS Liberation Officers will submit a motion of censure in the Trustee Board and Shakira Martin at every liberation conference in the run up to National Conference, where they will also seek to amend the budget to restore funding to the Trans Campaign. The Student Left Network called for the NUS NEC to vote no confidence in the Trustee Board before its most recent meeting.

SLN will also submit a motion of no confidence in Shakira Martin and the Trustee Board to National Conference in April. No NEC members have yet said they will vote no confidence in the Trustee Board. The NUS LGBT+ officers have also said they will not support a vote of no confidence in the President or Trustee Board at National Conference.

Motions of censure and model responses to the consultation are not enough on their own. It’s not sufficient to register passive protest in the face of the cutting of entire campaigns by a partially unelected body with no say from National Conference or any other democratic body. Students must use the only mechanism they have

to hold the leadership to account and vote to remove those driving the antidemocratic coup.

A source has informed the Student Left Network that the Trustees plan to abolish the Block of 15 section of the NEC and drastically cut the length and size of conference: it is not clear if these proposals are still on the table. The Student Left Network are demanding NUS open the books immediately, and publish full minutes of all Trustee and NUS UK Board meetings.

All cuts already made must be reversed: all decisions about reform must be made by National Conference, not unelected Trustees. Cutbacks must first be made to the corporate-style management structure and excessive salaries: the departing CEO was rumoured to have received an £80,000 pay off.

Student Left Network activists have been told that the left grouped around the leaderships of the liberation campaigns will not work with them and plan to run against SLN candidates in elections (so far Justine Canady, who is running for NUS President, with more to be announced). This is farcical at a time when the NUS right is allying with unelected senior



Posters left by a protest at NUS HQ, “Stop NUS Democracy Cuts”

management to cut democracy behind the backs of its members.

So far, no other candidates have launched their election campaigns. The NUS left must form a united front to save NUS democracy, with a joint slate to stop the cuts.

**SLN Conference
2-3 March
Sheffield Uni
Agenda online
bit.ly/SLN19**

Bakhshi and Gholian jailed again

By Gerry Bates

At 23:55 on Sunday 20 January, a large number of armed men in 15 SUV patrol cars descended on Esmail Bakhshi's home and detained him.

Bakhshi is a representative of the Haft Tappeh sugar-cane workers, in south-west Iran, who have recently been in dispute over unpaid wages and control of the sugar-cane complex. He was previously jailed on 18 November, and released on bail on 12 De-

ember.

Also on 20 January Sepideh Gholian, a journalist and social activist jailed with the workers on 18 November and released on bail on 18 December, was re-arrested. Police came to her parental home to arrest her. Since they had no warrant for arresting Sepideh, her brother, Mehdi Gholian, resisted her arrest. The cops' response was to beat him and then arrest both Mehdi and Sepideh.

Both Bakhshi and Gholian were mistreated in jail; the other Haft Tappeh workers do not

know where they are being held, or even exactly which security agency arrested Bakhshi.

The last two of the 43 steelworkers in Ahvaz, also in south-west Iran, who were arrested on 16 December, were released on 19 January.

The Shahrokh Zamani Action Campaign is campaigning for the freedom of Esmail Bakhshi and Sepideh and Mehdi Gholian, and of Ali Nejati, a former union leader still being held in jail.

• <https://shahrokhzamani.com>



Right, Esmail Bakhshi and above, Sepideh Gholian

Polls, votes, facts, and the Star



By Jim Denham

Opinion polls have earned themselves a pretty bad reputation — for obvious reasons — over the past three years or so.

But the ESRC Party Members' Project is no ordinary opinion poll: it's part of an ongoing wider academic study. Its recent findings regarding Labour voters' and members' attitudes to Brexit correspond to the overwhelming evidence of the last Labour conference and the statistics regarding the Labour vote in the last general election.

The study, part of the Party Members' Project led by Professor Tim Bale of Queen Mary University of London, found that while Labour members still strongly support Jeremy Corbyn overall, they don't agree with him on Brexit.

The polling of 1,034 party members shortly before Christmas found that almost two-thirds believed Corbyn was doing very well or fairly well as leader, and 58% believe he could get a better Brexit deal than Theresa May as prime minister.

But it also found that only 18% opposed Labour campaigning for a second referendum.

If a new referendum was held, 88% of

members would back remain, both in a two-way vote against either May's plan or no deal, or in a three-way poll between all of them.

Prof. Bale noted some difference between the views of Labour voters and members. While a parallel poll of 1,675 voters found 73% of the party's supporters believed the Brexit decision was a mistake, for members that rises to 89%.

The conclusions to be drawn are pretty obvious:

(1) Labour members tend to be loyal and give Corbyn the benefit of the doubt (or at least, were continuing before Christmas to give him that benefit) over tactics regarding Brexit.

(2) Labour members also strongly support Remain and a new referendum — especially if a general election cannot be achieved.

Bale sums up: "Our survey suggests Labour's membership is overwhelmingly in favour of the UK remaining in the EU and badly wants a referendum to achieve that end. It also suggests that Labour voters, while not as keen as the party's members on either count, are in the same camp.

"Labour's grassroots clearly hate Brexit, and although many of them still love Corbyn, he might not be able to rely for much longer on their support for him trumping their opposition to leaving the EU".

So how is it that the Stalinists and other regressive pro-Brexit forces in and around



An academic study says Labour members strongly back a new referendum, especially if a general election cannot be achieved. The *Morning Star* and Skwawkbox distort those findings.

Labour don't seem to understand the survey's findings?

The *Morning Star* (editorial January 4), grudgingly acknowledged the survey's findings, but went on to state, on the basis of no evidence whatsoever:

"It is probable that if a survey sought the opinions of affiliated members — those who pay the political levy through their trade unions — the result might be more in line with working-class opinion as a whole..."

The editorial closed with a statement of such dishonesty that even a hardened old *Star*-reader like your correspondent was taken aback:

Those "who place EU membership over the broader class interests of Britain's working people... keep very quiet on the key finding which shows that while 29 per cent of individual members polled oppose Corbyn's position, 47 per cent support it, while one in 20 don't know."

Bale is far more accurate:

"Labour members are, by their very nature, partisan — and most of them are still fans of Mr Corbyn more generally... Labour members are more supportive of the stance that the party has taken towards Brexit than are voters as a whole or, indeed, current Labour voters. Of the latter, only 30% say they support Labour's stance — compared to 47% of members. Only 29% of members were prepared, notwithstanding their own Europhilia, to say that they actually opposed Labour's stance, although some 24% were ambivalent or said they didn't know.

"Still, it's quite something when, on the issue that 61% of Labour members regard as the number one issue facing the country, only just under half of them actively support their party's stance on it".

Mind you, if the *Morning Star* is dishonest and selective in its coverage of the poll, the equally fanatically pro-Brexit and anti-new-referendum Skwawkbox website (which has links to people within Corbyn's office, notably Karie Murphy) has found a simpler way of dismissing the evidence. Namely, to create total confusion, to deliberately conflate the ESRC poll with a slightly earlier YouGov poll that came up with similar findings, so as to claim that it's all a conspiracy got up by the "establishment" and "liberal 'MSM' outlets".

The Skwawkbox doesn't even refer to the ESRC poll by name (presumably because it doesn't want readers to check it out for themselves) but (03/01/2019) simply denounces the *Guardian's* (accurate) coverage and claims the poll "finds that most — fully 71% — either specifically support his Brexit approach, or don't care enough about it to have an opinion, with a large majority of those supportive".

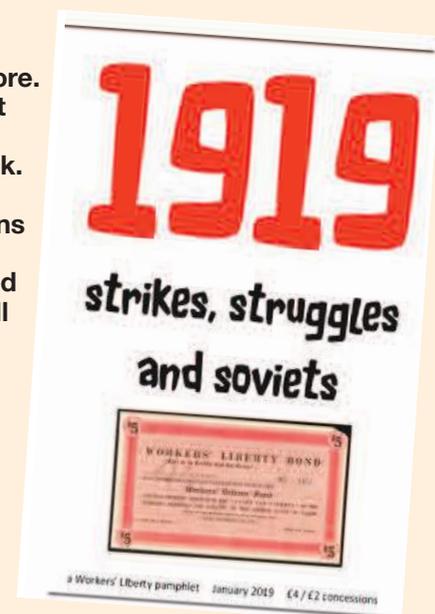
The piece then goes on to show the findings not of the ESRC poll (the subject of the *Guardian* article they're denouncing), but of the YouGov poll — though even that poll found support for and opposition to "the stance that the Labour party have taken towards Brexit" almost exactly evenly split among party members.

The only conclusion to be drawn, given the overwhelming evidence of where party members stand on Brexit and a new referendum, is that these Stalinist Brexiteers are simply liars, seeking to undermine the wishes of Labour members and commit the party to supporting Brexit — and dressing that up as a fantasy "Lexit".

To check the ESRC findings for yourself, go to bit.ly/lc-hb.

In 1919, inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, British workers took more strike action than ever before. But communists in Britain had still not formed a united party. Labour's representation in Parliament was weak. There were similar workers' mobilisations around Europe, rebellions in the British and other empires' colonies, and soviet republics declared in Bavaria, Hungary and elsewhere. All were, in the end, defeated. But only in the end.

Published to mark the centenary, a new short book, written by Janine Booth, tells the story of 1919, encouraging readers to imagine workers' revolution, to consider the consequences of settling for less and to recognise the missing link: an organisation of revolutionaries.



Buy online for £4.50 including postage: bit.ly/j-1919

New public vote now!

From front page

Shadow business secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey told BBC's *Today* program: "It's not stating that the party supports a second referendum".

The Skwawkbox blog, which is close to key people in Corbyn's Leader's Office, wrote:

"Labour amendment does not commit party to any kind of referendum... The wording will no doubt be misinterpreted to suit the agendas of the so-called 'people's vote'... but the amendment stipulates leaving time for those options as required and does not commit to the option of a new referendum actually taking place..."

"The party is rightly keeping all options open until the outcome of the current process is known..."

And, yes, in fact the amendment "instructs the UK Government to secure sufficient time for the UK Parliament to consider and vote on options" to forestall a "no deal" Brexit.

It states those options as amending the Tories' deal to add "a permanent customs union with the EU [and] a strong relationship with the Single Market" or "a public vote on a deal or a proposition that has commanded the support of the majority of the House of Commons".

What to do if no deal has a majority in the Commons, it doesn't say.



Rebecca Long-Bailey

The impasse in Parliament reflects core political facts. The idea of unwinding decades of cross-border economic and social integration to create a newly walled-off Britain makes no sense.

The only real answer to the bureaucratism, neo-liberalism, and despicable barring of asylum-seekers by the EU is Europe-wide solidarity of the left and the labour movement to democratise and win social improvements.

Though Brexit could bring no social or economic improvement, it could stall immigration and make life worse for migrant workers

already in Britain: and for some of the Brexiters, that is the aim. But it is more and more evident that such measures against an important section of the working class would hurt, not help, the working class as a whole.

And it is also clear, now, that any Brexit other than one which keeps a customs union and at least the bulk of the Single Market which the Brexiters dislike so much will mean a new "hard border" in Ireland, new sectarian strife, new regression.

Time to draw conclusions. Time to end the impasse. Time to abandon the nationalist nostalgia and fantasy which swung the Brexit vote in 2016.

Labour conference 2018 should have been able to have a real debate on Brexit, but was manipulated into having just one take-it-or-leave-it composite. Most of Labour policy since the parliamentary crisis on Brexit broke has been distant from the spirit of that composite, and licensed by it if at all only by its silences.

Labour should call a special conference on Brexit, as demanded by the railworkers' union TSSA.

Jeremy Corbyn: stop wavering! What you said in 2016 (not trenchantly enough, but you said it) was right: Remain and Reform!

Commit now to a new public vote!

£9,954 so far, just over £5,000 to go

This week's fund-appeal income is £336.39, mostly raised through sales of badges, bags, and similar at our London Forum on Rosa Luxemburg (19 January), which drew 140 people.

We need just over another £5,000 to reach our £15,000 target.

Essentially, everything we do beyond paying the rent and utilities for our office, and maintaining a minimal paid staff (others of our office staff are unpaid), relies on this fund-raising.

This week people from our office are going to Durham and to Oxford to do meetings. That costs money.

£15,000

As we've been doing the production work on this issue of the paper, we've also printed off and mailed out copies of the "Labour for a Socialist Europe" petition form to our supporters. That costs money, too.

The L4SE petition calls on Labour supporters to press the Labour leadership to back a new public vote and a Remain victory. Petitions are one of the oldest forms of labour movement face-to-face campaigning, on street stalls, among workmates, among friends and neighbours: the Chartist movement geared much of its activity around petitions.

Unlike online stuff, they can be used everywhere, and using them involves and leads into conversations, arguments, opportunities to persuade, opportunities to encourage people into activity (even if it's only taking a petition form themselves, to "radiate" further).

We need the cash to fund that sort of activity. We can't get it without your support.

• www.workersliberty.org/donate

The anti-Brexit campaigns

Labour for a Socialist Europe

Right now L4SE is campaigning for a special Labour conference, and petitioning and putting motions in the labour movement to demand that Jeremy Corbyn comes out against Brexit and for a new public vote.

As well as in labour movement meetings, it is also active on the streets, with stalls, petitioning, leafleting, etc. In fact it is the only one of the anti-Brexit campaigns so far to circulate hard-copy printed petitions for face-to-face activity.

It plans a conference on 9 or 16 March, and is approaching other specifically-Labour anti-Brexit campaigns for cooperation.

• labourforasocialisteurope.org

Another Europe is Possible

Another Europe is Possible (AEIP) was set up before the 2016 Brexit referendum, and campaigned then for a left-wing "Remain and Reform" vote.

After continuing on a low key in 2016-7, it revived in 2018, and did a lot of work to get "new public vote" motions to Labour Party conference.

We dissented from AEIP's rosy assessment of the eventual composite as "all but committing to a public vote" and "defending free movement".

But AEIP did work for the motions, and it organised a left bloc on the huge 20 October 2018 anti-Brexit march.

AEIP has recently come round to supporting the calls for a Labour special conference,

and it is campaigning now with an e-petition for the government to "extend or withdraw Article 50", which we support.

In late 2018 AEIP, previously structured as an NGO, opened itself up to individual membership, and held a conference which elected a committee.

AEIP explicitly defines itself as "cross-party" (meaning mostly Greens as well as Labour; it also has links with Best for Britain), and voted at the conference to support L4SE to do what can only be done by a specifically Labour campaign.

• www.anothereurope.org/

People's Vote

The People's Vote campaign was brought together only in April 2018, uniting Open Britain (run by many of the key figures from the conservative "don't-rock-the-boat" official Remain campaign from June 2016) with other groups on the same wavelength.

It is well-funded, has offices in Millbank, claims 20,000 active supporters, and had enough outreach to organise the huge 20 October 2018 anti-Brexit demonstration.

Its "chairs" are Anna Soubry, a dissident Tory MP, and Chuka Umunna, a Labour right-winger. Most Labour right-wingers have chosen to make a show of deference to Corbyn since the June 2017 election, but not Umunna: there is constant speculation that he may plan a new "centre party", or maybe he just has his eyes set on being the next *but one* Labour leader after Corbyn.

It embraces many MPs, from the Green Caroline Lucas to Remainer Tories, with the emphasis on the Tories.

It does now call for 16-17 year olds, and EU

citizens resident in Britain, to be entitled to vote in a new referendum.

Its people tend to deal with the issue of free movement by arguing that harsh measures against migrant workers and their rights can after all be carried out within EU rules.

• www.peoples-vote.uk/

Best for Britain

Best for Britain defines itself as "a group of campaigners, businesspeople, entrepreneurs and citizens who have come together to oppose and stop Brexit".

Its leading figures are actual capitalists rather than MPs, including Mark Malloch Brown (one of George Soros's deputies in his high-finance business) and Peter Norris (Richard Branson's right-hand man in the Virgin Group).

Perhaps thanks to the influence of its CEO, Eloise Todd, it has a slightly more leftist bourgeois-cosmopolitan tinge than People's Vote. It works with the anti-fascist group Hope not Hate, and sponsors the youth anti-Brexit group Our Future Our Choice.

With People's Vote it co-sponsored a 9 December rally top-billing former Thatcher minister Michael Heseltine.

• www.bestforbritain.org/



Rosa Luxemburg and imperialism

By Martin Thomas

Rosa Luxemburg considered her most important contribution to be her book, *The Accumulation of Capital*, published in 1913.

The legacy of the Polish-German revolutionary socialist leader who was murdered by a right-wing militia operating under the aegis of a Social-Democratic government just over 100 years ago has come down to us through a haze of sentimental misrepresentation and selective republishing, but now can and should be reconsidered.

For decades the two most widely-available texts from Luxemburg were critical notes on the Bolshevik revolution, drafted in jail in 1918, and not published by Luxemburg (in fact, in part, implicitly discarded by her) after she was freed; and a passing polemic against Lenin from 1904. The 1906 article in which she aligned firmly with the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks was unknown (see workersliberty.org/idob).

The *Accumulation of Capital* was also available in a 1951 academic edition, but not much discussed. Beyond that, there were thin pamphlets produced by the Trotskyists of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon, and then the world's strongest Trotskyist group). That was all.

From the early 1970s, several one-volume selections of English translations from Luxemburg's writings were produced, and a *Collected Works* in German which in fact failed to "collect" a big proportion of what she wrote. The new *Complete Works*, now being edited by Peter Hudis, will be fourteen volumes.

In the days when Lenin and Luxemburg were both active, as comrades and friends in the left wing of the world socialist movement of their day, no-one talked of "Leninism" and "Luxemburgism". Both would have subscribed to what Luxemburg wrote:

"Marxism does not consist of a dozen persons who have granted each other the right to be the 'experts', before whom the masses are supposed to prostrate themselves in blind obedience, like loyal followers of the true faith of Islam.

"Marxism is a revolutionary outlook on the world that must always strive toward new knowledge and new discoveries... Its living force is best preserved in the intellectual clash of self-criticism and in the midst of history's thunder and lightning".

"Luxemburgism", as an "-ism", was invented by Ruth Fischer, then leader of the German Communist Party, in the first half of 1925. The invention was part of what was called "Bolshevisation", and what was in fact incipient Stalinism — a process by which the Communist Parties outside Russia were made "monolithic", and their political life increasingly dominated by a chase after "deviations".

Just a couple of years earlier, at the 1922 Fourth Congress of the Communist International, the debate on the "Eastern Question" had been opened by a delegate expounding Luxemburg's theories on imperialism, and no-one complained or protested. Now activists were told that "Luxemburgism" was a heart-in-the-right-place, but economic and spontaneous, "deviation".

In the early 30s, "Luxemburgism" was revived by groups like the half-revolutionary half-reformist SAP (Socialist Workers Party) of Germany, but now with positive connotations. Luxemburg, the new "Luxemburgists" said, offered a more easy-going and ecumenical version of revolutionary politics than "Leninism".

That image has been passed on down the decades. John Berger's words give a comforting and popular version: "she loved workers and birds. She danced with a limp".

The image is condescending, maybe even sexist: Luxemburg as the fey, charming, warm-hearted, sentimental sort of revolutionary, easier to take as a model than the fierce Bolsheviks.

The real Rosa Luxemburg was most formally-educated economist in the whole world socialist movement of her day. She helped build a Marxist movement in Poland much factionally-tighter than the Bolsheviks ever were.

She was damned as "Bloody Rosa" by the German ruling class and conservative Social Democratic leaders. She was an intense, dauntingly argumentative, sometimes over-rigid, theorist. She was not modest, either. When she thought she had new ideas, she wanted people to know that it was she who had developed them.

Frau Doktor Rosa Luxemburg reckoned that economics was "her field". Like Antonio Gramsci, who resolved in prison to write something "für ewig", something lasting, she declared she felt "the need to 'say something great'... to write in such a way as to act on people like a thunderclap".

"HISTORICAL SCHOOL"

Luxemburg alluded to increasing state intervention in capitalism, but — unlike Kautsky, Hilferding, Bukharin, Lenin, and others — did not make much of it. She continued to depict an anarchic market as the main regulator.

Luxemburg's academic education in economics was at a university dominated by the so-called "Historical School". That school of theory is now scarcely mentioned even in university courses on the history of economic thought. At that time, however, it dominated German (and Swiss-German) universities.

Against the Historical School's schematising about nudging capitalism into more "social" forms, Luxemburg insisted on the governing role of market mechanisms. But, almost uniquely among economists whether bourgeois or Marxist, she argued that capitalist markets could not balance — not even imperfectly and via crises — without help from *outside*.

Because that "outside" would tend to become exhausted, the system tended towards collapse. (Of course, she added, the difficulties of capitalism along the way would surely spur the working class into overthrowing the system long before the notional final collapse).

Of all economists other than Marx, her warmest appreciation was for the early 19th century writer J C L de Sismondi, who also, though vaguely, suggested that capitalist markets would not just have crises but be inherently incapable of balancing.



Luxemburg shed light on how imperialism operates. Above: the Germany army, with the complicity of colonial administrators exterminated thousands of men, women and children in concentration camps in what is now Namibia at the start of the twentieth century.

Luxemburg derived her theory, in *The Accumulation of Capital*, of the necessity of help from the non-capitalist "outside" from flaws (as she saw them) in the jumbled and incomplete discussion in Marx's unfinished volume 2 of *Capital* of schemes of "expanded reproduction" — simple forms of the input-output analysis later developed by Wassily Leontief.

Her core argument, however, is really not to do with the balance between the two departments, production of means of production and production of consumer goods, which Marx uses in his schemes. It is about where the purchasing power is found to "realise" surplus value, i.e. to sell the commodities in which surplus value is embodied.

On a first approximation this is a problem even with "simple reproduction" (an economy where the capitalists and their hangers-on personally consume all surplus-value, and production and its proportions are the same each year).

If the capitalists start each period with just enough money to buy the means of production and the labour-power required to produce in that period, then the total purchasing power available at the end of the period (in the hands of workers who have sold labour-power, and capitalists who have sold products) will be exactly enough to buy only the same inputs for the next period, and not enough to buy the extra commodities in which surplus-value is embodied.

All that is required there, however, is that the capitalists should have a cash reserve large enough to purchase a period's surplus-product. That cash reserve changes hands among the capitalist class, but returns to them, collectively considered, after each period. A one-off cash reserve deals with the problem of circulating the surplus-product for any number of periods.

What about "expanded reproduction", though, when the surplus-product includes, in each period, a greater and greater mass of "investment goods" and industrial inputs?

At points Luxemburg appears to be asking, where does the ever-greater stock of money

come from to circulate the ever-greater output? At others, she seems to be asking, what is the purpose of this ever-greater output? Are the capitalists just producing for the sake of producing?

If I understand Luxemburg right, her core argument is a bit different. It is: how does the purchasing power to circulate the ever-increasing surplus product *come into the hands* of the capitalists?

Even if they want an endless spiral of investment-profit-investment-profit, how do they find the purchasing power to enable that flow? Even if more gold or notes or other money has been produced somewhere, how does it get into the capitalists' hands?

"We do not ask here... where does the money for the circulation of surplus value come from?... We ask rather: How does new money capital come into the pockets of the capitalists..."

Of course each capitalist can get new money by selling their own surplus-product: but the capitalists collectively can only do that if they, collectively, *already* have the extra money with which to finance buying that surplus-product. A one-off extra cash "float" will not solve this problem, as it does with "simple reproduction", because in each period an expanded "extra" is called for.

Luxemburg's answer to this puzzle was that the capitalists find an external source of purchasing power in the "non-capitalist environment", notably in Asian, African, and other countries then largely still pre-capitalist.

Yet how do the peasants and others in "non-capitalist environments" get purchasing power? They can do that only selling commodities, that is, by obtaining through exchange some of the purchasing power originally held by capitalists and workers.

When capitalists or their associates loot the "non-capitalist environment" without exchange, as of course they did, that only sharpens the puzzle: where do the looters find the purchasing power to sell the stuff they have looted?



The problem of how to sell the surplus product certainly exists as a chronically-recurrent one. That is not because of absolute lack of purchasing power. It is because capitalists with purchasing-power are holding on to their cash, or restricting credit — because it looks more profitable to wait before making new investments, because they need cash to deal with suppliers demanding prompt payment for goods already received, or because their credit has imploded in a financial crash. That happens repeatedly, but not all the time.

CREDIT

In fact purchasing power is expanded by the continuous creation of credit and credit-money. Most money is created by commercial banks through book-keeping operations: today in the UK, only about 4% of the stock of money (potential purchasing-power) is notes and coins of any sort.

Capitalists use credit to make the transactions in the first place. Then, outside a slump, each capitalist's extension of credit to buy their inputs is "validated", and more, by the payments they receive in due course for their outputs.

The extension of credit and the covering of it by payments received are both continuous processes — rather than there being any magic point in the circuit where purchasing power is pumped in from outside — and those processes, made possible and regulated by the basic mechanism of surplus-value, themselves generate the increase in purchasing power.

The puzzle is heightened by Luxemburg, like many theorists, choosing to model the continuous processes of economic life as a sequence of discrete periods. Between the start of each period demarcated by imagination (the purchase of means of production and of labour-power) and the end (output being

ready for market), nothing happens except production (and the capitalists and workers consuming the stocks of food and so on which they started with). How can more purchasing power have entered the system between the start and the end of the period?

In fact the expansion of purchasing power is a continuous and endogenous process throughout the circuit of capital, not an irruption from outside at this or that point in it.

So Luxemburg's "logical" argument was wrong. It must have been wrong, because the "non-capitalist environment" has been shrunk drastically in the last 100 years, and yet capitalism still has the capacity to grow.

Yet her theory shed light on issues otherwise left in shadow.

More clearly than any other writer of the time, she saw how industrialised capitalism moved inescapably to entwine the whole world. Even some other Marxists sometimes depicted international economic connections as secondary supplements, caused by "gluts" or other glitches in a system depicted as basically national.

Other Marxist accounts of imperialism from that time (Kautsky, Hilferding, Lenin, Bukharin, etc.) chiefly concerned themselves with analysis of the economic mechanisms in the metropolitan capitalist countries which generated competitive colony-grabbing, export of capital, etc. Their accounts of economic development in the colonies or economically-dominated weaker countries were scathing, but cursory (except for one pamphlet by Kautsky).

Luxemburg differentiated between different imperialist relationships. She showed how imperial rule and oppression could come together with economic spoliation in one area, or with promotion of economic advance in another.

On the basis of that scheme, Luxemburg wrote, in the later chapters of *The Accumulation of Capital*, a brilliant account of how the

European capitalist imperialism of her time was simultaneously despoiling countries and drawing them into capitalist circuits of trade. The "violent struggle in Europe", she wrote, which "took the form of revolution against feudalism... in non-European countries took the form of colonial policy", of imposing a "political apparatus for the exploitation of the peasant economy for the purposes of capital — this is the actual function of all Oriental states in the period of capitalist imperialism".

POLAND

In her native Poland, however, so she argued in her first book, *The Industrial Development of Poland*, Russian imperial rule had fostered Polish capitalist industry and created an intertwined Polish-Russian capitalist class.

That was why Luxemburg simultaneously was a fierce champion of colonial revolts, and argued that the majority socialist view favouring the right of nations to self-determination was, for Poland and by extension for other weaker nations *within Europe*, not so much wrong as fantastical and diversionary.

Poland was then divided into an area ruled by Russia, and smaller areas ruled by Germany and Austro-Hungary.

Contrary to much later slipshod summary, Luxemburg did not regard national feelings as irrelevant or unimportant. She did not minimise national oppression, or reckon that "economic" class issues must overshadow it.

She titled one of her articles on the plight of the Polish people "In Defence of Nationality". She argued vehemently for autonomy for both the Polish regions under German rule and those under Russian rule. She declared: "The cause of nationalism in Poland is not alien to the working class — nor can it be..."

But she argued that to restore Polish unity and independence was as impossible and unrealistic as, say, remedying working-class poverty by returning to a smallholder peasant economy.

She opposed agitation for Polish independence not because that was a bourgeois cause, but for the exact contrary reason: that she thought it impossible that there could be a real bourgeois movement for that aim.

We know that Luxemburg was wrong on that too: an independent Polish state was in fact restored in late 1918, shortly before her death. Her comrades in Poland were thrown into disarray when what they had long declared impossible now actually happened.

Yet again Luxemburg's mistakes often contained more illumination than the routine "correct" ideas of others.

By her economic arguments on Poland, she pushed Lenin, in his debates on that issue, into clarifying the irreducible autonomy of politics from economics. Yes, Poland could not be "restored" as an "independent" economic unit: but that did *not* mean that *political* independence was impossible.

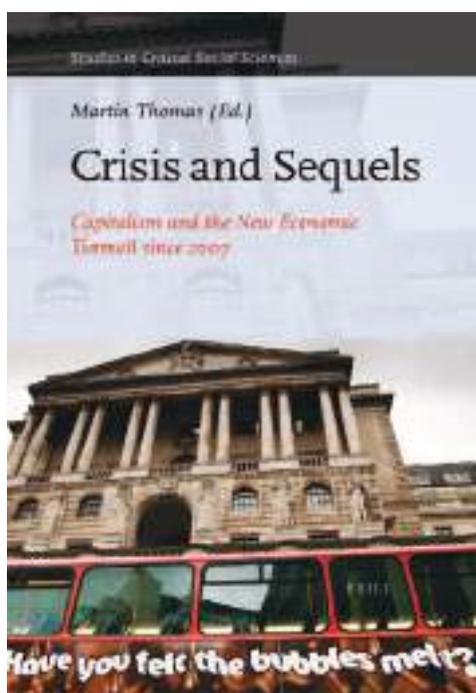
And by differentiating between the economics of Russian imperialism in Poland, and (say) German imperialism in what is now Namibia, she opened the way for theories of imperialism across the 20th century which would understand that there are many imperialisms and many anti-imperialisms.

That is why we should be "Luxemburgists" — not in the Ruth Fischer or SAP sense, but in the sense that we are also Marxists, Darwinians, Newtonians...

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Crisis and Sequels out in paperback



Crisis and Sequels: Capitalism and the New Economic Turmoil Since 2007. Edited by Martin Thomas. Haymarket Press paperback edition, November 2018. ISBN: 9781608460861.



By Janet Burstall

Martin Thomas outlines the guide he followed in compiling *Crisis and Sequels*, a book on the 2007-8 crash and its aftermath now out in paperback edition.

“Analysis must proceed not from a blurred outline of a ‘typical’ capitalist economy, but from the complex reality of a world economy with its own structure and within it national economies substantially different in pattern both from the global structure and from each other”.

Crisis and Sequels is built round 32 interviews with or contributions by 15 economists, organised into five chronological sections as the 2007-8 crash and its sequels proceeded up to 2015. In each follow-up interview the economist was asked to consider their earlier assessments.

Thomas contributes a long introduction, explores differences between the economists in his interviews, and follows up with an afterword and three appendices.

The questions put to the economists in-

clude the cause and trigger for the 2007-8 crash, and whether the crisis period marked the beginning of an end to neoliberalism, and if so in what sense.

What did the crisis and its aftermath show about the role of the USA in the global economy? Does the USA remain the dominant force, or is it beginning to crumble? What does financialisation mean? Where does it fit in economic development?

Martin Thomas does not offer a final judgment of his own on all those matters under discussion. He seeks to challenge himself, and the reader, to keep on thinking through these questions.

COMMON UNDERSTANDING

The book endeavours both to point to the value of trying to reach a common understanding, and how that might be approached through critical dialogue rather than different self-defined “Marxist theories” standing alone, protected by walls of anathema.

It also contains a challenge to the conventional popular formulae of Marxist economics inherited from the Stalinist tradition; it is a contribution to their re-examination, just as in other books Sean Matgamna has re-examined Stalinist-shaped formulas which

have weighed down the history of Trotskyism.

“Many on the left...”, writes Thomas, “make elaborate plans to fight the last war. The spectre of the 1970s (and even the 1920s) still hang over much of the left. Many socialists still regard imperialism in terms of (a garbled version of) the analysis Lenin made during the First World War. They repeat a cannibalised ‘Leninist’, actually Stalinist account of imperialism”.

Appendix 3 argues for rejecting the idea of a tendency of the rate of profit to fall as a thesis with explanatory power in understanding crisis. The “tendency of the rate of profit to fall”, as it appeared in Marx’s unfinished notes later collected as volume 3 of *Capital*, is just one tendency, among countervailing tendencies, operating in a limited context, and excluding other variables.

It “developed traction in the early years of Stalin’s rule, as a convenient reason to abandon revolutionary agitation on the grounds that capitalism’s collapse was inevitable”.

Socialists need to become better at discussing contemporary challenges to working-class interests, in terms of Marxist political economy, and in ways that are relevant and well-informed. This book will help us to do that.

Dig down to revive left activism

By Rhodri Evans

On 12 January the People’s Assembly and other groups mounted their response to maybe the biggest parliamentary-political crisis ever in British history.

They called a demonstration in London: “General election now!”

The People’s Assembly is an anti-cuts group run by the Counterfire split from the SWP, but getting active support and resources from Unite and other unions. It has had the skills and the reach to organise big demonstrations — up to 250,000 on a general demonstration against cuts in June 2015.

The 12 January activity was strongly promoted also by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Socialist Party (SP), and Momentum.

Yet it drew only about 2,000 people. There were, relatively speaking, a lot of union branch banners on the protest, but evidently the union branch activists who keep the banners had not been able to get their branch members along.

The SWP was visibly embarrassed about this. SWP leader Alex Callinicos, in *Socialist Worker*, proposed an answer: instead, Corbyn should organise protests.

“The People’s Assembly march last Saturday could only muster about 5,000 people [it wasn’t 5,000!]... If Corbyn launched a campaign of mass rallies demanding an election, this could help wrest our future away from the Westminster plotters”.

Hold on! Isn’t the SWP’s case for staying outside Labour that we need we need street

protests and strikes as well as parliamentary politics, and the SWP can deliver those when Labour can’t? Now Callinicos is saying that the SWP can’t deliver sizeable protests — only Labour can?

What about the political content? What should Corbyn say at those hoped-for rallies about Brexit, the issue which may bring the government down?

According to Callinicos, “Corbyn offered a way forward in his speech in Wakefield”.

ALTERNATIVE?

So May’s deal, ending free movement, modified by a customs union, plus “a close relationship” with the Single Market — that is “the socialist alternative”?

Callinicos praised Corbyn for saying that working-class people in Tottenham and Mansfield face similar problems. And working-class people in Poland and Romania and France? Do they have such different problems that the answer is to erect barriers in the Channel and pursue reforms-in-one-country behind those barriers?

If one worker blames “Brussels” and “immigrants”, and another worker blames capitalism for social problems, can they usefully unite by splitting the difference? By going for a bit of migrant-exclusion plus a bit of anti-capitalism, rather than arguing out the issues?

The 12 January protest was feeble because its organisers offered silence and evasion on the issue causing the political crisis.

And for another reason too. Historically, activist left movements have been able to mobilise sizeable protests even on off-key slo-

gans, so long as they have some general vigour.

Lots of leftish people think the left is steaming ahead today because the Labour right has accepted Corbyn as Labour leader for now, and Labour is doing not-too-badly in the polls. The increase in Labour Party paper membership is holding up, more or less, and some more leftish policies were adopted by Labour in 2017.

But actually left activist vigour is down. Active participation, and real political discussion, in local Labour Parties, is stagnant or declining, though still much better than under Blair.

The Labour left seems strong through Momentum having 40,000 members, but Momentum functions largely as an online-voting electoral machine, not as a movement with political life.

Strikes, union membership, and union branch attendances are stagnant or falling. The university campuses are quieter than ever. Street demonstrations, other than the huge 20 October 2018 anti-Brexit protest from which the activist left other than Workers’ Liberty was absent, are smaller than before 2015.

The RS21 group epitomises the trend. When it split from the SWP five years ago it had maybe twice as members as Workers’ Liberty. It had many skilled former central SWP organisers and writers.

It had a ready-made large catchment among the large number of ex-SWPs still wanting to be active but in a more civilised way than the SWP; and RS21 *was* more civilised.

Now it is invisible. It has stopped publishing its magazine. It has published on its website a leaflet (following the “ignore Brexit, Corbyn has the answer” line) which RS21 says was for the 12 January demonstration, but the leaflet certainly wasn’t distributed enough that any of us on the protest noticed it.

RS21’s website lists its local groups, but with descriptions like “not meeting at present”, “meeting monthly”, or at best meeting fortnightly.

MILLIONS

Yet under the layer of “returners” from the 1980s, politically eroded over the decades so that they find the *Morning Star* acceptable, under the small groups of younger people focused on getting jobs in the Labour machine or in NGOs — under those layers which so often dominate local Labour Parties, there really are millions of young people who want to be left-wing.

At present those young people find few and weak Young Labour groups or student Labour clubs, and a weak presence on the streets and the campuses of any activist left which has something to say on Brexit and something to say about general politics beyond “Corbyn has the answer, hope he wins the next election”. No wonder they find it difficult to get into activity.

Our job is to help them. The Brexit crisis gives us an extraordinary chance to do that by getting onto the streets, and out to our colleagues at work and on campus.

Sex in the City goes to Holyrood



By Dale Street

At first sight “Mary Queen of Scots”, released in the UK on 18 January, appears to be another celluloid contribution to the cult of Mariolatry.

Its trailer portrays Mary as an armour-clad warrior leading her troops into battle, a target of religious misogyny, a feisty heroine who faces down Queen Elizabeth, a victim of patriarchal politics, a champion of equal rights, and a fatal casualty of her own virtues.

At times, it is true, the film builds up Mary into a kind of cult figure for twenty-first-century feminism, liberal values and gender-identity politics. But that is secondary, by far, to the fact that the film is simply boring.

“I can’t understand why anyone would want to make a film about such an overrated woman, she didn’t have much of a head to begin with,” said historian Jenny Wormald, author of *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*, in an interview with the *Sunday Times* in 1997.

Despite everything, Wormald had a valid point. Even before her execution, the real Mary had been obscured by the beginnings of a veritable cult. In the years — and centuries — following her death the cult increasingly blotted out reality.

As early as the 1570s Mary’s imprisonment by Protestant England earned her a place in the annals of Catholic martyrs. Marian martyrologist Nicholas Sanders even claimed that Mary had refused the English throne out of loyalty to the Catholic faith.

Mary’s execution triggered mass demonstrations in Paris. Adam Blackwood’s “de Jezebelis” (i.e. Elizabeth of England) called for a French invasion to avenge her death. The Spanish “Address to the Captains and Men on the Armada” promised them the aid of “the blessed and innocent Mary, still fresh from her sacrifice.”

MIRACLES

Visitors to her tomb claimed to witness miracles.

There were regular calls for her canonisation. By the end of the eighteenth century this cult had already transformed Mary into what Wormald calls “the male-dominated, passion-ridden female so well known to readers of the novels of Barbara Cartland.”

In later years the Nazis rallied to the cult of Mariolatry. Their wartime film “The Heart of the Queen” portrayed Mary as an innocent victim of England’s drive for world domination, lured to her death by Elizabeth’s machinations. As the film’s Elizabeth helpfully explained: “He who lets himself be helped by England, he dies.”

The film’s format (and not just its format) is the same as that of “The Heart of the Queen”. It begins with Mary’s imminent execution. There is then a prolonged flashback to various (largely fictional) events and snippets torn out of their historical context. These climax in a return to Mary’s actual execution.

As the film progresses, the succession of events and the overall historical context become increasingly difficult to follow. When a film can be understood only if its viewers have read Antonia Fraser’s seven-hundred-page biography of Mary, if even then, there



Margot Robbie as Queen Elizabeth I and Saoirse Ronan as Mary Stuart, in Josie Rourke’s *Mary Queen of Scots*

is an obvious problem.

In place of a script which holds the film together as a whole, each individual incident has its own mini-script, tailored to make a particular point (however artificially). This is made even worse by the frequently deadpan mode of delivery.

All historical films sacrifice historical accuracy to dramatic effect. And fair enough. Such films do not claim to be documentaries. But in this film historical truth appears to be not so much the first casualty as the main enemy.

The film portrays Mary as a monarch committed to the welfare of her kingdom. But before her return to Scotland from France — the opening scene of the prolonged flashback — Mary had signed the country away to France in secret agreements before her marriage to the Dauphin.

The film Mary refuses to marry for political convenience: “I could have married any number of suitors, but I refused them all.” But the only suitors refused by the real Mary were ones deemed too poor (Archduke of Austria) or too minor (various scions of Scandinavian royalty).

Mr. Right for Mary was always someone who had an empire, an army or money — or preferably all three. After the death of her first husband, Mary looked to marry his successor on the French throne or the heir to the Spanish Empire. A return to Scotland was not even on her agenda.

The film Mary dies a martyr. (We know that because one of the attendees at the execution is kind enough to tell us.) But the real Mary was not a martyr to virtue in a world of evil (Elizabeth: “Your gifts will be your downfall.”) She chose to die as a martyr for Catholicism.

She belatedly discovered that she had been “born to offer my blood” for the Catholic faith. She calculated that her death would be “profitable before God for the children of his Church.” And she was set on “spending my blood in defence of the ancient Roman Catholic religion.”

Her execution certainly triggered a cult. But not everybody took out membership. When Mary’s son discovered that his mother’s death warrant had been signed, he

commented: “She should drink the ale that she has brewed”.

Mary was caught — “entrapped” would be more accurate — plotting to overthrow Elizabeth. The Bolsheviks executed the Romanovs, a dynastic rallying point for the forces of White counter-revolution; Elizabeth did the equivalent in her age, only with some hesitation and without the revolutionary determination displayed by the Bolsheviks.

The film’s assault on historical accuracy reaches its nadir with the washhouse confrontation between Mary and Elizabeth which ends the flashback. That no such meeting ever took place is a secondary failing.

The film “needs” the scene for a contrived climactic confrontation between the two monarchs. Mary berates Elizabeth for being her “inferior” and warns her that if she murders Mary, then she will be murdering her “queen” and her “sister”. Elizabeth can only wilt under the pressure of Mary’s verbal onslaught.

CRUDE JUXTAPOSITION

This confrontation-that-never-was is the final example of the crude juxtaposition of the two monarchs which, with increasing tediousness, permeates the entire film.

Mary has orgasms. Elizabeth is frigid. Mary is fertile. Elizabeth is barren. Mary has an alabaster complexion. Elizabeth has a pox-scarred face. Mary has a full head of hair. Elizabeth wears a wig. Mary is relaxed. Elizabeth is pompous.

Mary is surrounded by simplicity. Elizabeth is surrounded by pageantry. Mary enjoys life. Elizabeth is riven by neurotic uncertainty. Mary whiles away the evenings with her servants. Elizabeth maintains a haughty distance from hers.

Mary gallops across the hills of Scotland. Elizabeth wanders aimlessly round forbidding palaces. Mary is a woman. Elizabeth is a man.

“I choose to be a man ... I am more man than woman now,” says Elizabeth. “I will be the woman she is not, I will produce an heir unlike her barren self,” says Mary. And in

the washhouse scene, the three gifts which will be Mary’s downfall are: “your beauty, your bravery, your motherhood”.

The film *Mary* is a 21st century liberal transplanted to the 16th century. When her second husband turns out to be bisexual and spends the wedding night in bed with the gay cross-dressing court musician, Mary forgives the musician: he simply has to live life the way he is.

The incident epitomises one of the core weaknesses of the film’s portrayal of Mary. As the *New York Times* review put it, albeit far too mildly: “Mary’s declarations of tolerance — for foreigners, sexual non-conformists and freethinkers — sound a bit too closely tailored to twenty-first-century sensibilities.”

The review in the American *Vulture* magazine homed in on the same point: “The intermittent stabs at a boardroom’s idea of millennial values renders ‘Mary’ a kind of nothing of a film. It ends up doing the exact same things — pitting women against each other, fixating on fertility and virginity — it claims to find so oppressive for its heroine.”

The film’s John Knox is played by David Tennant, the time-travelling Dr. Who. But the film is such a jumble that it seems to be Mary herself who has travelled back in time — a “Sex and the City” heroine catapulted through time and space from modern New York to sixteenth-century Scotland (although she would have preferred France or Spain).

Scotsnat puddledrinkers will be those who are the most disappointed with the film.

They like their history to be, in Wormald’s words, “a tartan romance which makes folk heroes of failures and thugs, be they Mary Queen of Scots, Rob Roy, or Bonnie Prince Charlie.” And they prefer their films to end with “Freeeeedom!” (“Braveheart”) or mounds of English corpses (“Outlaw King”).

But Mary’s final words in this film are: “We shall live in peace”, followed by a shot of James VI of Scotland and I of England sitting on the throne following the Union of the Crowns.

So, the film does have one redeeming feature after all.

Glasgow equal pay: accounts to settle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By Anne Field

Last October, the lack of progress in settling a long-running dispute at Glasgow City Council led to the biggest equal-pay strike in British history.

On Monday 21 January over 250 women members of the GMB employed by Glasgow City Council attended a meeting to hear an update on the campaign.

The previous week the media had reported that agreement had been reached with the now SNP-run Council in a dispute stretching back to 2006, when the then Labour-controlled council introduced a new pay scheme to address gender-based pay inequalities.

Refusing to adopt the pay scheme used by all other Scottish local authorities, the Council brought in private consultants to create a scheme which did the opposite: it led to women workers being paid up to £3 an hour less than male workers doing work of equal value.

Subsequent Labour-controlled administrations perpetuated the injustice, spending £3 million on legal action to try to defeat the women.

Care workers fight pay cut

By Darren Bedford

Care workers employed by charity Alternative Futures Group are balloting for strikes to resist a pay cut announced by their employer in November.

The workers, who are members of Unison, face a cut of up to £40 following AFG bosses' announcement that they will no longer pay an additional allowance for workers who sleep overnight at service users' homes as part of their shift.

AFG, whose work primarily comes from contracts tendered by local authorities, says that a July 2018 court ruling, which overturned previous rulings from 2017 and 2016, stipulates that they no longer have to top up the pay of sleep-in workers.

Unison's North West Regional Organiser Tim Ellis said: "Councils are paying AFG enough for them to pay their staff decently for sleep-ins. AFG should pass that public money on to where it's supposed to go — to the hard-working frontline support workers who cannot afford cuts to their incomes.

"AFG's current plans are jeopardising service provision, impoverishing staff, and they ignore local councils' wishes. AFG faces the real prospect of strike action if they continue on their reckless course."

Unison's ballot closes on 1 February.



Glasgow City Council workers dress as suffragettes on their protest for equal pay, November 2018

Now the dispute has been resolved — in principle. As Action4Equality lawyer Stefan Cross, who represents 8,000 of the current 14,000 equal pay claimants, put it at last Monday's meeting: "No-one has signed on the dotted line yet".

Neither side had got everything that it wanted, he said. Both sides had made concessions. But the deal — still to be finalised and then approved by a full Council meeting — would be a fair deal and was in line with the women members' priority, i.e. getting paid what they are owed as soon as possible.

There will also be a further pay-out in 2021. Negotiations have begun about a new pay scheme as a replacement for the current one. It will be 2021 before a new scheme has been finalised. In the meantime, the existing one, with its in-built discrimination, will continue to operate.

CALL TO ACCOUNT

Although a final resolution of the equal pay claim is now in sight, other issues remain outstanding.

The City Council Labour Group leadership needs to be called to account. That is to say: They must resign, at least from their positions, if not as councillors as well. When in power they not only failed to meet the women's demands but also did everything possible to defeat them.

Group leader McAveety, deputy-leader Graham and other long-standing councillors who should have been put out to grass years ago, are a dead weight on the Labour Party in Glasgow.

They perpetuated discrimination. The SNP put an end to it. That's how tens of thousands of voters in Glasgow see things — and their perception is 100% correct.

When women workers staged last October's historic strike, the Labour Group failed to back it. While women workers made history, Glasgow Labour councillors picked their noses and looked the other way.

There are also the questions of the "rehabilitation" of Stefan Cross and the failure of union officials to oppose the discriminatory pay deal.

For years Cross has been denounced by Unison in particular as an ambulance-chaser, latching on to equal pay claims which unions claimed to have resolved by cutting a deal with the local authority employers — albeit at the expense of women workers.

At last Monday's meeting Cross made repeated allusions to this, although not everybody in the audience would have picked them up:

"This is the first time in seventeen years I've been allowed into a meeting of trade unionists... They (the GMB) put your interests ahead of what happened in the past. ... There are ambulance-chasers out there trying to latch on to your claims — but that's what people used to call me!"

The Action4Equality blog has also carried some uncharitable comments about Unison officials, both national and Scottish:

"I'm surprised that Dave Prentis and Mike Kirby are doing the talk-

ing here because if you ask me, neither Dave or Mike have covered themselves in glory since this fight began back in 2005 — quite the opposite, in fact...

"Unison's Mike Kirby has burst into fairy lights all of a sudden after a long period of silence over the fight for equal pay. I've known Mike for years and the last time I saw him in Glasgow in the flesh, he was terribly rude which I put down to my work with Action4Equality, as this got right up some people's noses."

Just as Labour councillors must be called to account for creating and perpetuating a discriminatory pay scheme, so too must those union officials who colluded in it.

Finally, there is the question of how Glasgow City Council will find the £500 million or more needed to pay the wages owed to its women employees.

McAveety's administration was so convinced that it would be able to defeat the women workers that it left only £1 million in the Council's contingency fund when it was voted out of office. The SNP has increased this to £35 million, but this is still only a drop in the ocean.

The SNP appears to be planning on extending the Council's current debt facilities (meaning that an even larger amount of council income will be handed over to banks as interest payments) and mortgaging Council properties (ditto).

It has not given a commitment to maintaining services, not even specifically frontline services: According to SNP Group leader Susan Aitken, the SNP will "seek to avoid cuts to frontline services as much as we possibly can" but people will see "differences".

Voters in Glasgow should not pick up the tab for the failures and political bankruptcy of former Labour administrations. The women workers should get every penny they are owed — but not financed by cuts in services and handing over even more money to banks.

Rail workers forced to re-ballot in DOO fight

By Ollie Moore

Rail union RMT's dispute against the imposition of Driver Only Operation (DOO) on South Western Railway is continuing, meaning that anti-union legislation will force workers to re-ballot for a fourth time.

Laws introduced as part of the Tories' 2016 Trade Union Act mean unions must re-ballot every six months, even if the same dispute has continued. The latest ballot closes on 7 February. A union statement said: "RMT has been forced under the latest wave of Tory anti-

union laws to re-ballot for a fourth time in the rail safety dispute on South Western Railway under the six month rule.

"I am confident that once again our members will return an overwhelming mandate to carry on the fight to put public safety before private profit."

Guards on Northern are continuing their weekly strikes on Saturdays, striking most recently on 19 January, where large pickets were mounted in Leeds to resist a threat from the far right.

Further strikes are planned on 26 January and 2, 9, and 16 February.

Food couriers strike

By a Bristol courier

A strike by Deliveroo riders in Bristol on Friday 18 January caused significant disruption, with riders invading several restaurants, despite Deliveroo offering pay boosts to undercut the strike.

We're organising for future strikes and protests, repeated and escalating until we win better pay.

Deliveroo riders are paid per delivery only and are classified as "self-employed independent contractors" rather than employees or even "self-employed limb (b) workers", so we have no minimum wage per hour, pension, or holiday or sick pay. (On the other hand, we aren't shackled by anti-union laws.)

We take on many of the risks and costs — such as equipment — that employers often would, and should, cover.

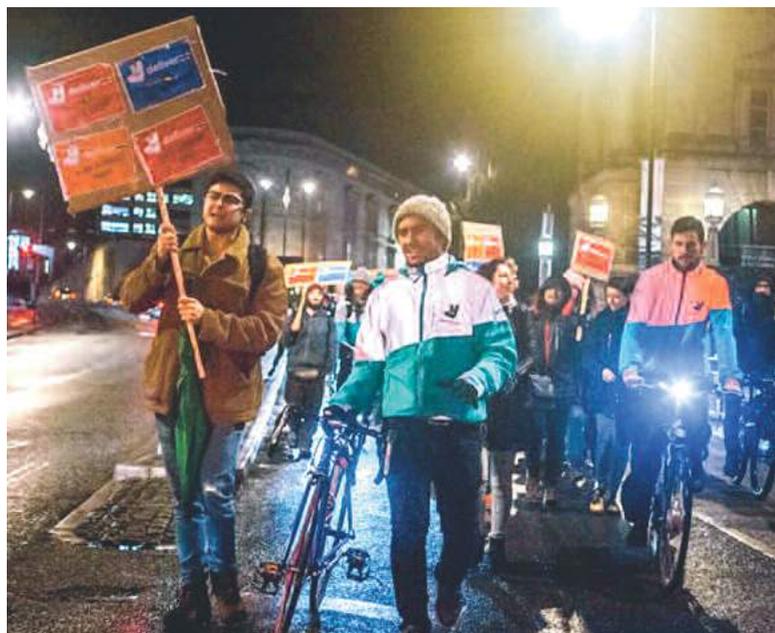
The amount a Deliveroo courier can earn per week has steadily reduced as Deliveroo's operations have expanded. Average delivery distance is longer, and pay per delivery has not kept up with that: since summer it has even decreased. The extra pay for longer distances is meagre, and seems to average around 10-15p per mile.

We are also angry about not being paid during the persistent long wait times at restaurants, which can add up to hours per shift. Deliveroo has consistently over-hired new couriers, reducing the availability of work and allowing Deliveroo to push down the pay per delivery as we are all more desperate to take any work offered.

We believe they receive on average £10 or more per order, but we receive around £4.

Courier demands include a minimum payment of £5 per order, higher pay per distance of £1 per mile travelled, paid waiting time of £10 per hour (or roughly 17p per minute), no victimisation for riders going on strike, and an immediate hiring freeze on new riders, as well as more information on pay, levels of demand, and order location from Deliveroo.

Around 150 people took part in the protest, perhaps 120 couriers and 30 supporters. A slight major-



ity of the couriers present were cyclists, and with the rest motorcyclists, plus one car. We've had difficulty reaching out to car couriers, in part because they are less easily recognisable at work. We estimate that another 100 or so people refused to work but stayed at home.

This work-stoppage hit Deliveroo's operations across Bristol, with many restaurants unable to deliver through the company. The impact was probably smaller than the previous spontaneous strike in December, partly because it was publicised in advance, and so Deliveroo were able to advertise pay boosts.

There has been comparatively low demand for food delivery services through the holiday period and since, and so many couriers felt desperate to work.

We invaded four chain restaurants — Mission Burrito, Wagamama's, KFC and Itsu — who subcontract delivery services using Deliveroo. Managers for all four restaurants called up Deliveroo to complain about this, putting pressure on Deliveroo to pay us better so we don't do it again.

The vibe of the protest overall was energetic, angry and constructive; and it received good media coverage. Many couriers now feel more inspired for future action.

This strike was organised

through the Bristol Couriers' Network (BCN), partly off the back of a previous strike in October.

We've organised a couple of meetings, and then spread the word through talking to riders at restaurants and with bilingual English and Brazilian-Portuguese leaflets.

Brazilian motorcyclists are a significant proportion of Deliveroo's operation in Bristol. They have quite a high degree of communication and sense of community among themselves. The impressive spontaneous strike in December was organised by them and supported by BCN. They organise informally and through "organic" leadership.

The boosts on Saturday and Sunday — offered in Bristol alone — were already a small win for the strike. We need to build on this, in Bristol and beyond.

We need to build a sizeable strike fund to support this. We can win.

Contacts

- www.gofundme.com/bristol-couriers039-strike-fund
- www.facebook.com/bristol-couriersnetwork/
- couriersnetworkbristol@gmail.com
- platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/stacked-orders-petition-deliveroo

Ford workers face jobs massacre

By Darren Bedford

Bosses at the Ford plant in Bridgend, Wales, plan to cut almost 70% of the factory's workforce over the next two years.

Ford plans to manage the first wave of cuts via 370 voluntary redundancies over 2019, with a further 620 jobs due to go in 2020. There are currently 1,490 workers employed at the plant.

The Unite union, which organ-

ises workers at the plant, says it will fight "any compulsory redundancies", a stance which leaves the door worryingly open for management to make the cuts on the basis of voluntary redundancies.

Although there is some hope that winning a contract to produce a new 4x4 for the automotive wing of chemicals and energy giant Ineos might save around 500 jobs, only public ownership can secure the long-term future of the plant.

Instead of limiting itself to only opposing "compulsory redundancies", Unite should take a firm position against any and all job losses, and mount a political campaign for the plant to be nationalised.

They should explore a workers' plan to repurpose the factory's productive capacity away from ecologically unsustainable, market-driven production and towards production for social need.



Outsourced workers at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) struck together on 22 January to demand a living wage. MoJ workers were also due to strike on 23 January. The strike was coordinated between the United Voices of the World union (UVW), which organises outsourced staff at MoJ, and the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), which organises outsourced staff at BEIS, as well as directly-employed civil servants in both departments.

"Cyber-picket" tribunal

By Kelly Rogers

In early January I had my employment tribunal against Picturehouse cinemas. I was sacked, along with three of my fellow trade union reps, over 18 months ago from the Ritzy cinema, in Brixton, part of the Picturehouse chain.

That was in the midst of a high-profile strike, which I took part in leading, by workers in the Picturehouse chain.

I was dismissed for my involvement in "cyber-picketing", an online protest where supporters of the strike would block-book cinema tickets on the websites of cinemas where workers were on strike. While the tickets were in their baskets, they couldn't be sold either online or in person.

It was a tactic employed to bolster the impact of our strikes, when Picturehouse were bringing in strike-breakers and BECTU, our union, were refusing to allow us to hold picket lines outside all of the sites where we were on strike.

Cinemas would remain open, customers would innocently cross our picket lines, and Picturehouse could operate business-as-usual. We couldn't allow that!

After a very successful trial-run of "cyber-picketing" at Hackney Picturehouse, union members from all five striking cinemas agreed the tactic in an all-members meeting. This decision, however, was leaked to management, and, within a fortnight of the meeting, every single trade union rep at the Ritzy had been suspended. In the end, I was dismissed for "inciting people to cyber-attack the company", failing to report "cyber-picketing" to my employer, and failing to name fellow union members in my disciplinary hearing.

The crux of my employment tribunal was to establish whether these things — informing my colleagues of plans for supporters to engage in cyber-picketing, and keeping private information about our strategy and our union secret



from the employer, are protected trade union activities.

Our argument (put simply and briefly) was that trade unionists should (and do) have the right to discuss protest activity in their meetings and keep it secret from their employer. Any obligation to keep employers informed of strategies during disputes, or to name activists, contradicts the most basic ABCs of trade unionism and our ability to strike.

There is every chance that I will lose. The anti-union legislation in this country is extensive, and there is very little to protect workers daring to do more than meekly stand outside their workplaces on strike days.

The other three Ritzy reps have already had the result of their employment tribunal. Natalie Parsons and Marc Cowan won their claims of unfair dismissal. The third — Tom McKain — had not yet reached the two years of service needed to make the claim. All three, however, lost their claim for victimisation.

The employment tribunal has ordered Picturehouse to reinstate Natalie and Marc, but Picturehouse are choosing to appeal, absolutely determined to keep the old strike leaders out of Picturehouse.



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Mass strike wave in Zimbabwe



Striking workers and protesters in Zimbabwe. The signs say "enough" in Zulu, English, Xhosa and Shona.

By Rhodri Evans

Police and soldiers have killed at least a dozen people, wounded scores and arrested hundreds since mass strikes and demonstrations began on 14 January against the government of Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Mnangagwa, a long-time sidekick of the former liberation fighter turned despot Robert Mu-



Striking workers: "Only monkeys can survive on peanuts" and "We are workers not servants"

gabe, eased the 94-year-old Mugabe out of office in November 2017, but has continued a regime very like Mugabe's corrupt and autocratic crony capitalism.

The protests started with a shut-down called by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, and have escalated into a rolling wave of strikes and other action.

As we go to press, civil service unions, who are planning a nationwide strike from 22 January demanding to be paid in US dollars.

Mnangagwa has promised (22 January) to "investigate" abuses by his security forces, a promise which indicates that he feels under pressure.

The wave of revolt started after Mnangagwa announced, on 12 January, that the price of petrol would be increased to \$3.31 per litre from \$1.32 from midnight, but there would be no increase for for-

eign embassies and tourists paying in cash U.S. dollars.

There were already fuel shortages, and the price rise meant that even those who struggled to the head of the queues could scarcely afford what they had queued for.

Officially, since 2016, Zimbabwe's economy runs on US dollars. But "dollars" held in Zimbabwean bank accounts, so-called "zollars", exchange for actual dollars at the rate of US \$1 = Z \$4.

There is a strict limit on withdrawals from bank accounts. There are shortages of basic supplies. To shop in a supermarket you must first wait in a long queue. Many households depend on supplies sent in by relatives who have fled to work in South Africa or other nearby countries.

Zimbabwe has a genuine, though harassed, trade union movement, organised through the

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), which was central to the opposition to Mugabe.

Politically, the opposition is dominated by the Movement for Democratic Change. Morgan Tsvangirai, the main MDC leader until his death in February 2018, founded the MDC in 1999 after eleven years as secretary of the ZCTU and previous years as a miner and a miners' union official.

The MDC reports that five of its MPs are currently being detained

and denied the chance to apply for bail, and a sixth MP has been arrested, detained, and then released without charge

The MDC has drifted into largely neoliberal politics. Socialist groups exist in Zimbabwe, but are weak. In the current wave of protests, Zimbabwe's government has shut down much of the internet in the country, making it difficult to get news out.

General strike in India

These excerpts from an article by K R Shyam Sundar in the *Mumbai Economic and Political Weekly* (19 January) give information on the recent general strike in India.

The joint platform of Central Trade Unions comprising 10 unions conducted a general strike on 8 and 9 January 2019.

Since 1991, the CTUs have conducted 18 countrywide work stoppages and multiple forms of protests... apart from concerted strikes at the industry level, like banks, insurance, etc, against the economic and labour policies of the central government...

The macro protests have become frequent and also more inclusive. This is so in three senses, namely in mobilising workers from the unorganised sector like the domestic and anganwadi [rural childcare] workers, and street vendors; widening the struggle agenda; and in locating workers' protests at various sites of social dialogue forums like the Indian Labour Conference (ILC), Parliament, the streets, etc...

The two-day strike is reported to have a guesstimated participation of 200 million workers [though the author reckons that the real figure would have been smaller].

The trade union movement is witnessing fissuring and fragmentation... A few trade unions... have walked out of the joint platform of Central Trade Unions...

The strike was seen to be overtly political for two reasons. It was sponsored by the labour wings of the political parties that constitute the opposition front to the government and it has reportedly received [Congress Party leader] Rahul Gandhi's blessings....

Notwithstanding the cracks within the trade union and in the unity forums, the angst and anger in the length and breadth of the working class movement cannot be denied. Trade unions, irrespective of their professed association with some front or the other, are unarguably against the policies of the government and hold almost common protest charters.

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