



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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www.workersliberty.org



Britain: low wages, but 1% ultra-rich

**THE MOST
UNEQUAL IN
EUROPE**

**Fight back:
strike on
10 July.
See page 5**

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism 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 has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want 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 the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and 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 the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. 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.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: 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!

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Sunni volunteers

The right and Iraq

By Martin Thomas

The USA and most other big-power governments (including China, which has huge oil interests in Iraq) have followed a Saudi call for "a national conciliation government" in Iraq.

Vladimir Putin's Russia has confined itself to saying: "We warned long ago that the affair that the Americans and the Britons stirred up there [in Iraq] wouldn't end well".

The US has got a pledge from Maliki to form a new government by 1 July, but may resign itself to Maliki heading it.

The Sunni minority in Baghdad is reckoned to have fallen to 12% (as against 35% pre-2003) over ten years of simmering sectarian civil war in Iraq. So, ISIS is unlikely to be able to take Baghdad; but also, a reshuffled Baghdad government is unlikely to be able to present itself as other than Shia-dominated.

John Kerry's recent speeches suggest that the US will be too alarmed by the ISIS advance to be very insistent about political change in Baghdad. ISIS now has a new semi-state stretching from Turkey's borders almost to Iran's and controlling Iran-Lebanon and Iraq-Jordan land routes. None of its neighbours will

live with that state peacefully any time soon.

Much of the territory is desert; and so ISIS, if it retains control, will not be content with what it has: it will seek control of markets and routes to the sea.

Probably not even the military might of the Americans can defeat ISIS quickly. Radical Sunni Islamists seized control of the city of Fallujah twice before, during the US occupation of Iraq. The US had trouble re-taking the city, and proved unable to stabilise an alternative to Islamist rule there.

Iran must be as alarmed as the USA; but Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei says: "We don't approve of [US action] as we believe the Iraqi government [i.e. Maliki's government], nation and religious authorities are capable of ending the sedition". According to president Rouhani, the Sunni rebels are "bits of dust compared to the pious [Shia] of the country".

Maybe Iran will collaborate with the USA in secret. But the official line from Iran is that ISIS "has been a tool in the hands of Tel Aviv and Washington".

"The takfiri terrorists and their allies including the US, the Zionist regime and certain Arab countries, have decided to retaliate for their defeat in Syria by attacking Iraq".

Three million Syrian refugees, UK takes 24

By Simon Nelson

Just 24 Syrian refugees have been admitted into the UK under a special arrangement — the Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme (VPR) — to help those identified as most at risk and who have not yet claimed asylum.

By comparison Sweden has admitted over 24,000 refugees.

Since 2011 almost three

million Syrians have fled the country, most to neighbouring Arab states with Lebanon alone taking in over one million people. A further 6.5 million people are believed to be displaced within Syria.

The Government had committed to take only 500 of the most vulnerable refugees, resisting an imposed UN quota. It argued that the leading role it played in delivering aid to camps in Jordan and

The left and Iraq

Socialist Worker, and others, say not much more than that the US invasion of 2003 is to blame for the breakdown, and that new US bombing or ground troops won't help.

Socialist Worker nowhere says straight out that it is against ISIS. But it implies that: the growth of ISIS "threatens sectarian battles that will have an impact far beyond Iraq".

SW doesn't point out that US action would be to support a Shia-sectarian government, maybe modified but still sectarian, and thus would not mend things. It doesn't even point out that the USA's preferred method of war, high-tech bombing from a safe distance, is especially likely to feed political backlash (as in Afghanistan).

SW makes much of saying imperialism is bad, but the core of its case is only that bombs are (always) bad.

The SWP splinters RS21 and ISN have said nothing.

The Socialist Party mostly stresses that in 2003 "the Socialist Party warned [the US invasion] could lead to the break-up of Iraq and terrible sectarian war". The SP's archives show that they didn't warn, unless in obscure small print. Probably the SP, like us, like most others, didn't know.

Socialist Worker, on the contrary, suggests that the sectarian divisions were invisible before 2003 and created by the US alone.

In fact, for centuries the Shia in Iraq were second-class citizens in a Sunni-dominated Ottoman Empire. Shia-Sunni divisions eased, and cities became more mixed, in the mid 20th century. In 1991

Saddam Hussein bloodily repressed a Shia rebellion; after that, his regime systematically discriminated against the Shia south.

The US did not invent the divisions. But the more-or-less secular neo-liberal Iraqi exiles whom it wanted to take over in 2003 had little support among Iraqis who didn't like the USA's initial plans for a free-market "year zero" in their country (flat tax, mass privatisations, lush contracts outsourced to US firms). The USA's disbanding of Iraqi governance, down to traffic-cop level, created chaos which drove people to the mosques and the Islamists, and rancour among vast numbers of Sunnis sacked from their government jobs.

US policy worsened the divisions; and Maliki has worsened them further.

The old auto-anti-imperialism, supporting anyone who clashes with the USA, which used to dominate the left, has already broken down seriously over Syria. Its breakdown continues.

Even Workers' Power, who have backed the Taliban in Afghanistan, say: "No ISIS caliphate!"

Only a WP split-off, the RCIT, retains the old auto-anti-imperialism. "Defend the Sunni popular insurrection against the Iraqi army! Support the insurgents against any military intervention of US imperialism!"

Solidarity's calls for defence of the Iraqi labour movement against ISIS terror and Shia-sectarian war fever, and for the right of Iraqi Kurdistan to independence, have been taken up by few other papers.

Lebanon meant it had "done its duty". Really?

Theresa May's commitment to bring down net migration is the real sticking point here. Political considerations are far more important than the lives of displaced Syrians.

Meanwhile there is a huge backlog of asylum cases. Some Syrians will have to wait up to a year for their cases to be heard even when substantial evidence of anti-Assad activity has

been provided.

The labour movement should fight for refugees to be welcomed into the UK with unrestricted access to the NHS and other public services. After the release of the VPR figures protest were held at the Home Office.

Such actions should be supported and will have to continue as part of a campaign to support those forced to leave by the civil war.

New disability benefit “a fiasco”

By Matthew Thompson

Personal Independence Payment, the benefit launched last year to replace Disability Living Allowance, has already run into trouble.

Like Universal Credit, the new benefit combining payments to working-age claimants currently made through Jobseekers' Allowance, Income Support and Working Tax Credit, PIP is being piloted in Northern England before being extended to the rest of country.

It is supposed to be in place by the end of next year although it now seems almost certain that the deadline will be missed.

Despite its limited geographical introduction,

there is already a large backlog of claims to PIP, with many disabled people waiting months for a decision and some terminally ill claimants dying before their application is processed. In a critical report by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee the chair Margaret Hodge describes the introduction of PIP as “a fiasco”.

Unlike other benefits claimed by disabled people such as Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support, DLA isn't based on your National Insurance Contributions or means-tested against other income or savings. It is non-taxable and can be claimed by those in work, reflecting the fact that it is designed to cover some of the extra costs associated with personal care (paying someone

to help with cooking, cleaning, washing etc.) and mobility (taxis, adapting vehicles for wheelchair use etc.) rather than to replace wages when you are sick or unemployed.

The Department for Work and Pensions has outsourced the medical assessment of claimants for PIP to two private companies, Atos and Capita, each of whom has — to say the least — a patchy record when it comes to delivering public services under contracts awarded to it by the Government (Atos recently exited its contract to carry out work capability assessments for ESA a year early after delays and criticisms almost identical to those now being seen with PIP).

If the rate of refused claims by Atos in the transition from Incapacity Benefit

to ESA is replicated with PIP, it has been estimated that only forty per cent of those currently receiving DLA will be getting it in two years time.

PCS, the union which represents civil servants in the Department for Work and Pensions as well as staff in private contractors such as Atos and Capita has said these contracts should be terminated as soon as possible and the assessment work should be brought back in-house.

“It is a scandalous waste of taxpayers' money for these failing contractors to continue to get paid for their shockingly poor performance while PIP customers have to wait months for their claim to be dealt with.”

Labour betrays young people

By Michéal MacEoin

Labour leader Ed Miliband has promised to cut Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) for around 100,000 18-to-21-year-olds and replace it with a lower means-tested benefit depending on claimants' qualifications and skill levels.

This will affect those young people under 21 who have do not have A-levels — around seven out

of ten 18-to-21-year-olds currently claiming JSA.

Miliband told the press that “Britain's young people who do not have the skills they need for work should be in training, not on benefits.”

What Labour have not explained is why young people can't receive training and enough to live on at the same time.

This policy will kick young people already relying from tuition fees, the

abolition of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and record levels of youth unemployment.

JSA is already too low — £57.35 a week (£8.19 a day) for under-25s. The new rate could be even lower, as it is means-tested on the basis of parental income.

The Labour policy follows the same reactionary course as the Tories' plans to remove housing benefit from under-25s and increasing young peoples' re-

liance on their parents.

There are innumerable and obvious reasons why young people cannot, or do not want to, live with family members — parents or guardians may be abusive or homophobic, or young people and family members may simply not get on.

Recent Trade Union Congress (TUC) research shows that prospects for young people not in full-time work or education have deteriorated sharply in the last decade and a half.

This does point to increased barriers for young people getting into work, including lack of skills. But any policy which does not take into account an unemployment rate of nearly 7% is really about demonising those individuals who are out of work.

Labour needs a programme for decent, unionised, and socially useful jobs, expanded, well-funded training, and living benefits.

This new policy smacks of political posturing and Labour's tendency to bend towards rather than shape public opinion.

At a time when the welfare state has been chipped away by decades of means-testing, Labour needs to break with austerity and stand up for universal benefits for those in need.



Bring back Pride's radical roots!

By Kate Harris

As Pride season kicks off, it looks like the majority of festivities will be more establishment-focused than ever. Part of London Pride (28 June) will continue to the Cenotaph for Armed Forces Day and the police will be a prominent part of the parade.

Our movement seems to have a very short memory. Our acceptance as LGBT+ people into institutions has been very, very recent and is also not consistent or inclusive of all of us.

Sex between two men wasn't legalised in Scotland and Northern Ireland until 1981 and 1982 respectively. During the miners' strike in the 1980s, we gained sympathy from straight, cis working-class people as they became aware of the levels of police violence and harassment that we were subject to through working with Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners.

While the British establishment is now smug about their perceived progressiveness on the rights of LGBT+ people, the homophobia and transphobia that many suffer across the world is often, at least in part, a consequence of British colonialism and the evangelical Christianity of missionaries in the nineteenth century.

And today, LGB+ asylum seekers are told to “prove” their sexual orientation in order to be able to stay in this supposedly welcoming, LGBT-friendly state.

LGB (and to a lesser extent, T, I, etc) people are the cause du jour of the more liberal minded elements of the ruling classes, but only the right kinds of LGBT+ people: immigrants, poor queers and people with less well-understood identities are still ignored or reviled.

Historically, capitalism reinforces the oppression of women and LGBT people because the nuclear family was (seen as) better for the social reproduction of the labour force, and women's unpaid labour in the home could be relied upon. Alongside straightforward bigotry, this led to state discrimination and violence against us.

The heroic struggles of LGBT people have changed our status in many parts of society. Pride should connect us with our radical roots, with queer anti-capitalism, and with those in our community whose right to exist is under attack.

• Paul Penny, (London Transport RMT LGBT Officer, Workers' Liberty) and a speaker from the African Out and Proud Diamond Group will be speaking at Ideas for Freedom on the International Fight for LGBT rights. 12.55pm, Sunday 6 July, University of London Union, Malet Street.

Protest against neo-Nazis after Tottenham stabbing

A crowd of about 200 people gathered outside Tottenham Town Hall in London on Monday night to protest fascism in the area following a racist attack on Saturday night.

A 24 year-old Polish man, believed to be Jewish, was knifed at a music festival in Markfield Park after neo-Nazis from the Zjednoczeni Emigranci (ZE) group stormed the event. They also threw flares and rocks at the crowd. The man who was stabbed was treated at hospital and is recovering well.

Unite Against Fascism (UAF), which is led by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), called a demonstration, to which a good number of activists showed up despite short notice and little advertising. A diverse range of people were represented, including local residents, the Turkish and Kurdish community centre DAY-MER, National Union of Teachers members, independent leftwingers, anarchists and members of the Green Party, SWP, RS21, the Socialist Party, Workers' Power and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

After UAF called an end to the demonstration, about one hundred anti-fascists marched down Tottenham High Road to the park where the attack took place, led by Polish anti-fascists from Dywizjon 161 and the Anti-Fascist Network.

Ultra-nationalists from ZE have been increasingly active in Tottenham, gathering around the green adjacent to the Town Hall and in Markfield Park and leaving racist graffiti, including some around Seven Sisters station.

A further demonstration has been called for Saturday, 28 June, in Markfield Park at 3pm.

Elizabeth Butterworth



A different kind of feminist

How I became a socialist

By Jill Mountford



The Christmas of 1969 was a turning point for me. I was a month off my ninth birthday when my sister gathered up all the selection boxes and various other sweets and treats and parcelled them up for the pot-bellied, fly-covered starving black kids who appeared in our living room every teatime all the way from Biafra.

I didn't declare then that I was a socialist. But I did carry what felt like a huge burden of concern that I had some responsibility to sort things out. Immediately, that meant giving all our chocolate away. In the long term, it meant finding out about how the world works and why some kids starve to death on a huge scale while others have loads of chocolate.

I was a feminist before I was a socialist. I was fifteen in 1976 and the influence of the women's movement was filtering through to popular culture. Candy Stanton's 'Young Hearts Run Free' was in the charts, warning young women of the crushing pain of being trapped by marriage and kids. Erica Jong's *The Fear of Flying* gave a "grown up" and modern, liberated expression to the history I was being taught at school about the Suffragettes. I was angry, but inspired.

The Friday before I left school in June 1977 I was sent for an interview by my office skills teacher and I got the job. I felt I'd gained a further addition to my liberation: music, novels, history and now my own job and some cash. How wrong could I have been? Having a wage did buy me a few choices. But I became brutally aware that typing wills and conveyances for 7.5 hours a day, five and half days a week, was nothing short of (wage) slavery.

There were times when the relentless routine felt like crushing torture. I had just left school, where I'd had a great time, and now this! Fortunately, I worked with several other

young women who found that laughing their way through the day helped. Kicking the boss's afternoon cake down the dusty corridor, putting back on the plate, then knocking on his door and presenting it to him with an insincere smile, broke the monotony. Nailing a kipper under his desk and then insisting his room didn't smell, felt like payback for him robbing our time.

My parents were pleased I hadn't had to go into the "pots" (working in a pottery production factory). Instead, I had a nice, clean job in an old, established solicitor's. Working in a small office for some silly old fuckwit was seen as progress. The thing that irked me more than anything was that I had no free time, no say in how my waking hours were being spent. I really felt like any freedom I'd had at school had been taken away from me.

After three years of working in a variety of mind-numbing jobs, I left work to go to college. By now, we had a woman prime minister, riots on the streets, a war in the Falklands, growing unemployment, the selling off of public services and a celebration of the greedy "Yuppy". I knew, without any doubt, I had no solidarity with Thatcher and she had none with me or my class. Bitterly disappointed with Labour after the "Winter of Discontent", it all seemed a bloody mess.

I found a leaflet for a women's consciousness raising group and joined. This brief encounter was no love story. I was looking for solidarity and some answers, I didn't find it here. These educated, clever, articulate, middle-class women didn't like my accent, my energy or my politics. For some strange reason I've yet to understand they were obsessed with talking to each other about their genitalia. I was obsessed with talking about changing the world. I was a feminist, but a different kind of feminist from them.

The next stop was the local women's peace group: this involved eating a lot of gluten-free cake and talking a lot about non-violent direct action. From here I went to Greenham: this involved eating a lot of dhal and engaging in a lot of non-vi-

olent direct action. My new cause was better, more worthy than the introspection of the consciousness raising group, but didn't go far enough. It would be great to put a stop to Cruise Missiles but the system that makes them and "needs" them would still exist.

Then I found a leaflet for a meeting of local socialists called the Militant. This seemed more akin to what I was looking for. I told a bloke I'd recently met about the meeting because I thought he might be interested. He was quietly alarmed that I might join them and asked me to start some discussions with him about the politics of the Militant. These discussions were more about his politics than the Militant's but he convinced me of the need to consciously fight for socialist revolution. I was persuaded of the need to be an organised revolutionary and to get involved in the Labour party — despite the "Winter of Discontent".

In November 1983, National Graphical Association members in Warrington were in a bloody battle with their boss, Eddie Shah, and we joined the picket lines. This was a raw physical fight: defending the right to picket against the police. At the time, I could not believe what I was seeing. The police were militaristic and scary, but the experience was galvanising. The bloke I was with was arrested and I went home without him.

The next day, I went up to Warrington with a couple of friends and got arrested for contempt of court, after loudly chanting "the workers united will never be defeated" when my friend's charges for affray were read out. I was put in a cell with Minnie, a woman who had, in self-defence, escaped her violent boyfriend by hitting him with a bottle. She was arrested and he was free, despite his record of domestic violence.

I was a socialist feminist. And nothing has changed since then to make me question my commitment to the cause of smashing capitalism into the ground and in its place creating a new socialist society.

Teaching "British values" in schools

Letter



From a teacher in the AWL

Following the "Trojan horse" "scandal" regarding the alleged plans of Islamist governors at various Birmingham schools, David Cameron wrote an article in the *Mail on Sunday* about "British values". He defined these as "a belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, respecting and upholding the rule of law".

Cameron also promised, alongside Education Secretary Michael Gove, that teachers in 20,000 state funded schools will "actively promote" British values. Those who do not subscribe to these values will be ruled out of becoming school governors — though this is laughably impossible to enforce.

As a state school teacher, I'm struggling to know what this means for me. In the humanities we have already seen changes to the Citizenship and History curricula at secondary level, with a liberal rights discourse being replaced by a curriculum of "precious liberties" and "the role of the monarch" in Citizenship; and what Cameron describes as bringing back "proper narrative history" in that subject, "so our children really learn our island's story".

When I started teaching, I was struck by the comments of a friend who is a History graduate, saying he chose to become a Maths teacher because he did not want "to lie to children". I teach Citizenship, History and Religious Studies. I feel confident that Gove would be appalled by my lessons, because I refuse to lie to children, instead teaching them about the brutality of the British Empire; the flattening of



Michael Gove knows what British values are

German cities like Dresden in World War Two; and discussing with them the role of Christianity in British politics.

I see this as marginally allowing children to access the knowledge that they should be entitled to and providing a space in which they can discuss ideas, as both school and home tend to be repressive environments. Presumably, instead, I should be giving them a right-wing account of British history and society, full of lies, in which World War One was a heroic victory and not an imperialist massacre; and the North of Ireland is wholly proud to be "British".

I am lucky in that the young people I teach would have absolutely none of it. They readily point out to me when they think something is racist, or biased, or just plain wrong. They are more intuitive and perceptive than your average politician, and will see right through these changes. And they are wonderfully straightforward.

The other day they asked, "Miss, are you a communist?"

after telling me that they thought the History GCSE Programme of Study was racist. I would like to see Cameron or Gove try to teach History or Citizenship in the way they would like to (in a London comprehensive). They would be rightfully laughed out of the classroom. A trainee teacher I came across once was told by a 13 year old boy of African background, after talking about all the countries that "we" owned in the British Empire, "That's because you [the British] stole them."

Before writing this I had a look at the Life in the UK test for those who apply for permanent residency here. It had some outright lies in it, such as, "British people are proud of their record of welcoming new migrants" — at which I darkly laughed out loud. Ironically, many of the liberal values it highlights are not practised by the Prime Minister or the Education Secretary: for example it says that British citizens should "treat others with fairness", "look after the area in which you live" and "respect the rights of others, including their right to their own opinions".

You can have opinions, as long as they are the right ones. You can practise freedom of religion, within the correct framework (the one white upper-middle class people approve of). You can have individual liberty, but if you are a young black man living in a working-class area, you can expect to be regularly stopped and searched for no reason.

What should I tell my students? Should I tell them that the racism they experience is negligible because the UK is a "tolerant" place, whether they believe it or not? Should I hide my real views and promote the state? Should I instead impose a set of arbitrary "British values" on them?

All of these would inevitably involve watching their eyes roll into the backs of their heads and possibly getting told to fuck off. I think I'll stick to what I'm doing. As it says in our department office: Keep Calm and Ignore Michael Gove.

Build for 10 July strike!

Members of the public sector union Unison have voted by a 59% majority to strike on 10 July against a 1% pay offer and for a rise of at least £1 an hour. In the week preceding the announcement of Unison's ballot result, the National Union of Teachers confirmed it would join a 10 July strike.

Strike ballot results from Unite, GMB, and the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) (all over public sector pay) are yet to be announced, and the Fire Brigades Union has a live ballot that will allow it to participate in a 10 July strike.

Transport for London staff (employed in central TfL administration, rather than by subsidiary companies such as London Underground) in RMT, TSSA, and Unite have already confirmed their participation in the strike.

In addition, Unison is planning to ballot its members in the NHS but activists anticipate that strikes, if voted for, would not happen until October.

The turnout in the Unison ballot was around 14%. This is worryingly low, and suggests real gaps in Unison's organisation on the ground in local government workplaces. The poor turnout means there is still risk that Unison's leadership will pull back from calling a strike at all, which could in turn cause smaller unions to climb down. Unison members should be vigilant to this threat.

Activists in Unison and other unions should call emergency meetings to build for a strike — both to put pressure on union leaders to call one, and also to make the strike as solid as possible. *If the strike goes ahead, the Tories will probably redouble their propaganda offensive against the unions and push for new legislation requiring minimum thresholds in strike ballots.* Unions must prepare a counter-offensive against the anti-union laws, fighting for a positive charter of workers' rights.

Workers' Liberty members in public sector unions argue that 10 July must be the start of a campaign, not an end in itself. The recent Unison local government conference discussed the importance of setting further strike dates and the Executive have discussed 9 and 10 September as possible further dates. We need to hold them to this promise.



Members of the Fire Brigades Union among tens of thousands of marchers with the People's Assembly march against austerity on 21 June

Other unions should set further strike dates for the autumn as soon as possible, with other industrial and political action in between all-out strike days to maintain momentum and maximise pressure on employers.

Cross-union public sector committees in every area, facilitated through Trades Councils where these have life, or convened informally where necessary, should discuss the

direction of the dispute, and plan local activity.

If such steps are taken in the three weeks between now and 10 July, workers too demoralised to even vote in the strike ballot can be sufficiently bolstered and emboldened to participate in a strike, and to push for more action afterwards.

The most unequal country in Europe

Britain is the most unequal of the larger countries of western Europe. Only Portugal is more unequal.

Fuel poverty has been redefined by the current government to count only those who spend more than 10% of their income on heating and also have residual income below the official "poverty line" — defined for 2012 at about £12,000 a year after housing costs.

Since real wages have been falling since 2009, the poverty line has dropped too — you have to be poorer before the government statistics will recognise it. Nonetheless, figures released from the Department of Energy and Climate Change project that the number of households living in fuel poverty will increase from 2.28 million in 2012 to 2.33 million (9% of UK households) in 2014.

Under the previous measure (10% of income on heating) 4.5m households (17%) would be fuel poor. These are not so much cases of the "squeezed middle" but of those living in poverty unrecognised by the official figures.

This picture of people struggling to make ends meet but not recognised as poor by the government is underscored by a report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, called 'Wages, Taxes And Top-Ups'. This looks at how tax and benefits have affected working families on modest incomes from 1998 to 2013.

While this group saw some improvements in their living standards before 2008, since then both falling real wages and cuts in benefits have hit.

Using their measure of a Minimum Income Standard (a measure of what people believe to be an acceptable minimum standard of living), the research shows that by 2008 the lowest paid 25% of working one parent families had a disposable income £21 a week above this minimum, but £23 below it in 2013. The lowest paid 25% of double-wage-earn-

ing families saw a similar fall, while families reliant on one wage saw their disposable income fall from £65 per week below the minimum to £113 below.

For those solely reliant on benefits, the picture is far worse.

The Child Poverty Action Group report "On The Brink" looks at the impact of benefit cuts in London and the social cleansing this is beginning to bring about. The benefits cap, bedroom tax, localisation of council tax benefits and local caps on housing benefits have combined to leave families in receipt of these benefits in London an average of £1,300 a year worse off. In many cases the impact is more than twice this level.

This has helped fuel child poverty in London, with 36% of children in London living below the poverty line. This will only get worse as rents continue to rise and the ability of councils to make discretionary payments to mitigate these cuts is further squeezed.

A report from the High Pay Centre shows a long term trend of Britain becoming more unequal compared to the other members of the OECD (the organisation that brings together the world's 32 most developed economies).

Forty years ago, the UK had one of the more equal economies amongst the OECD states. Now, only Portugal, Israel, the USA, Turkey, Mexico and Chile are more unequal.

The report seeks to put into perspective the claim by the Conservatives that Britain has become more equal since the 2008 crisis. The measured decrease has been slight. All indicators suggest this is a pause caused by some of the financial losses of the richest in the 2008-2009 crash (the very rich lose more in a crash, at least temporarily), and the underlying trend is still for increasing inequality.

The report shows that in 2011 the average disposable income of Britons was £15,800, 84% that of Germany. However,

the top 20% (a much broader group the truly rich) reached a disposable income of £32,800, only a little behind Germany.

The impact of this is that the poorest 20% are much poorer than those in many comparable countries. The 25% with the lowest incomes in the UK received £5,700 in the UK, compared to £7,700 in France and £8,200 in Germany.

If Britain were as fair as equal as the most equal in Europe, Denmark, they would have nearly £2,000 more a year. The poorest 20% in the UK have incomes very similar to the bottom 20% in some of the poorest EU states, like Slovenia (£6,700) and the Czech Republic (£5,100).

There is huge inequality within the top 20%. Figures the World Top Incomes Database (2011) show 13% of all income is taken by the top 1% in the UK. If this was redistributed to every household in the UK, each would be around £5,600 per year better off.

If incomes only as unequal as in Denmark, then each household would be £2,700 better off each year.

Sources:

http://highpaycentre.org/files/What_would_the_neighbours_say.pdf
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2014>
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/Wages-Taxes-Topups-FINAL1.pdf>
<http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/families-brink-london>
<http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/blog/2014/jun/11/deconstructing-wages-data/>
 For a much broader picture of UK poverty see <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/editorial/pse-report-reveals-impoverished-nation>

Behind the rise of the Front National

French socialist Yves Coleman responded to questions from *Solidarity*

What do we know about the voting base of the FN (sociologically, demographically, etc.) and how has it changed since 1983?

To answer your question I will be obliged to use statistics based on "social professional categories" which are not ideal to understand any social reality. This said, if you compare the results of the European elections in 1984 to the same elections in 2014, the Front National (FN) jumped from 17 to 28% of the votes of company owners; from 14 to 15% of higher professionals, managers and qualified experts; from 14 to 22% of second-rank professionals; from 15 to 35% of white collar and service workers and from 8 to 45 % of blue-collar workers. So, the capital change is clearly the growing electoral influence of the FN among the working class.

As regards the difference between men and women voters, what was true thirty years ago is no longer valid today. Today women don't hesitate to vote as often as men for the National Front. What has not changed is that the more educated voters are, the less they vote for the National Front.

According to social scientists like Nonna Mayer and Florent Gougou², the FN socio-electoral basis has been enriched, after 1995, by growing numbers of young workers whose parents are also workers, or of young people who are married to a working-class man or woman. This generation has not known the long domination of the right (1958-1981).

It has known the Communist Party and Socialist Party in power and the catastrophic balance-sheet of France's left governments (1981-1986 and 1988-1993), which were unable to do anything against the dramatic rise of unemployment (from 1.6 million in 1981 to 3.2 million in 1993, from 6.3 to 10 % of the active population), continuing destruction of whole industrial branches (coal, steel, shipyards, textile, etc.). On the contrary, during that period and still now, the Socialist Party defended the necessity of having a competitive economy based on good capitalist investors; it hailed the virtues of creating one's own business and even glorified individual capitalist "success stories" like the crook Bernard Tapie.

According to sociologists, young workers who vote for the National Front explicitly hate the word "solidarity". They think the state only cares about foreigners, illegal migrants and "lazy" French people supposedly living on social benefits paid by "their" taxes. They dislike trade unions and grass roots associations, etc.

More recently it seems the FN has gained more influence not in the poorest suburbs (of the former Parisian suburban "Red Belt", dominated by the Communist Party from the

1930s to the 1980s) but in towns where very few or no foreign workers live, but where the fear of losing's one job and of living in an insecure environment is constantly growing. That's at least what has been noted by the social scientists after the last municipal and European elections of 2014. Apparently it's not the poorest Franco-French workers, unemployed or not, who vote most for the National Front but those who have a job, a small technical diploma (like the CAP — two years — or the "baccalauréat professionnel" — three years) obtained in a vocational school, who live far away from the poorest suburbs but fear losing their social status.

When one talks about the "workers" vote, one should always keep in mind the percentage of working-class voters is smaller than the percentage of workers in the overall population, because (legal or "illegal") foreign blue collar workers constitute a very important part of the manual working class in France (around 50% of the six million blue collar workers) and they have no right to vote.

That leaves open the question of how would migrants vote, had they the possibility of doing so. I tend to think they would not vote exactly like Franco-French workers, unless the FN really changes its program...

Some say that the FN's score on 25 May was not very significant, since it was lower than in the last presidential elections (abstentions were very high). Others say it's significant (people still abstained when the polls said that the FN might come out with the highest vote). What do you think?

Apart from the years 1945-1947, during which around 55 % of blue collar workers voted for the Communist Party and around 20% for the SFIO (ancestor of the present Socialist Party), the percentage of blue collar workers voting for the Communist and Socialist parties has regularly declined. In 1962, the reformist left parties (Communist Party, Socialist Party, Parti socialiste unifié) had only 40% of the workers' votes. 45 % of the workers voted De Gaulle in 1969, 30 % for Chirac in 1988 (when Mitterrand got 70% of blue collar votes), 47 % voted for Chirac in 2002 and 50 % for Sarkozy in 2007.

What is significant today is the demoralisation of the Socialist and Communist Parties' old traditional working-class voters who prefer to stay home than to vote, even for the Trotskyist far left or the new Parti de Gauche (a small social-chauvinist party coming from a split inside social-democracy in 2009). This abstention, which affects all social groups more or less in the same proportion, contrasts strongly with the mobilisation of FN voters who support their party's line — even for example when the FN calls to vote for a Socialist Party mayor or MP to impede the election of a UMP (Right) candidate who denounced them or refused an alliance.

But for the moment, most of the sceptical former left voters don't vote for the FN, specially those who still support the trade unions, are sometimes active in local left associations or at least support their work, belong to the reformist left periphery, etc.

So, contrary to a legend, there has been no massive transfer of the old left (or even Communist Party) electorate towards the FN. At least not so far, and not on a national scale, although there may be some local exceptions to the rule!

RIGHT TO FAR RIGHT

According to electoral specialists, since 1984, and even more 1988, what has taken place, inside the right-wing working class vote, is a transfer to the far right.

To give a schematic figure, before 1984 it was more or less 50/50 between the right and the far right working class vote, now it's more 25/75 in favour of the FN. There is a growing sympathy for the FN among young blue or white collar voters who had never voted before, have no links with the traditional reformist parties, trade unions, associations, etc.

The other long term phenomenon is the decline of the

workers' vote in general for the reformist left. The left vote, including the Communist Party vote, has always been cross-class, contrary to the legend of its purely working class nature, but this process of class dilution is increasing: if the working class vote for the Communist and Socialist parties diminishes, the so-called "middle class" (first and second rank professionals' vote is more and more important for the reformist left.

The decline of the workers' vote for the left corresponds to a transformation of French capitalism, the fact that two workers in every five today work in an isolated position, and don't belong to an numerically important workers' collective. Let's recall in France, blue and white collar workers represent 13 million people, 60% of the labour force.

The FN is not the "first party in France" nor the "first working class party" in France, despite what journalists and Marine Le Pen have recently said. It does not control any trade union, or any fraction in any trade union, even if it has trade-unionists in its ranks. It does not organise a significant, militant, youth organisation. It does not play any role in the strikes or struggles for better living standards in working-class suburbs. It's not able for the moment to control whole sections of the territory as French social-democracy and later the Communist party did. So we should obviously be preoccupied by its growing electoral and ideological influence (for example, its electoral results encouraged the "Republican" Right to adopt its agenda on migration laws) but we should not panic or become paralysed by the FN.

The FN has leading cadres with a clear fascist past, but avoids street-fighting and more recently has tried to get a "moderate" image. How would you define it as a party?

The FN has never been a purely fascist party, with only fascist cadres and militants.

The radical left often presented in the past the FN as a "pre-fascist" party and had more in less in mind the strategy of fighting the FN in the street as the left sometimes fought the fascists in the 1930s and getting it banned by the state. That strategy has failed for many reasons which can't be dealt with here.

On the other hand, the denunciation of the FN as "non republican", if not a fascist, party was also propagated by the mainstream media. It was and is part of the Socialist Party's strategy (*Le Monde* and *Libération* dailies have been very close to the Socialist Party for years and fully supported this dangerous policy): to exaggerate the importance and influence of the FN, to present it as an imminent fascist threat for democracy, was and is conceived as a way

- to divide the right (the UMP party is a front bringing together several right and centre organisations),

- to gather all the left around a vague conception of anti-fascism and anti-racism (therefore the creation of SOS Racisme in 1984 with the help of the Socialist Party)

- and more important to enable the Socialist Party to win the elections, given the very unfair electoral system in France (no proportional vote). But the advantage of this strategy for the Socialist Party has clearly come to an end.

So to come back to your question about the nature of the FN, one has to trace its origins. The initial project was conceived by a core of mostly young fascists coming from "Ordre Nouveau" (a group banned in 1973 after one of its meetings was attacked by the — Trotskyist — Ligue communiste). This project of a FN, uniting the radical right and neo-fascist grouplets with the anti-Gaullist right, was "kidnapped" by Jean-Marie Le Pen.

He had many more contacts with official, bourgeois politicians than those inexperienced young guys and their older neo-fascist mentors.

Le Pen also had good relations with ex-supporters of the Vichy regime (which collaborated with the Nazis) or men who fought on the Russian front in the Légion des Volontaires contre le Bolchevisme with the SS, and good friends



After the European election, demonstrating against Le Pen



among the anti-Gaullist military people who participated in the OAS (the Secret Army Organisation which tried to overthrow De Gaulle and stop Algeria's independence negotiations).

Le Pen managed to group together in the same "Front" pagan neo-fascists, national-revolutionaries (inspired by national-bolshevism, another form of fascism), Catholic traditionalists, ideologues of the "Nouvelle Droite" (New Right)³, people nostalgic for Vichy and French colonialism, and some traditional right-wing politicians.

He was a good speaker (his charisma is appreciated by a large periphery... and even more by the media!). He was able to play the role of the leader in a dominating position over the different fractions and tendencies of the FN fighting each other inside his party, while he nurtured and manipulated these rivalries to stay at the head of his organisation. But he has never been a serious organiser, because he wanted to control every detail and every decision of his cadres and to play his personal card.

The relation of the FN with street violence has never been the same as the traditional fascists in the 1930s. The FN did not try to organise its own militias (it preferred to infiltrate the police and armed forces, hopefully with little success until now — not like Golden Dawn in Greece) although it had a quite professional and impressive "service d'ordre" called DPS (Département Protection Sécurité) which also works as an intelligence agency (it supposedly has 1500 members and has been connected to many violent incidents). It always maintained more or less hidden friendly relationships with smaller fascist groups (the advantage of these groups is that they can be banned on Sunday and recreated with another name on Monday). The FN has always conveniently used these groups to protect its meetings, put up its posters, and even to do the dirty job (fighting the Far Left in the Universities and sometimes in the street) without dirtying its own hands and tainting its reputation too much.

MODERATE?

The recent supposedly more "moderate" image has been built up with the help of the mainstream media which closed its eyes to many dark aspects of the FN. They invited Marine Le Pen all the time and tried to spread the message she wanted something really different from the neo-fascist FN Old Guard.

The media and many social scientists think Marine Le Pen wants to break with the old project of uniting all neo-fascist or extreme right groups, and to build a presidential machine

centred around her and her closest collaborators. The diffusion of this new image has been facilitated, during the last then years, by the fact the FN doctrine is much less officially oriented towards 19th-century counter revolutionary theoreticians and 20th-century monarchists, fascists or neo-fascists. It attempts to present a governmental program which could be accepted by a good part of the "respectable right".

The 1999 split inside the FN also affected, for various complex reasons, many elements close to the nationalist-revolutionaries, the New Right and the national-Catholics inside the leadership and among its militants. So either they left to form new parties (MNR, Parti de la France, etc.) or go back to their original fascist grouplets, or they stayed but were marginalised, or opportunistically changed their line to a softer one....

There have been a lot of debates among historians about the labelling of the FN: national-populist, neo-populist, populist, radical right, far right, nationalist authoritarian, etc. Mainstream social scientists have never characterised the FN as a fascist party and I think they are right. The problem is that they slander or ridicule the anarchist or radical left anti-fascists as being as "totalitarian" as their enemies; they underestimate the unofficial links between the FN and the more radical groups from which the FN regularly co-opts militants and even leaders; they are too confident in the capacities of French (or European) democratic systems to pacify and swallow the FN or other national-populist parties; they underestimate the influence of social media on the FN militants (for example the influence of people like Soral and Dieudonné who have an anti-semitic agenda and nurture popular anti-semitism with an anti-Zionist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist rhetoric).

To whitewash the FN, Marine Le Pen copy-pasted what Bruno Mégret (the FN number two at that time) tried in the 1990s: building the Front from below, by winning small town municipalities (from 10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants); gaining as many municipal councillors and mayors as possible, making local alliances with the right (UMP) to break or split this mainstream right party, trying to attract young people with a certain academic background and high rank state officials, etc. This project failed with Mégret because Le Pen did not admit any intelligent rival with an alternative strategy. So he kicked Mégret out of the party in 1998 but Marine Le Pen rapidly took up exactly the same ideas some years later... with Daddy's help. This project also failed because (with the exception of one mayor in Orange who left the FN while remaining on the same political line), the FN has been unable

to financially and politically manage the towns of Toulon (185 000 inhabitants), Vitrolles and Marignane, gained in 1995 and 1997.

Marine Le Pen was also very much inspired by Fortuyn and Wilders tactics in the Netherlands. The idea was to appear as the best defenders of Western freedoms and civilisation (including, for Marine Le Pen, French Enlightenment, French Revolution and French Republic, which were always demonized by French traditional fascists). She did not go as far as her Dutch models who openly defend gay rights but she sold to the media and to the public a kind of cheap "feminism" (meaning women can divorce, work, raise their children alone, sometimes be obliged to abort without risking going to Hell) and a cheap form of "tolerance" towards homosexuality (several of her political counsellors are gay and this situation creates problems in the FN Old Guard).

It does not matter whether she is "sincere" or not, the fact is that she was presented by the media as an "independent" woman who had liberal ideas (liberal in the American sense of the word). The media just forgot to tell us she is now 46 years old and still lives with daddy in a luxurious private mansion, and most of her party's money comes from her father's dubious heritage (Le Pen managed to convince the owner of a big building company — Ciments Lambert — to leave him his money when he died).

Marine Le Pen also borrowed from the Dutch right populists the idea of targeting Muslims, both as migrants and as practitioners of a non Western religion. It was a good move for her because she could this way defend "laïcité" (French conception of secularism) which was always traditionally a left, or at least a Republican, idea, attacked during a long period by the right, the Catholic church, the monarchists and totally ignored by the traditional far right.

• Longer version of this article at bit.ly/fn-yves

Notes

- <http://www.mondialisme.org/spip.php?article1319>.
- Watch for example this video <http://www.world-for-fun.1s.fr/video/dailymotion/x1lfoqe>
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1lfoqe_le-fn-parti-des-ouvriers-rencontre-de-l-observatoire-des-radicalites-politiques_news
- About the "Nouvelle Droite"'s impact of British Far Right one can listen to Nigel Copey's conference in English <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2011/09/nigel-copey-au-revoir-to-sacred-cows-the-nouvelle-droites-impact-on-britains-far-right/>

What is anti-Muslim racism?

By Sacha Ismail

There is a lot of reference on the British left to “Islamophobia”, but less actual discussion about what it means. Do Muslims in Britain suffer oppression as Muslims, and if so what kind?

This article will argue that Muslims in Britain do suffer specifically anti-Muslim oppression and bigotry, but that anti-Muslim racism is a better way to understand and describe it.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

The use of “Islamophobia” to describe anti-Muslim bigotry blurs the distinct concepts of Muslims as people, Islam as a religion (which like all religions is an extremely broad, variegated spectrum of ideas, practices and cultures) and right-wing Islamic-inspired politics, including Islamism (and, indeed, left-wing Islamic-inspired politics).

Whatever the intentions of those who first developed the term in the 1990s, and of many who use it now, its rise has been intertwined with the rise of right-wing religious reactionaries. As the East End Bengali leftist Ansar Ahmed Ullah put it: “We do not use the term ‘Islamophobia’. Calling things ‘Islamophobic’ is a defence card used by Islamists whenever they are criticised.”

The way use of the term has developed has promoted the implication that any criticism of ultra-conservative Islamic politics and practices is a criticism of Islam per se and more-over a bigoted criticism, i.e. expressing hostility against Muslim people.

Moreover, the implication of hostility to religion as such hardly gets to grips with the multiple aspects of discrimination and oppression which Muslims in Britain and elsewhere face, most of which have little to do with Islam per se (which is not to say they are entirely separable from the victims being Muslim).

The necessity of untangling things is shown by the record of the Blair government, which while it presided over racist policies of various kinds, including some which targeted Muslims specifically, was in many ways not Islamophobic but Islamophilic — funding Islamic organisations, facilitating the establishment of Islamic schools and so on. To call Blair an Islamophobe is to confuse, not clarify.

In various writings since 2007, Robin Richardson, who edited the Runnymede Trust’s influential 1996 report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, has made comparable criticisms of the term Islamophobia. He also argues that because it is widely accepted and used, particular by Muslims themselves, it is not possible to abandon it.

I would not make a big deal of opposing the term, but I am not in favour of using it. Another term Robinson suggests, anti-Muslim racism, makes more sense to me.

There is a problem with bigoted attitudes towards Islam as a body of ideas, practices and traditions, because this is a definite theme of some right-wing ideologies: from commonplace ignorance about the facts of Islam to stupidity promoted by the right-wing press to the wild anti-Islamic claims of the organised far right.

There are numerous facets to this, from particular (often conspiratorial) views of international politics to claims about Islam and women’s rights, LGBT rights, etc. Sometimes such arguments are made on a more strictly religious basis (referring to the text of the Quran, etc); but even where they are made on a “cultural” basis and shade into more straightforward racism, arguments about the nature of Islam play a crucial role.

Sometimes isolated elements of such criticism will sometimes be true — but those making them have racist “real reasons” as well as more publicly acceptable “good reasons” for making them. Socialist criticism of Islam is radically different from the ill-informed, inconsistent and sometimes lying criticism of the right. Although we should be open-minded about the textual, ideological and in-social-practice differences between different religions, our criticism of each has to be consistent both with our criticism of all religions and our wider (including anti-racist) worldview.

Consistency is possible because Marxist criticisms have a materialist and not a religious basis. They seek to understand



Thousands attended anti-racist rallies in Belfast and Londonderry on Saturday 31 May in demanding first minister Peter Robinson publicly apology for a racist insult against Muslims living in the region

and criticise both Islam and Muslim-majority societies in the context of social development and class struggle, in the same way that we criticise Christianity and other religions and cultures.

Bigoted hostility towards a religion does not necessarily produce the kind of racism which many Muslim people in Britain experience. In the US, for a long time, there was widespread vehement feeling against the Catholic religion but in so far as there was bigotry towards ethnic groups strongly associated with Catholicism (Irish, Italians, etc), this faded long before the anti-religious feeling did. For instance, Irish Catholics became a major force in US society and politics in the early 20th century.

Anti-Muslim racism has flared up since 2001, but the events of the “War on Terror” do not by themselves adequately explain why. After all, the early 1970s saw many more Irish Republican bomb attacks in England than there have been Islamist bomb attacks. There was quite a lot of anti-Irish feeling at the time, but it died away relatively quickly, even before the ceasefires in Ireland.

Most Muslims in Britain face material conditions which makes them vulnerable to racism. While opposition to phobia of or bigotry against Islam is necessary, socialists’ basic concern must not be to “defend Islam” but to understand this racism so we can help fight it.

RACISM

To say “x group is not a race” as if this is straightforward is to misunderstand the nature of racism.

There is no such thing as a “race”: there is one human species. Today almost no one subscribes to 19th century or Nazi-style biological racism — which insists that there are indeed distinct races — or at least not openly. Racist arguments often involve some variant of “I’m not racist, but...”

Almost universally, racism is used to mean prejudiced hostility (and institutional oppression built on it) to all members of a group which may not be pseudo-scientifically defined as a “race” but which has shared characteristics based not on individual choice but some communal “tag” — often skin colour, but also sometimes other characteristics such as language or (presumed) religion.

In Britain there is a history of racism being closely bound up with the “tag” of skin colour, but many examples from all over the world show this is not a necessary part of it. Muslims in Gujarat or Catholics in Northern Ireland look physically the same as Hindus and Protestants — the point being that in these contexts the religious terms actually describe ethnic groups defined by religious heritage.

Muslims in Britain suffer hostility and oppression. Is it because they are Muslims? Almost 70 percent of Muslims in Britain are of South Asian background (over 42 percent Pakistan, over 16 percent Bangladeshi, over 8 percent Indian). Anti-South Asian racism (again “Pakis”) has a long history here. Aren’t we just talking about anti-Asian racism, perhaps

with a new rhetorical coat of paint?

The disadvantage in terms of poverty, jobs, housing etc suffered by South Asian people in Britain, particularly Pakistanis and even more so Bangladeshis, remains. There is a general law in capitalist society that those suffering from social disadvantage will also become the target for bigotry and oppression — in order to justify the disadvantage and because they are relatively easy and vulnerable scapegoats. Given this, it is unsurprising that anti-Asian racism has been more persistent than racism against Irish people, who for a long time have been better off, more integrated and more confident.

It is not at all clear that Muslims suffer discrimination in employment, housing, etc because they are Muslims — e.g. that an Albanian or Turkish migrant would suffer worse than a Bulgarian or Romanian one for specifically religious reasons. Nonetheless it would be perverse to ignore the fact that the huge majority of Asians in Britain who suffer worst from poverty and disadvantage are Muslims. This must be what gives anti-Muslim racism some of its strength.

Moreover, since the 1980s, religion in general has become a bigger force in British and world politics, and Asian Muslims here are much more likely to prioritise their identity as Muslims. The worldview of anti-Asian racists has shifted too — including the far right, with a new emphasis from e.g. the BNP and the rise of specifically anti-Muslim organisations like the EDL. Racists are much more likely to focus their hostility on Muslims specifically, but at the same time the popular racist image of a Muslim is still Asian.

In other words, anti-Asian racism persists, but it is intertwined with anti-Muslim racism. The intertwining is demonstrated by the fact that an Asian person who is not Muslim but looks something like the stereotype of a Muslim may well become a target of anti-Muslim racism. Being dark-skinned may make you a target more than being from an ethnic group which is predominantly Muslim (eg Turkish people).

Of course, anti-Muslim racism has other aspects which affect all Muslims, as touched on above. These are often more vivid than the grinding disadvantage and poverty affecting South Asian Muslim communities in particular, though they happen in part because of them. Far-right mobilisations; attacks on mosques; street hassle or hate attacks on people dressed a certain way; bigoted nonsense in the right-wing press; state repression focused on Muslim men — these things can affect Muslims of different “races”, even if their focus is often on Asians.

FUTURE

In the situation of cuts, worsening social conditions, etc, we know that racism is in general getting worse.

“Austerity” naturally effects the most disadvantaged most heavily, while scapegoating also increases. Despite the disarray of the organised far right, “hate crimes” against Muslims shot up in all major Muslim population centres in 2013. Figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales suggest both that in 2012-13 religiously-motivated hate crime — which is predominantly anti-Muslim — grew much faster than racially-motivated hate crime.

2012-13 was the year of the Woolwich murder and the (as it turned out, relatively small) wave of anti-Muslim agitation which followed it. We will have to see how the figures look for next year.

It is true that anti-migrant agitation has displaced anti-Muslim agitation as a focus for the organised right, unsurprisingly given the disarray of the BNP and the EDL and the rise of UKIP. But unfortunately there are good reasons to suppose that anti-Muslim racism has deep roots and will persist.

This is not just because UKIP is a less virulent force than the anti-Muslim far right, but because anti-Muslim racism keys into better established anti-Asian themes and because most European migrants are, with exceptions like the Roma, less poor and thus less vulnerable.

1984-5: the year of the Great Strike

John Cunningham, who was active in the National Union of Miners in the early 1980s, reviews *Class Against Class: The Miners' Strike 1984-5*, edited by Sean Matgamna

This a welcome re-issue of a booklet published shortly after the miners' strike by Socialist Organiser (a forerunner of Workers Liberty). Alongside the original articles and illustrations there are updates and a new introduction.

As a compact but highly readable account of the strike and the lessons to be drawn from it, I can recommend *Class Against Class* unreservedly. The reader is taken through a, more-or-less, blow by blow narrative of the strike with many eye-witness accounts from NUM activists and their supporters. The important debates that raged at the time are all discussed in depth.

Much of the analysis and reportage not only stands the test of time but, just as important, conveys to the reader a strong sense of what it was like to be involved in the biggest industrial dispute in Britain since 1926. In this respect it is a valuable text for younger readers. It is astonishing to think (at least for me!) that if you are 40 years old you would only have been ten at the time of the outbreak of the strike.

In the section "The story of the strike" the reader is taken through the history of the dispute, including the preparations made by the government, police and the NCB to take on the miners, particularly in light of the earlier climb down by the Thatcher government in 1981. Some thorny issues are tackled here: why was solidarity lacking from the other major trade unions and the controversy over the hotly debated question of whether or not there should have been a national ballot.

The central role of women in the strike is discussed in "Issues and experiences", with a number of eye-witness accounts from women who were centrally involved in building up the various women's support groups.

The "Lessons for our movement" are discussed in the final section and this is followed by some additions for the 2014 edition. Finally, there is an appendix discussing "The National Union of Mineworkers, Stalinism, and Solidarnosc". All in all then, a very comprehensive document and an extremely useful introduction to the strike and the issues it raises, very few of which have gone away.

On the issue of a national ballot, *Class Against Class* argues strongly in support of the striking miners, pointing to the way in which miners, as it were, voted with their feet rather than lose the impetus and dynamism that the strike obviously possessed in its early months. For the majority of strikers, clearly, a ballot was simply seen as irrelevant.

The tactic of sending flying pickets into Nottinghamshire and other areas was working well and by 14 March (only 13 days after the NCB had announced the closure of Cortonwood) 132 out of 174 mines were shut down and it was usually the case that working miners, when confronted with the arguments of pickets, responded in the traditional manner and did not cross the picket lines. The Thatcher government, clearly alarmed, sent in massive numbers of police which, over a period of time, effectively sealed off Nottinghamshire.

SCARGILL

***Class Against Class*, given that it mainly consists of reprints of articles written at the time and, no doubt, often in haste, is very much of its time but this is not a bad thing. The editor has wisely made a decision not to try and encompass all the developments, twists and turns, in the last 30 years since the strike ended. Nevertheless, some developments are worth pursuing despite their being outside the immediate 1984-5 framework.**

In March I attended the memorial meeting for the two Yorkshire miners killed in the strike, Davy Jones and Joe Green. This event is held every year at the Barnsley headquarters of the NUM and acquired particular poignancy this year as it coincided with the 30th anniversary of the strike.

Arthur Scargill was in attendance but it was noteworthy (and significant) that he remained a peripheral figure, being greeted by only a few of those attending. He was not addressed or greeted from the platform, though as Honorary Life President of the NUM it might be expected, as a courtesy if nothing else, that his presence would be acknowledged. Scargill, once the hero of the miners, now cuts a rather sad, isolated figure and this is a complex post-1985 story.



The subsequent political career of Arthur Scargill was tragic

At the risk of paraphrasing, Karl Marx once wrote that the great figures of history appear first as tragedy and then as farce. However, if the outcome of the 84-5 strike can be regarded, at one level, as a tragedy, then Scargill's post-85 trajectory can only be viewed as an even deeper tragedy.

His post-1985 decision to try and build a political organisation — the so-called Socialist Labour Party — turned out to be a disaster and created nothing more than a pathetic, personal bandwagon which spluttered briefly before the wheels fell off. Riddled with Stalinist politics and practice and some of the worst sectarianism imaginable, it has no meaningful existence today.

Scargill continues to maintain the fiction of a miners' international organisation, having broken with the existing international, although he and his small group of collaborators dotted around the world don't appear to do very much. If they do it is well-hidden.

During the Spanish miners' strike in 2012, I had the pleasure and honour to be centrally involved in the Spanish Miners Solidarity Committee here in the UK — the only body officially recognised by both the main unions in Spain (the Comisiones Obreras [CCOO] and the Union General de Trabajadores [UGT]) for the purposes of collecting money and raising solidarity. During this period I did not, once, come across any mention or evidence of activity in support of the Spanish miners from Scargill and his "international".

The way in which he became embroiled in a court case (against the NUM) to maintain his right to a flat in the Barbican in London says much about the Arthur Scargill of today. As to the rights and wrongs of this case (which, it has to be said, was decided in favour of Scargill), I make no comment, but it is indicative of the gulf that now exists between himself and the remains of the union he once led.

All this could be dismissed as just a footnote in history. After all the NUM now, sadly, has only a few thousand members and the mining industry in the UK is a mere shadow of its former self. Yet it is all, in various ways, related to an issue that *Class Against Class* raises on a number of occasions — the question of leadership in the trade union movement.

Scargill, along with Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey, is quite rightly praised for his leadership of the union during the strike, his refusal to accept a grubby compromise (which would have suited the likes of Neil Kinnock), his inspirational speeches and his utter dedication to the miners' cause. Yet, there were times when it seemed as if it was one-man against the government and the NCB.

A personality cult had developed around Scargill, even before the strike, and it was a cultishness that he did little to discourage. It was rare, for example, that someone other than Scargill was interviewed by the media and although Scargill was a consummate performer in front of the cameras and interviewers seldom got the better of him, there was rarely a sense of collective leadership (at least on our TV screens). Heathfield and McGahey, despite their prodigious qualities, often appeared as "bit players" in support of the "main act".

Class Against Class makes the point, quite correctly, on a

number of occasions, that the leadership of the NUM was way ahead of much of the rest of the trade union (and Labour Party) leadership some of whom actively stabbed the NUM in the back, yet Scargill's behaviour, although by no means a major issue, nevertheless had consequences that were, at times, quite serious.

One aspect of the Scargill personality cult, for example, was his tendency to surround himself with those who agreed with him: the NUM's Press Officer, Nell Myers, the editor of *The Miner* (previously editor of *The Yorkshire Miner*) Maurice Jones (a Stalinist albeit of a somewhat watered down variety) and Scargill's "personal adviser" Frank Watters. Mention must also be made of another one-time Scargill favourite — the Executive Officer Roger Windsor, who, it turned out, was almost certainly working for MI5 or MI6 in some capacity.

Did the fact that Windsor was yet another "yes man" mask his activities on behalf of the state? One can speculate on this but the point, surely, is that leadership has to be collective however charismatic certain individuals may be, and it must be a critical leadership, constantly examining its decisions and debating issues to the full, not a "one-man show".

MEDIA

As *Class Against Class* points out, the miners had to contend with any number of enemies, not least of which was a viciously hostile media.

It would be difficult to think of another industrial dispute, at any time since the onset of the industrial revolution, when so many lies have been told about a particular group of workers and their supporters. And, as everyone knows, the lies did not finish when the strike ended.

The *Daily Mirror* and *The Cook Report* on TV hounded both Scargill and Peter Heathfield over allegations (all subsequently shown to be utter fabrications) that they had used strike funds for their own personal ends. Yet when a miners' leader was jailed, in April 2012, for embezzling funds there was little coverage of this, certainly in the national media (The *Independent* was one notable exception).

The person concerned was, however, a member of the scab "union", the UDM. Neil Greatrex, the former President of the UDM, was found guilty of 14 charges of theft having stolen almost £150,000 from the Nottingham Miners Charity Home. As I write I suspect he is counting the days to the end of his four year sentence. Savour this information, if you didn't already know about it, alongside the article "The fate of the pet pig" contained in *Class Against Class*, and you have the perfect obituary for the UDM.

There is much more that could be said about *Class Against Class* both as a record and analysis of the strike and a tribute to those who participated. Although the political landscape has changed dramatically since 1984-5 there is still much to be learned from these pages, even if the triumph of the Thatcherite "free market" and neo-liberalism means that it is unlikely we will ever see the likes of such a strike again.

There will be other strikes, other battles, whatever form they may take, and it is certain the spirit and example of 1984-5 will continue to inspire and teach.

CLASS AGAINST CLASS
The miners' strike 1984-5
Edited by Sean Matgamna

Buy online at www.workersliberty.org/miners
£9.60 including p&p

Or send a cheque (to "AWL") to 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

When we debated Vladimir Derer

The May 1979 general election, in which Labour Party leaders who had systematically turned against their working-class base since winning office in 1974 were defeated by Thatcher's Tories, triggered rank-and-file revolt in the Labour Party.

Local Labour activists, and for a while even some trade union leaders, rallied around the slogan "Never again". They vowed to win changes in Labour Party structure and policy which would tie future Labour governments to the mandates and interests of the labour movement.

The revolt surged forward through 1980 and 1981, and into a Labour deputy leadership contest on 27 September 1981. Tony Benn, the figurehead of the Labour left, won a big majority of the vote among individual Labour Party members and lost to right-winger Denis Healey only by 49.6% to 50.4% after the union and MPs' votes were counted in.

Benn's defeat sparked debate in the Labour left. Many Labour people had been alarmed by the splitting-away of a large chunk of Labour's right wing in March 1981, to form the SDP, which later united with the Liberals to form the "Liberal Democrats". The union leaders were repenting of their rebellion, and signalling that they wanted a compromise with the Labour right, which they would cut at a meeting in Bishops Stortford in January 1982. Already many MPs previously considered left-wing had backed off by refusing to back Benn for deputy.

Vladimir Derer, the leader since 1973 of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, who died on 10 June this year at the age of 94, argued that the left should hunker down and take a more defensive stance. The debate on this was carried in many publications of the left, but most of all in



In 1981 Tony Benn lost to Denis Healey in a contest for Labour's deputy leader position. That sparked a debate in the Labour left

Socialist Organiser, a forerunner of *Solidarity*.

Last week we published a tribute to Vladimir Derer by one of his close comrades in CLPD, Jon Lansman. Introducing Jon Lansman's review, we noted that our forerunners worked closely with Vladimir Derer in the early 1980s, but also debated vigorously with him.

This week we print excerpts from an exchange in those debates. We still think we were right. In fairness, it should be said many prominent Labour leftists agreed with us at that time on an "aggressive approach" (though few went along with us in arguing for a turn to democratising the unions and developing industrial action); and probably the majority of those prominent Labour leftists would, over the 1980s and 90s, swing to the soft left, to inactivity, or worse. Vladimir Derer did not.

Time to go on the defensive

By Vladimir Derer

Brighton [the autumn 1981 Labour Party conference in Brighton] showed that, for the time being at least, the democratic advance was successfully checked. At all levels of the Party the support for further constitutional changes was seen to be ebbing.

Among the trade unions a halt to democratic reforms was called already last year when there was an overwhelming support for the reimposition of the three year rule for constitutional issues. No doubt support for democratic reforms is still strongest among the constituencies. However, even here it is falling off.

The margin, sometimes a very wide margin, by which union members expressed their preference for Healey [when balloted in the deputy leadership election] does indicate that the argument for democratic reforms and Party policies — the platform on which Tony Benn fought his Deputy Leader campaign — is not won so far as the mass of the members of the labour movement is concerned.

Concern over Labour's chances to win the next general election, which are threatened by the present divisions, has made the need for Party unity an urgent priority even at the cost of entering into a compromise with that wing of the Party which is led by the majority of MPs and trade union leaders.

To adopt aggressive tactics at this stage would only result in further isolate of the "left" and be even greater threat to democratic reforms already achieved.

Comrades who advocate "aggressive tactics" in the present situation are still clearly carried away by the euphoria generated by the Deputy Leadership campaign. They are simply refusing to face the fact that this campaign ended with the declaration of the final result.

The gains of the last few years can only be successfully de-

fended in the name of Party unity. Reforms that are coming up next year must be argued for as essential for the sake of Party unity. At this stage we can only press for such reforms and policies that can still be realistically achieved.

Last but not least, it is necessary to mobilise support for the commitment by the Party leadership to a significant extension of public ownership. Without such a commitment the alternative economic strategy amounts to little more than an alternative way of running a capitalist economy.

The setting up of an entirely new organisation which would adopt a "high profile" approach — with circuses and jamborees so beloved to the far "Left", the Communist Party, and those members of the Labour Party who try to compensate for their inability to make any headway within the Party (i.e. their failure to make full use of the existing party channels) by fantasies about the effectiveness of "extra-parliamentary" action — would make a successful defence of such gains as have been made, let alone any new achievements, quite impossible. [There was then talk of a new alliance of Labour's left, which eventually emerged as "Labour Liaison 1982"].

Where the situation is not particularly favourable, patient explanations must replace some immediate demands, and only such immediate demands should be pressed which have some chance of being actually realised. In this context one might usefully recall what Lenin wrote 60 years ago:

"To accept battle at a time when it is obviously advantageous to the enemy, but not to us, is criminal; political leaders of the revolutionary class are absolutely useless if they are incapable of 'changing tack, or offering conciliation and compromise' in order to take evasive action in a patently disadvantageous battle" (Collected Works, vol.31, p.77).

• From articles in *Socialist Organiser* 57, 15/10/82; 58, 22/10/81, and 61, 12/11/81



Class battles were the way to build confidence. 1982 Plessey factory occupation

Only battle can reinstall confidence

By Gerry Byrne

If there is one law in politics, it is that nothing stands still. Either you go forward and press home victories, or the ground already gained gets taken back. Vladimir Derer's articles arguing for "low profile", non-divisive tactics miss this vital point.

His argument that if we keep our heads down and don't antagonise the opposition, then they'll accept that we're for unity too and will leave alone the democratic gains already achieved, is the wisdom of the ostrich.

It credits the right with a gentlemanly Queensbury Rules view of politics. It's a recipe for turning a temporary retreat into a rout.

Of course it is necessary to make a sober assessment of where we are at. False optimism is only slightly less dangerous than Vladimir's crushing defeatism. But... was there really nothing gained [from the Deputy Leadership campaign]? Was it really only the distasteful diversion Vladimir Derer sees it as?

One can't help feeling that Vladimir Derer sees as one of the disadvantages of that campaign what I would count one of its strengths, the widening of the debate to far greater numbers of people both in the CLPs and more especially in the unions.

Why else his almost obsessive uncomplimentary references to "extraparliamentary politics" and "circuses and jamborees"?

He talks of a new mood in the Party, which is quite evidence, but he sees it entirely from the perspective of internal organisation. Yes, there is a new mood and it's one that is not particularly advantageous to what we're trying to do. Enormous pressures are being extended, but the question is, how do we react to them?

The problem with the "let's unite behind the leadership we've got" argument is that the leadership is part of the problem. The objective pressures which create the felt need for unity at all costs are precisely that this system is in a crisis that allows of no half-way solutions.

[The answer] is widening of participation to the mass of Labour Party and trade union members; following through the fight for democracy in the unions; linking the democracy struggle with the policies needed to offer a real alternative to the Tories... extending the fight for accountability to local government... against the weak-kneed refusal by Labour councils to fight [the Tories].

The "effectiveness of extra-parliamentary action" is not a "fantasy". It is precisely extra-parliamentary action or the lack of it which has created the climate of demoralisation. It is only action in halting the Tories' onslaught and reinstalling confidence into the working class which will create a more amenable climate for the changes so dear to Vladimir Derer's heart.

He seems to have fallen into the trap of taking up a mirror-image of the attitude of groups like the SWP who see the fight for Labour Party democracy as totally irrelevant to the class struggle.

Socialist Organiser 61, 12 November 1981

Tube cleaners stand up to Big Brother

Cleaning workers on London Underground are fighting the introduction of biometric fingerprinting machines, which cleaning agency ISS wants workers to use to book on for shifts. ISS cleaners in the RMT union are boycotting the machines. A cleaning worker spoke to *Solidarity* about the struggle.

Biometric fingerprinting takes a print of your capillary blood vessels, which are unique to every one of us. Immigration authorities put biometric data on your passport and visas, to keep track of exactly who is in a country. It's a "Big Brother" technology.

ISS say biometric data will make their pay systems more efficient, but we believe it goes beyond that. ISS has an overwhelmingly migrant workers. We be-

lieve ISS is having its strings pulled by the UK Border Agency and the Home Office. The company has said that, if they're asked to, they'll give all the biometric data to the Home Office.

We already know ISS cannot be trusted, and is happy to shop its employees to the immigration police. Just after the Olympics, ISS summoned 30 cleaners to an office in Stratford, apparently to receive "an award" for their work during the games. When they got there, they found UKBA and the Met waiting for them. Some of them were in the UK on student visas, and were deported. Others are still in the UK, but out of work, and others have been forced to return home. That's how ISS treats the people who work for it. In 2013, a UKBA snatch squad raided Waterloo station and took night-shift cleaners away from work.

The introduction of biometric machines was announced 18 months ago. We began putting out stickers and posters, to educate people about what the threat was, and strengthen their resolve. We had ballot for action short of a strike last year. The action the union agreed upon was for cleaners to boycott the machines.

Our ballot delayed ISS's implementation.

But the union could've done more over the last year to build up membership. When ISS announced on Friday 13 June that they would begin implementation on Monday 16 June, we were left having to organise things somewhat at the last minute when we should already have had plans in place.

When that announcement was made, we got the message round as many cleaners as we could that the industrial action gave them legal protection not to use the machines.

REFUSED

We told members to use the standard procedure for booking on instead, where they're signed into stations by station supervisors.

ISS tried to send cleaners home if they refused to touch the machines. Where cleaners were "locked out" of work, union reps went to visit them.

At many stations, cleaners refused to touch the machines. I was getting phone calls from all over the place. ISS were telling people they wouldn't get paid if they didn't use the machines, we told people to remain on site and sit in messrooms if

they had to: we weren't refusing to work, just refusing to use the machines. Some ISS managers threatened to call the police.

Some station supervisors were unsupportive, telling cleaners to leave messrooms, but others have shown solidarity by flooding ISS with jobs for every bit of dirt in their station. ISS gets fined when jobs aren't fulfilled, and because they'd locked cleaners out, the jobs weren't being covered.

A lot of cleaners feel threatened and intimidated. We have bills to pay like everyone else, and people are scared of losing their jobs. We've tried to counteract the intimidation, telling cleaners to put in grievances and that the union will back them.

Our action has caused mayhem for ISS so far. It's costing them a fortune to hire agency staff to cover for cleaners they're locking out for refusing to use the machines, and they're also being fine because of unfilled jobs. In talks with RMT, they agreed that everyone locked out on Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 June would be paid, and that implementation would be delayed until Monday 23 June. In further talks at ACAS, the implementation

was put back again until 4 July, which gives us a couple of weeks' breathing space to organise further.

I think we'll have to strike over this. It could be a long, drawn-out battle. We need strike funds urgently, otherwise cleaners won't be able to afford to take sustained action. The IWGB at the University of London has been effective in organising fundraising events and donations, we need to learn from that.

There's been a tendency for cleaners' struggles to be sidelined when issues amongst directly-employed LU staff come up. We cannot let that happen. This is the biggest fight for cleaners on the Tube since the Living Wage strikes in 2007. If

RMT takes it eye off this issue again, or deprioritises it to focus on the LU jobs dispute, cleaner reps who've organised the action so far will be picked off.

ISS is a multibillion pound company. Low-paid, mainly-migrant cleaning workers taking them on feels like a modern-day David and Goliath. But I don't think the company realises what we're capable of. We've already proved that with our action so far. We sat in station messrooms because ISS wouldn't let us work if we didn't touch the machines, and they've been forced to pay us for it!

That's already stung them. We must continue to stand our ground.

THUMBS DOWN TO FINGERPRINTING!



Defend your civil liberties
Oppose fingerprint scanning for booking on for work
RMT Join RMT at www.rmt.org.uk

Support Lambeth college!

By Katy Dollar

Teaching staff at Lambeth College are on all-out strike. The workers are fighting new contracts that attack pay and conditions, which would affect all new workers and create a two-tier workforce at the college.

The changes include:

- An increase in working hours, and a lower hourly rate of pay.
- Reduced holiday.
- An attack on sick pay entitlement for those on long term sick leave.

This is the fourth week of all out indefinite action for UCU members at the college.

Unison members joined the UCU on strike for the second time on 24-26 Jun.

The UCU have agreed £50 per day strike pay for their members, Unison's strike pay is £15.

Niall Macgrath explained concerns about the difference in strike pay; "It costs

as much to feed a Unison member as it does to feed a UCU member."

Unison launched the "Sponsor a Lambeth College Striker" initiative at their National Delegate Conference. Ruth Cashman and Jon Rogers, Unison Joint Secretaries explained;

"We are calling for donations so we can make hardship payments so no member who want to fight this disgusting attack is forced back to work because they cannot afford to stay out. This is local dispute of national significance to workers in further as if this package of terms and conditions are pushed through at Lambeth College they will be rolled out across the sector.

Management at the College have tried to use the anti-trade union laws to stop the democratic decision of UCU members to strike. They have used intimidatory tactics against strikers threatening trade union reps



with completely spurious disciplinary charges for their role in the dispute. The Lambeth College strikers' fight is everybody's fight. Make sure you play your part!"

The joint unions are also calling on community and student groups to broaden the action by organising solidarity actions to support the strike.

Ritzy workers take another day of strike action:

- bit.ly/1nCsIFi
- Support Bryan Kennedy, sacked for alleged "gross misconduct":
- bit.ly/1jLqVXQ

"Law" used to gag debate

By a conference delegate

The ill-defined threat of legal jeopardy dominated speeches at Unison conference (15-20 June), far more than the subject of the national pay dispute.

At Local Government Conference two emergency motions on the pay dispute were ruled out of order on the ground that they might place the union in legal jeopardy.

Given they were not printed on the agenda and no detail was allowed in appeals to the Standing Orders Committee from submitting branches, delegates were left with no idea what legal jeopardy the union was facing.

Lambeth UNISON delegate Jon Rogers requested the conference went into private session so delegates could discuss the pay dispute frankly. That was rejected.

Those delegates who obtained back-alley copies of the unprintable motions were somewhat surprised — they simply contained suggestions that the union made a mistake in not seeking take academy schools out at the same time, requests to co-ordinate action with health and a call to plan strategy including action short of strike action to ensure momentum was not lost.

At National Delegate Conference, legal jeopardy issue arose again. A motion from Tower Hamlets Unison on industrial action to fight cuts in jobs and services and a motion on violence against women, already passed by Women's conference were both ruled out of order on grounds of potential legal jeopardy. The motion on violence against women, had already been incorporated into UNISON policy!

The SOC informed delegates that if the motion had

included an additional carriage return then the motion could have been allowed on the agenda!

Legal jeopardy has been used for many years to silence key debates at conference against the left, but this year against National Women's Conference, Eastern Region and National Women's Committee.

Union activists need to campaign on the principle of over-cautious treatment of the law. These laws are not our laws. We should call on our union to listen to members not lawyers and uphold the right to debate the policy and strategy of our union.



Vote for John Leach!

Workers' Liberty members active in the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union (RMT) are backing John Leach in the election for General Secretary.

John is standing on a platform of democracy and equality, committing to put women, black, LGBT, and disabled members' struggles at the heart of the union, and emphasising the importance of member leadership.

The other candidates are Mick Cash, Steve Hedley, Alex Gordon, and Alan Pottage. Voting will be from 21 July to 22 September.

• Read more about John's campaign at facebook.com/johnforGS





IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2014

Their class war and ours

Across the world, capitalists are waging class war against the living standards and rights of workers and the oppressed. At Ideas for Freedom, the summer school on 3-6 July in London organised by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL, which publishes *Solidarity*), we will be discussing how we can resist and fight back.

IFF will include lectures, debates, workshops, films and plenty of space for objections, dissent and criticism. It opens with a Thursday night (3 July) Radical Walking Tour of East London and a Friday night (4 July) meeting on "One hundred years of women's struggles, 1914-2014".

Grillo allies with UKIP

By Hugh Edwards

Italy's Five Star movement, which announced its arrival on the political scene as the harbinger of a new, modern "non-ideological" Italy, cleansed of the filth and corruption of the "old", has just joined forces with the right-wing populist UKIP in the European parliament.

After weeks of "democratic" debate, and a online referendum, it was announced last week that Five Star leader Beppe Grillo and UKIP's Nigel Farage had managed to fish from the sewers of Europe's political right the minimum of 48 representatives necessary to constitute a parliamentary group of Euro deputies.

Among the new bedfellows of the 24 UKIP and 17 Five Star MEPs are an elected Le Pen deputy, Joelle Bergeron, several from Lithuania's "Order and Justice" party, a few from Sweden's ultra-racist "Democrats", and a few more of the same ilk from the Czech extreme right.

They share a visceral opposition to Europe and to immigration, differing only in the virulence of their racist utterances or, in the case of Grillo and his friends, the degree of philistine self-delusion that "racism" is just another "old" ideology.

Nothing since the galloping victory of Renzi a few weeks ago could more urgently underline the debacle that is now being played out in the Italian left and working class movement. The Grillo phenomenon was, in its origins, a cry of anger and protest from millions of the most downtrodden. In less than two years, amidst the unresolved political and economic crisis, Grillo now increasingly figures as the aspiring right-wing opposition, following the collapse of Berlusconi's Forza Italia and the Five Star haemorrhage of three million votes.

LEFT

And the left that in the same European elections claimed that the positive performance of the Tsipras campaign marked a turning point in the direction of building a Syriza movement in Italy?

Fine words, but the campaign's largest politically organised component, SEL led by the governor of Puglia, Nichi Vendola, has split. Its deputies and senators prefer to "tough it out" in the battle to persuade Renzi, and the left of his party to throw a few crumbs more to the masses.

Nothing surprising here, given that in two-thirds of the country the so called radical left, Vendola's outfit and Ferrero's Communist Refoundation, are in alliance with Renzi's Democrats in local, regional and provincial councils.

But the picture is even blacker in "red" Livorno, historically the most left-wing city in the country. In order to defeat the Democratic Party candidate in the second round of the recent mayoral elections, the whole of the radical left backed the Five Star movement, the leader of which declared not so long ago that the local steelworks of 3,000 workers should be closed and trade unions abolished. Little wonder that the fascist right in the city voted for the Grillo candidate!

The shameful spectacle of political impotence and retreat continues. And all this despite real, courageous battles and struggles going on, especially from sections of the remarkable base unions and others. The need for revolutionary clarity, theory and organisation was never more burningly obvious than in Italy today.



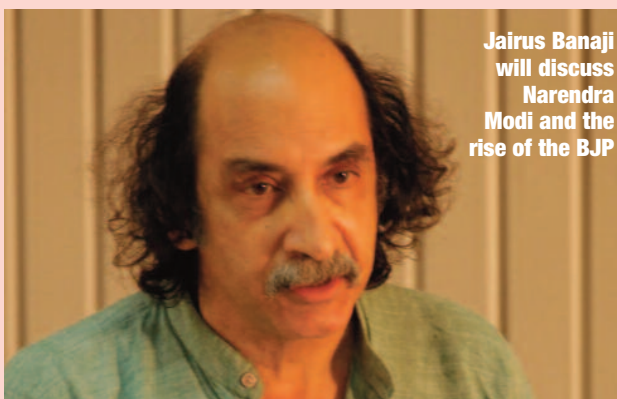
Daniel Randall will talk about on Jewish revolutionaries

• Revolutionary Jews

When millions of Jewish migrants fled poverty and persecution in Tsarist Eastern Europe, they settled in great numbers in Britain and the US. They often worked in sweatshops and grim, un-unionised workplaces, and were threatened by xenophobia and a nascent fascist movement. Hip-hop artist and AWL activist *Daniel Randall* will give a presentation on the history of Jewish radicals and revolutionaries.

• Politics and Class Struggle in India after Modi's election

The Hindu chauvinist BJP has just swept the Indian National Congress from power. What does the BJP's victory mean for the diverse Indian working-class? *Jairus Banaji* from the School of Oriental and African Studies and a speaker from South Asia Solidarity will discuss the issues.



Jairus Banaji will discuss Narendra Modi and the rise of the BJP

Fighting the far right

This year has seen the continued rise of the racist, anti-immigrant right across Europe and the world.

What can the left do to build solidarity between migrant and local workers, and turn back the tide of nationalism? Several sessions at Ideas to Freedom will be addressing the question.

• Migrant struggles in Britain past and present

For centuries, people from around the world have been travelling to this island and settling. Their struggles against racism and bigotry and for a decent life are an inspiring example for today. *Vicki Morris* of the AWL and *Shreya Paudel*, NUS International Students' Officer, will discuss the lessons.

• Is the far-right winning over Europe's workers?

The European far-right has made big gains in elections across Europe. Are they winning the argument amongst European workers? What can the left do to beat them back? *Yves Coleman* from the French journal *Ni patrie ni frontieres*, *Matt Cooper* of Workers' Liberty and Greek socialist activist *Theodora Polenta* discuss the way forward.

The weekend sessions are at the University of London Union, WC1E 7HY.

A creche and overnight accommodation are available free, and food will be available cheap.

Tickets bought in advance cost £34 waged, £18 low-waged/uni students, £7 unwaged/school or college students.

Book or inquire now at www.workersliberty.org/ideas