



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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After Scottish shock, reshape Britain

A democratic

federal

republic!

Workers should
unite against their
common enemy
— the bosses
and the Tories.
See page 5



**A democratic constituent assembly to
reshape the whole British Isles**

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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Control at the top, ferment below

By Martin Thomas

It was advertised in the Labour Party conference fringe guide as an NUT (National Union of Teachers) meeting with Tristram Hunt, the Labour shadow minister for education, but turned out to be something different and more interesting.

It started earlier than advertised in the guide. When I got there, the room was already full, with maybe 100 people. NUT deputy general secretary Kevin Courtney was there, but it was not an NUT meeting. It

was an hoc event organised by an individual activist, Emma Hardy-Mattinson. And Hunt was not scheduled there.

Hardy-Mattinson is a right-winger in NUT terms. The event was chaired by a very New-Labour-sounding Labour councillor from Croydon. When it broke into discussion groups, my group at least was coordinated by people who sounded very New Labour. ("We have to be smart about this...")

Yet the temper of the event was left-wing. The discussion group I joined was asked to discuss:

"How do we raise standards in a Labour way?"

The question was immediately challenged. What do we mean by standards? Shouldn't we ask something like: "How do we help students learn better?" For life, and not just for exams and for work?

One teacher in the circle had al-

ready proposed to the plenary that formal assessment should check only literacy and numeracy. When I advocated abolition of all school exams and of Ofsted, I got more nods, and fewer "oh, that's too radical" shrugs, than I got in the Workers' Liberty school workers' fraction.

Another circle reported back for abolition of performance-related pay, another for abolition of faith schools. When one teacher hesitantly defended faith schools, others were vehement against them.

There were speeches for abolishing Academies and faith schools; for at least stripping private schools of their charitable status; for much better pay for teachers; for re-basing the whole schooling system on cooperation, not competition.

Those attending were, it appeared, almost all teachers, there because they had come to the Labour conference as delegates or observers.

In short, there's more left-wing feeling in the Labour Party ranks than you'd guess from the very-

controlled proceedings inside the Manchester Central conference centre.

Inside, CLP delegates as well as the union delegations were mostly cowed into making a show of unity in preparation for the May 2015 general election.

At the conference entry, however, *Solidarity* sold perhaps more briskly than it would sell at a large far-left event, and the left-wing "Yellow Pages" bulletin was warmly welcomed — despite the fact that the actual Labour people entering the conference, delegates and observers, are now much outnumbered at the event by exhibitors, advisers, apparatchiks, media people, and so on.

The hunker-down factor has affected the "outside" left, though. The flurry of leafleters and campaigners at the conference entry was much smaller than in 2011 and 2012 — I missed 2013 — with no left papers on sale except *Solidarity* and the two rival *Labour Briefing* publications.



Tristram Hunt at conference this week

Neo-liberalism with a veneer of socialism

By a Labour conference delegate

There are some promising policies such as a rise in the minimum wage to £8, the scrapping of zero-hour contracts, repeal of the Social and Health care bill, reversal of the 50p tax cut, repeal of the bedroom tax and exclusion of the NHS from the EU-US trade agreement.

However, I would not exactly call these policies progressive. Yes they will hopefully improve the lives of those on low incomes, but they will do little to bring about real social change. Or enable those from all sections of society to enter into positions that have for so long been dominated by the upper classes, particularly white men.

For me real social change begins with education, and unfortunately the education policy seems to be more focused up moulding our children

into ideal neo-liberal subjects rather than giving them real opportunities to think critically and challenge social reproduction.

The focus of Labour Party education policy is on vocational education, rather than levelling the playing field by supporting and adequately funding a comprehensive education system.

Schools will still exist in a fragmented system with LEA schools given the same powers as Academies. Giving more powers to schools really means giving more powers to head teachers, and in many of the academies I know head teachers have used these powers to implement significant changes, such as extending the school day, without negotiation with staff, parents or students.

Thus the education policy, like many of the other policy areas, echoes neo-liberal logics — personal responsibility, individualism and retreat of the government.



Thousands march on UN climate summit

By Rhodri Evans

Over 300,000 marched in New York on Sunday 21 September, as the UN Climate Summit met there.

About 40,000 people marched in London, and other marches took place in cities across the world.

After the march some pro-

testors moved onto Wall Street with the #floodwall-street action.

Highlighting the danger of raising sea levels, protesters covered the area with blue dye to symbolise water.

Police arrested more than 100 protestors in Wall Street, and injured many.

USA: 370 million student debt-years

The UK is heading towards a US-style education system. This article by Con Karavias, adapted from the *Red Flag*, the newspaper of Socialist Alternative in Australia, explains.

Currently, 12 million US citizens borrow money annually to continue studying for their degree. The total number of

those paying off student loans is 37 million. It will take each of them an average of 10 years to do it. It'll take a lot of them far longer.

In the US, the vast majority of people are deprived of anything resembling a worthwhile education.

The "diverse array of institutions" in the US is two-tiered. At the top are the Ivy League colleges — the

Harvards, the Yales and their dignified peers. These institutions have unparalleled global prestige [as Imperial and Cambridge have here].

They are lavishly funded, have tens of billions in endowments (more than \$30 billion a year in income from its endowment for Harvard alone), attract the most lauded professors and boast campuses resembling royal estates. Where could be better than these beautiful, spacious grounds for the spirit to flourish and the mind to roam at ease?

But their oak and cedar doors rarely open for any but the wealthy. Fewer students than ever from working class backgrounds are invited to traipse their avenues. In 2013, Harvard enrolled fewer than 200 students from the poorest half of the population. Students from the bottom half of the wealth ladder account for only 10 percent of enrolments at elite US universities; more than 60 percent come from the richest quarter. US education is utterly corporatised. The pursuit of knowledge is subordinated to the pursuit of profit. "Knowledge will

be the most important currency", said Harvard president Drew Faust as he launched the university's latest \$6.5 billion fundraising drive.

Those for whom the elite institutions are out of reach have a bleak outlook. Student debt now totals more than one trillion dollars. It stands head and shoulders above credit card debt or car loans, and is second only to the country's monumental home mortgage debt.

Indebtedness exacts a crippling toll on most US graduates. Stories of despondency and aimlessness abound, while 54 percent of graduates under the age of 25 are either unemployed or doing work for which their studies were unnecessary.

The Australian Liberals [Conservatives] want government funding to be extended to private institutions. This is just another way of forcing students immediately to accrue huge debts. In the US, students who attended private institutions are almost twice as likely to default on their loans.

A 2012 US Senate com-

mittee report on for-profit colleges found, among other things, "overwhelming documentation of exorbitant tuition [fees], aggressive [student] recruiting practices, abysmal student outcomes, taxpayer dollars spent on marketing and pocketed as profit, and regulatory evasion and manipulation".

That is, in a system based on massive rip-offs, institutions have become so predatory and uninterested in the education of their "customers" that the US Senate had to issue a reprimand.

The turn towards the US model has been a long time coming. Both the Australian Labor and Liberal parties over the last decades have undertaken regressive changes that more and more have corporatised education and allowed private interests to meddle in and corrupt what should be a right for all.

It's only when we've been ready to fight for our right to a decent education that such changes have been challenged and even beaten back.

Schools for profit

By Gemma Short

Academy schools are paying large sums of public money to private companies linked to their management, according to a report by the Education Select Committee.

Academies are state-funded but privately managed schools; many are "sponsored" by private education companies. Still more have individual board members who run or have interests in private companies.

It has always been clear that academisation meant privatisation, and private profit, but less clear how companies are making a profit. This report makes it clear. Aurora Academies Trust, for example, is paying £100,000 a year to use its parent company's "patented global curriculum".

The report identified conflicts of interest: a head teacher spending £50,000 on a training course run by their friend, another who was also trustee of the trust and could appoint the board that would undertake his performance management and decide his pay.

The report only interviewed a small selection of school board members and head teachers. This could be happening on a wide scale, unnoticed in many schools.

In January of this year one of the largest academy chains, Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), advertised a 10 year contract to outsource all its support staff in a £400 million deal. The same chain had come under fire for having paid £500,000 over three years to private businesses owned by its trustees and executives. This included payments claimed as "project management" and "HR consultancy", often paid on top of salaries.

It is estimated that £80 billion has been spent since 2010 on legal, administrative, accountancy, recruitment and consultancy fees connected with academy conversions.



Over a third of student women face sexual harassment

By Charlotte Zalens

37% of student women say they have faced sexual harassment at university, according to an NUS report.

This is an extraordinarily high figure, given that it's about harassment within only a few years of a woman's life.

The report also found that two-thirds of respondents had witnessed others tolerate unwanted sexual comments and the same number witnessed the telling of rape or sexual assault jokes in a university environment. More than a third were aware of promotional materials around university

that had sexualised images of women.

A second year student reported the use of "Almost cartoon-like images of women with large breasts and bum, very skinny and the 'clothing' usually fancy dress type or topless, always revealing, and posing provocatively. Usually advertising a clubbing event etc."

Three fifths of students were not aware of any policies at their university or students' union regarding sexual harassment or assault. The report also found that women respondents were significantly more likely than men to not report harassment for fear of not being believed.

This reflects sexism in society in general, where lack of belief of victim's reports contributes to under reporting of sexual harassment and assault.

Some universities have announced they will be starting compulsory consent training for all students. This seems to be coming from the right place.

However there is a world of difference between lectures on sexual behaviour and an empowering conversation about what consent means.



Kent student union officers take part in a "Zero tolerance" campaign



These homes need people

By Gerry Bates

The Focus E15 Mothers campaign have occupied empty property on the Carpenters estate near Stratford station.

The women started their social housing campaign last year when Newham council evicted them from a hostel for young parents and said they would have to move out of London. They won the right to take up temporary private housing tenancies but these end soon. Meanwhile large parts of hous-

ing on the Carpenters estate lies empty, and Newham council's housing waiting list is 24,000.

The women report that the flats on the Carpenters-estate are clean, well decorated and one even had a new kitchen. Why are so many homeless while these flats stand empty?

The occupiers plan to stay in the space and open it up to use for the community.

• More information: on.fb.me/1x0Frpa

The flood of Putin's lies

The following is an extract from an interview by the Russian Socialist Movement with Dmitry Kozhnev, a former engineer and trade union activist in Kaluga (Russia) and member of the Workers' Platform of the RSM.

The conditions under which trade union activity takes place (in Russia) have changed in recent months. Anybody who wants to now tries to cover up their dirty little games with "patriotic" rhetoric.

Accusing everyone who is dissatisfied and opposed to the current state of affairs of being supporters of the Maidan [Ukrainian protest movement of 2013/2014] and of Banderism [right-wing wartime Ukrainian movement] has become very popular.

It's impossible not to recall the well-known saying of Saltykov-Shchedrin [nineteenth-century Russian satirist]: "If they talk about patriotism in Russia, then this means that something somewhere is being stolen."

These are the methods of the bosses in the enterprises, of "trade unions" which have sold out and are at their disposal, and of the authorities.

What's interesting is the fact that for some reason or other these gentlemen declare their own personal selfish interest to be the "interest of Russia", the interest of the country, the in-

terest of the people, etc.

People who want to fight against outrageous practices in the workplace are denounced as "agents of the west", "Banderists" and "people who want a Maidan [in Russia]".

The bosses of foreign private companies, representatives of western capital, are not embarrassed to accuse trade unions of "wanting to destroy the Russian economy" and to describe international working-class solidarity as "a plot against Russia".

The authorities and the regional press also lend a helping hand here.

Attempts to present the opponents of the Maidan [in Russia] as a proletarian class force have no substance at all.

Without doubt, workers are present in the anti-Maidan movement, just as workers are present on the other side of the barricades, amongst participants in the Maidan and among supporters of the Kiev government.

But on both sides workers are merely grains of sand in someone else's game. They are not the ones who make the decisions, draw up the programme and decide the agenda. They are merely expendable material in conflicts between oligarchs.

We should not be misled by the use of superficial formal fetishes, such as the red flag and monuments to Lenin in the south-east of Ukraine or the symbols of the [Banderist] Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the west. In reality, they lost their original content and meaning a long time ago.

The same applies to the use of elements of Soviet rhetoric.

I do not see how the Ukraine of Poroshenko is in principle worse or more reactionary for workers than Putin's Russia, towards which the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics unconditionally orient themselves (insofar as they do not straightforwardly subordinate themselves to it).

The "power of the oligarchs" in Russia is in fact the liberal (i.e. economically liberal) capitalist economy. At times there is a lot of open fascism in everyday life and at an official level, as well as a conservative, clerical, reactionary ideology, political persecution, and a heavy-handed reliance on the police, above all in relation to the left.

It is quite clear that the whole history of the conflict in Ukraine was an artificial dividing

of the workers of the east and of the west.

Social-class contradictions were unscrupulously replaced by "linguistic", "cultural", "historical" ones, dividing the workers of different regions and pitting them against each other. Artificial identities are being created which push the real social problems into the background.

And certain "lefts" are playing an unsightly role, in that they are using left phraseology in the service of the financial and economic interests of pro-Kremlin oligarchs. This does great damage to the prospects of the development of a socialist movement in Ukraine.

In the south-east the lefts never really had any influence, and no-one is intending to give them access to decision-making. They are simply used as an additional resource, like the Cossack-monarchists and all manner of fascists.

DISCREDIT

But this regime, which has nothing left-wing or socialist about it, will discredit left-wing and socialist ideas in the eyes of the broader public.

In the rest of the country, as a result of the endeavours of the so-called "lefts" and "communists", socialist ideas and the red flag will be associated with foreign imperialist aggression and an attack on Ukrainian culture, history, identity, etc. It will then be very difficult to destroy these stereotypes.

As for claims that "the Russian workers will not forgive the abandonment of the people's republics" [claimed, for example, by Boris Kagarlitsky], let us be totally honest.

The very idea of "people's republics" was formed in mass consciousness precisely by an unbridled state propaganda. And it was Russian state propaganda, ambiguous political "signals", and the presence of "Russian specialists" which played no small role in the so dramatic course of events in these regions of Ukraine.

For us, the workers, to have a chance of a decent and better life we need to stop being expendable material in other people's hands and become an independent force.

We need to learn how to understand our own interests, to draw up our own programme on the basis of solidarity and unity of organisation in order to achieve a power capable of transforming society and the surrounding world in our interests, the interests of people of labour.

To act in a way which will benefit us, rather than to choose the lesser of several evils.

• Full interview at bit.ly/1tWV5iW



Hundreds of thousands of anti-war demonstrators marched in Moscow last Sunday

TUC silence on Russian aggression is nothing new

Eric Lee



In an otherwise excellent piece on the TUC's passing of an idiotic resolution on Ukraine, Dale Street writes that "for the first time since the Second World War the territory of a European country has been seized by that of a neighbouring big power."

That doesn't sound right — and it isn't.

In fact there have been several occasions since 1945 when European countries have been the victims of aggression by neighbouring big powers.

There was the Turkish invasion of Cyprus 40 years resulting in a division of the country and an occupation of its northern part that continues until the present day.

That invasion was exceptional not only in the sense that such invasions are rare in Europe. It's also exceptional because every other example I can think of involves the Russian army.

Russian tanks and troops invaded Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and while they did not redraw any borders, they did impose regimes that were considerably friendlier to the Soviets than the ones the local populations would have liked.

In the 1990s the Russian army waged a brutal war of conquest targeting the breakaway Chechen republic, burying

once and for all the Leninist myth about a "right of secession". (There never was any such right.)

More recently, in 2008 the Russian army -- no longer the Red Army -- invaded Georgia, wresting control of the provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, turning these into "independent" states recognized only by Moscow.

Actually, that's not entirely true. The "independent republics" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are also recognized by Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru. Nauru for those of you who are not familiar with the Pacific island country formerly known as "Pleasant Island", has a population of just over 9,000. The only country in the world that is smaller is the Vatican.

As for Nicaragua and Venezuela, this slavish kowtowing before Russian imperialism is utterly shameless. Even Cuba hasn't gone so far as to recognize the breakaway provinces, currently occupied by Russian troops.

When tiny Georgia was facing the full might of the Russian army, a number of European leaders flew in to show solidarity, appearing at a rally in Tbilisi's Freedom Square. These included the presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia -- the same countries that are today worried yet again by Russian sabre-rattling.

Historically, the left understood all this. Prior to 1917, the view on the European left was unanimously Russophobic, with the Tsarist empire branded as a "prison-house of nationalities".

After the first few years of the Stalinist dictatorship, much

of the international left turned anti-Soviet, and once again there would be widespread protests at Stalinist aggression.

But today with post-Soviet Russia reverting to the more traditional forms of imperialist expansion, first in Chechnya, then seizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia, then Crimea, and now eastern Ukraine, you would think that the left would have no hesitation about condemning that aggression.

But none of these have provoked any serious protests, least of all from the organized left.

On the face of it, this is quite strange.

After all, when the Soviet Union was young, and when idealistic leftists believed it incapable of doing any wrong, Stalin could order the Red Army to march into Georgia and annex it once again to Russia. Communists in Britain and elsewhere supported that invasion without protest because it was done under the banner of, well, Communism.

They were wrong, and the social democrats who opposed Stalin were right. But at least one can understand their error. Soviet imperialism at least pretended to be somehow "progressive". Putin's aggression makes no such pretence.

The fact that the TUC couldn't bring itself to condemn Putin this time should come as no surprise, as they didn't say a word when Russian tanks poured into Georgia six years ago, or Chechnya a decade before that.

Shame on the TUC and the British Left for not speaking out.

After Scottish shock, reshape Britain!

Scotland is not settled. The whole British political system has been unsettled.

The majority on 18 September against separation — 55/45 — was bigger than expected, and *Solidarity* is glad the vote went that way. We said “reduce borders, not raise them”.

But the Scottish National Party reports an influx of 10,000 new members. There is a storm on Twitter with the #45 hashtag, with which the 18 September percentage for separation spookily link their cause to the feudal-reactionary revolt of 1745, which started in Scotland.

The frantic promises of further devolution given to Scotland by Cameron when he feared a No vote have made the Rube Goldberg contraptions of the British constitution untenable. They subsisted for ages only because they seemed to work and it would be troublesome to rationalise them. Now they are exposed for the nonsense they are.

The SNP has plenty of meat to chew on as it campaigns to pin down Cameron’s promises.

A new referendum may be a while off. The 1995 referendum on separation in Quebec has not followed by another, even though it rejected separation by only 1.2% and the separatist Parti Québécois remains strong. But Scotland may be different. In any case, the constitutional questions have been unfrozen.

As socialists we want a response which minimises barriers while giving no nation or markedly distinct population good grounds for feeling that it has been unjustly overridden.

ENGELS

We want a response which maximises democracy and working-class unity.

The old United Kingdom system was never rational. Scotland had distinct systems of education and law even while all the decisions on them were made by an all-British parliament.

In his comments on the German socialists’ Erfurt Programme of 1891, Frederick Engels advocated “the one and indivisible republic” as the general socialist approach. For Britain, though, he argued that “a federal republic... would be a step forward... where the two islands are peopled by four nations and in spite of a single parliament three different systems of legislation already exist side by side”. (He was reckoning Ireland as the fourth nation and the third system).

The same principle holds today. More patchworkery and ad hoc contrivance will only make more grievances stew and more petty localism flourish.

Labour leader Ed Miliband has called for a constitutional convention. That is good. But his plan is for a from-above consultation with “ordinary citizens and civil society” in “every nation or region”, followed by a “convention”, apparently un-

elected, and then recommendations to Parliament: a sort of giant focus-group exercise.

Democracy is better. We demand a full-scale elected Constituent Assembly.

It should include representatives from the whole of the British Isles, including the Irish Republic as well as Northern Ireland. It should not take the existing partition of Ireland as a fixed axiom. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 has kept that partition going for a while — but only the basis of “peace walls” and permanent, simmering, bureaucratically-institutionalised sectarianism.

Of course the Constituent Assembly need not produce uniform proposals all across the islands. The Irish people may not want closer confederal links with Britain than they have now, through the European Union and the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. But all options should be up for discussion.

Open discussion of options will immediately discredit much of what exists. The House of Lords, for example.

Reformed, adapted, tinkered with as you like, it can still have no validity in a democratic constitution. The middle-of-the-road journalist Will Hutton pointed that out in the *Observer* before the referendum. If there is to be a second house of parliament, it has to be a federally-based house, of a similar species to the Senate in the USA or Australia, or the Bundesrat in Germany.

And the monarchy? The servile SNP wanted to keep the British monarchy as a dual monarchy supreme also in Scotland. But it makes no sense.

LORDS

In the island of Britain, there should be a democratic federal republic, as Engels proposed.

The campaign for an English parliament has been driven mainly by sour, revenge-minded right-wingers. The Labour Party tried to sidestep them by advocating regional assemblies which would divide England into units comparable in population to Scotland.

The effort failed. Under legislation put through by Blair and Prescott, there were to be referendums to create eight elected assemblies. The first referendum, in November 2004 in the north-east, rejected an elected regional assembly by a major-



Alex Salmond will stand down as First Minister

ity of 7:2.

Further referendums were abandoned. The regional assemblies were set up only as shadowy unelected bodies, and eventually abolished by the Labour government in its last days (2008-10).

In any case the last thing we want artificial new mini-frontiers. Like it or not, England is a nation, and with a long-standing identity. The offset to an English parliament is not an artificial and disliked parcellisation: it is integrating it into a democratic federal republic, with genuine local government below it, and a democratic federal united Europe above it.

We should reverse the expansion of central control and extinction of local autonomy pushed through since the early days of the Thatcher government.

Along with this democratic programme, we want a drive to secure and increase labour movement unity across the territory.

If the #45 campaigners seek to separate off Scottish trade-union organisation from British, they should be resisted. All-British trade unions, instead of haggling for little concessions from Scotland or Wales which then license them to exclude those areas from big strikes like 13 and 14 October, should fight to level up conditions across the territory to the best won anywhere, or better.

Level up, don’t separate off!

Beyond the sidestep

By Dale Street

The Scottish referendum debate drew in thousands of people who had not been previously involved in political argument and activity. Public meetings attracted capacity crowds. Political discussion became a mass activity.

When passions run high, as they did in the referendum debate, there will inevitably be excesses. Activists on both sides were equally guilty of such excesses. And, in the end, they were peripheral to the big political debate.

But some toxic divisiveness in the Yes campaign was inherent in its political project. Whereas the workers’ movement seeks to bring together people of different national and ethnic identities as equals in a common movement, the nationalism of the Yes campaign stood for the polar opposite: dividing peoples along national lines.

The history of Britain was reduced to the existence of the British Empire. The centrality of Scotland’s role in that Empire was conveniently ignored: Britain plundered the world, whereas Scotland was apparently just an innocent bystander.

Also written out of British history was everything which

represented historical progress, from the revolutionising of the means of production so admired by Marx to the world’s first powerful working class movement (Chartism).

In the final week before the referendum the Yes campaign produced posters (in Labour Party colours) declaring “End Tory Rule For Ever — Vote Yes”, while the “Radical” Independence Campaign produced leaflets calling for a Yes vote in order to “say goodbye to the Tories and because we’ll always get the government we vote for.”

The unspoken political sub-text was that national identity defines voting patterns (English: Tory; Scottish: not Tory). But it doesn’t.

The appeal of the Yes campaign to gut working-class anti-Toryism was not an attempt to mobilise workers as a distinct social force in society. It was an attempt to mobilize them on the basis of national identity and rope them into a nationalist project at odds with the basic working-class value of solidarity.

In the immediate run-up to the referendum the Yes campaign ran the argument that a failure to vote Yes would result in the privatisation of the NHS in Scotland. This was despite the fact that health is a devolved power. Only the

Scottish parliament can privatise the NHS in Scotland.

And three days before the referendum an NHS whistleblower leaked documents showing that the SNP government was considering plans to cut £400 millions from the Scottish NHS budget (following on from the £300 millions it cut in the last parliament).

There was certainly an element of scaremongering in the professed concerns of certain elements in the No camp about the social results of a Yes vote.

But the response of the Yes campaign was to sidestep. And only that sidestepping allowed the Yes campaign to hold together.

LGBT activists and homophobic big businessmen; green activists and politicians who promised an oil-driven economic boom; feminists and Tommy Sheridan; socialists and the custodians of capital; migrants’ rights campaigners and the architects of yet another border; CNDers and the champions of NATO...

But an independent Scotland could not deliver such contradictory aspirations. Now we need to sidestep the sidestepping, and focus on united working-class action to deal with the real problems.

1864: the First International

By Michael Johnson

150 years ago, on 28 September 1864, the working-class movement took a huge step forward with the founding of the International Working Men's Association.

A meeting at the St Martin's Hall in London brought together radical and socialist delegates from around Europe, to set up the organisation which would become known as "The First International".

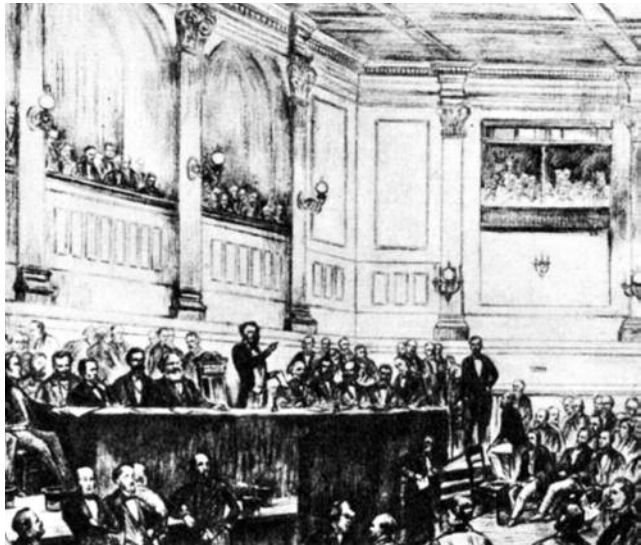
In 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels ended their *Communist Manifesto* with the famous and ringing declaration: "Proletarians of all countries, Unite!" But in many ways, their theoretical elaboration of an international proletarian movement was far in advance of the actual state of working-class organisation of the 1840s. Though many workers fought bravely in the bourgeois revolutions of 1848-49, the working-class was a small minority, and its leaders were often hegemomised by petit bourgeois democrats and republicans. Marx's Communist League was a tiny "vanguard" group.

By the 1860s modern industry was making headway in western Europe, and in many regions the industrial working-class began to outstrip in numbers the pre-industrial artisans and other urban plebeians. A proletarian movement really began to take shape in 1864 with the formation of the First International. As the cloud of post-1848 political reaction began to clear, Marx himself returned to large scale political activity after a twelve year hiatus.

The initiative for the St Martin's meeting came from the working-class movements in England and France, including the London Trades Council, which had been formed in 1860. Largely representative of an upper stratum of skilled craft workers, it was not socialist and tended to follow bourgeois radicals, especially in the campaign to extend the franchise. The leading figures included George Odger, a shoemaker who would serve as the president of the International until 1867, and William Cremer, a carpenter who later became a Liberal MP.

But international solidarity was becoming a basic imperative. Strikes for a nine-hour day in the building trade had seen bosses importing foreign workers as strike-breakers. The Trades Council realised the need to mobilise solidarity in other European countries in order to prevent strike-breaking.

The upturn in economic struggle intersected with important political developments which were also focusing the minds of English workers on international issues. There was widespread enthusiasm in the radical and working-class movements for the Italian Risorgimento, and when Giuseppe Garibaldi arrived in England in 1864, he was rapturously received by the London Working Men's Garibaldi Committee. When the British government forced Garibaldi to leave the



The founding meeting of the International in St Martin's Hall 1864

country, a demonstration of London workers ended in clashes with the police.

Even more important was the American Civil War (1861-5). The war had led to a "cotton famine" which hit production in the north of England — initially much of the workers' press supported the slave-owning South. However, Manchester's workers looked past short-term economic considerations.

During the Northern blockade of the Confederacy, which left many Lancashire workers starving, workers gathered on 31 December 1862 at Manchester's Free Trade Hall. They sent a letter to Lincoln expressing their "hope that every stain on your freedom will shortly be removed, and that the erasure of that foul blot on civilisation and Christianity — chattel slavery — during your presidency, will cause the name of Abraham Lincoln to be honoured and revered by posterity."

After the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, an enthusiastic campaign of pro-Northern mass meetings played a role in preventing active British involvement in supporting the Southern side.

After the Polish uprising of 1863 against the Tsar, skilled workers organised rallies in support of Polish national independence.

Polish independence had long been a touchstone of the French radical movement, and in July 1863, Henri Tolain, a follower of the anarchist thinker Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, travelled to London with four other delegates to speak at a meeting in support of Poland organised by the London Trades Council. Odger raised the issue of European workers being imported as strike-breakers, and proposed "regular and systematic communication between the industrious classes of all countries" as a solution. And so it was at St Martin's Hall on 28 September 1864 it was agreed to form an international organisation.

UNEVEN

The International reflected the uneven ideological development of the workers' movement across Europe. The French representatives elected in September 1864, for example, were republican democrats.

The Italian democrats were followers of Giuseppe Mazzini, and both delegations were hostile to the idea of a politically independent workers' movement. And as David Fernbach wrote: "The English trade-unionists, though politicised, were indifferent to socialism and hostile to revolution, and the French Proudhonists, who professed a form of socialism, were hostile not only to revolution but to all forms of politics."

Due to its reliance on the English male and skilled working-class, and the vigorously anti-feminist French Proudhonists, the International was, Fernbach wrote, "essentially male in its outlook". However a women's section of the International was founded in Paris in 1871 and a section was founded in New York by the feminist reformer Victoria Woodhull, though it remained largely middle-class in character. Marx, though disparaging of Woodhull, responded to the Paris developments by moving a resolution for the formation of working women's branches.

Marx joined the International soon after its formation, and saw his role as providing ideological clarity, while at the same time treading carefully in order to build up the organisation. He wrote to Engels that: "It will take time before the reawakened movement allows the old boldness of speech. It will be necessary to be fortiter in re, suaviter in modo [strong in deed, gentle in style]."

After deftly forcing the resignation of the explicitly non-working-class republicans, Marx set about crafting the Inaugural Address and Provisional Rules for the General Council of the International. It can be read as an attempt to make the basic ideas of class-struggle socialism palpable to the English trade unionists, at the same time as trying to win over elements influenced by Proudhon in France and Ferdinand Las-

salle in Germany.

In the Address, Marx made the important observation about the Ten Hours Act passed in England in 1846 that it was "the victory of a principle...the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class." He attacked the anti-political trends within the workers' movement, arguing that the economic struggle by itself is insufficient and that "to conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working classes."

The Provisional Rules begin with a fundamental principle, which distinguished Marx's thought from the utopian schemes or conspiratorial methods of his predecessors — "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves." The Rules also say "the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and that abolition of all class rule", before calling for "the immediate combination of all the still disconnected movements" of the working-class.

At the London Conference in September 1865 and Congress in Geneva the following year, Marx took the Proudhonist arguments head-on. As against the latter's anti-political doctrine that producers' co-operatives funded by a "people's bank" could transform capitalism and displace the state — without class struggle on either the economic or political fronts — Marx emphasised the struggles to win reforms such as the eight-hour day, and the role of trade unions in fighting for "general laws, enforced by the power of the state." At the same time, he stressed that trade unions must transcend their narrow craft outlook and "consider themselves and act as the champions and representatives of the whole working-class."

In 1867 a wave of strikes swept across western Europe. The International intervened successfully in Belgium, France and Switzerland, building strong sections and dealing a blow against the Proudhonist ideology which saw strikes as a "forcible" interference into economic relations. A section of left-wing Proudhonists around Eugene Varlin, spurred by the repression of the French section by the Bonapartist regime, took a further step towards a recognising the need for political action.

By the Brussels Congress of 1868, Marx's ideas were in the ascendant, and for the first time the International "went on record demanding the public ownership of land, including mines, railways, forests, canals, roads and telegraphs." As Fernbach wrote: "The international had thus developed a long way from its original conception as a workers' defence society."

The passage of the 1867 Reform Act in Britain would lead many of the International's English supporters to dissolve into the camp of radicalism and the Liberal Party. Though the Reform League was organised by many of the same trade unionists who supported the International, and its meeting in Hyde Park on 6 May 1867 was the largest workers' demonstration since Chartism, it was never an independent workers' organisation. Its demand for "manhood suffrage" was qualified to mean "registered and residential", excluding casual workers and the unemployed; it was compromised by endorsing the bourgeois radical demand for household suffrage.

After the armed Fenian uprising against the British in February-March 1867, Marx and Engels took an ever greater interest in the Irish Question. Frustrated at the unwillingness of most English trade unionists to support the Irish struggle for national independence and the amnesty movement for condemned Fenians, Marx broke new ground in stating the oppression of the Irish held back the British workers' movement as a whole. He wrote to German socialist Kugelmann:

"The English people will be kept in tether by the ruling classes, because they will have to establish a common front with them against Ireland. Every one of its movements in England itself remains paralysed by the quarrel with the



Communards defending a barricade on the Rue du Rivoli

Irish, who form a very considerable section of the working class here.”

The First International achieved most fame and notoriety though to its support for the 1871 Paris Commune. Following France’s defeat by and humiliating surrender to Bismarck’s Prussia in 1870, the National Guard resisted government attempts to disarm it and seized power in Paris. A Commune was set up in March 1871, taking its name from the elected local council in Paris established in 1792 during the French Revolution.

In *The Civil War in France*, Marx wrote that the Commune “was essentially a working-class government, the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating classes, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour.”

Marx had argued previously against an isolated uprising in Paris, and the International’s section in France had been severely weakened by state persecution. Once the uprising began, the main political forces in the Commune were the Jacobins and the followers of Louis Auguste Blanqui, a brave and principled revolutionary whose views were nevertheless a continuation of the most radical wings of the first French Revolution — the Jacobin-Communists — and whose methods were those of the conspiratorial secret society. There was however a left-wing of revolutionaries connected to the First International. Varlin was the most prominent of these, and was killed defending the Commune.

After the Commune was crushed, with 14,000 workers massacred and a further 10,000 imprisoned or deported, the International was wrongly blamed for its instigation. This was mainly on account of Marx’s impassioned vindication of this “glorious harbinger of a new society” in *The Civil War in France*.

In March 1872 membership of the International became a criminal offence. Action was proposed against the organisation by Bismarck, and it was discussed at international conferences by the Pope and the Emperors of Austria-Hungary and Germany.

The International eventually perished under the weight of reaction in the 1870s. Another important factor in its demise, however, was the internal crisis caused by the involvement of Mikhail Bakunin.

Bakunin had been involved in the German Revolution in 1848, and was imprisoned in Russia between 1849 and 1863. He later escaped to Italy, and his followers were active not among the workers’ movement but the young middle-class Italian intelligentsia disaffected with the anti-democratic nature of the newly unified Kingdom of Italy. Initially part of the bourgeois-democratic League of Peace and Freedom, Bakunin split and formed its more left-wing elements into the Alliance of Socialist Democracy. He wrote to the General Council to apply for affiliation to the International.

Bakunin’s politics started not from the working-class and its struggle against capital (and, necessarily, the capitalist state as a part of that struggle) but from opposition to the state as such. He came to the working-class when he realised that it was the only class in modern society with an interest in smashing state power.

PARTY

Bakunin, however, vigorously rejected the idea that the working-class should form itself into a political party, or carry out any activity aimed at gaining reforms from the existing state.

Moreover, unlike Marx, who saw in the Commune the form of democratic political institution appropriate to the socialist organisation of society, Bakunin denied that the working-class should set up any political authority of its own after the revolution.

He led a campaign against Marx behind the banner of rejecting the General Council’s “authoritarianism.” On this basis he was able to form an opportunist bloc with the English trade unionists who had their own reasons for resenting the input of the General Council into their affairs.

Though rejecting the idea of a political party, Bakunin advocated the construction of a secret leadership (“invisible pilots”), who would carry out a full-frontal insurrectionist attack on the state. His Alliance was merely a front aimed at infiltrating the International, and when it was refused affiliation, he reduced it to its “central section” based in Geneva and re-applied.

In 1870, Bakunin won over a section of the Federal Council of French Switzerland and split, attracting workers who had joined the International’s sections in Italy and Spain.

Though both sides were not above using questionable methods, the subsequent battle between the followers of Marx and those of Bakunin was for Marx a question of political principle: that of independent working-class political action.

Though Marx was able to win a formal majority for his position, and Bakunin was expelled for organising his secret society, the conflict led to the end of the International.

According to Fernbach: “Marx’s majority at The Hague [Conference July 1872] was composed chiefly of Germans, the exiled French Blanquists and a part of the English delegates, as well as his personal supporters on the General Council. Against Marx were ranged forces that counted for at least as much in real terms: the Spanish, the Belgians, the French-Swiss, and a part of the English.” Though Italy was Bakunin’s main base, they refused to attend the same conference as the “authoritarians”.

In order to salvage the International from falling into the hands of Bakunin, Engels successfully proposed, against Bakuninist and Blanquist opposition, to move the General Council to New York, where it would lie in the control of Marx’s German-American supporters. It was finally wound up at the Philadelphia Congress of 1876 and its successor would be the Second International founded in 1889.

The Bakuninists formed their own International which lasted until 1877.

Despite its relatively short life, the First International was a path-breaking attempt to unite the working-class movement at its various stages of development across the European continent.

In 1947, the American Trotskyist Albert Glotzer summed up its importance in the following terms:

“The First International ‘laid the foundation of the international struggle of the proletariat for Socialism.’ It disseminated the scientific principles of socialism developed by Marx and Engels and destroyed for all time the power and influence of utopianism, ‘true’ socialism and anarcho-communism, and gave the coming movement of the proletariat its scientific basis.

“The First International of Marx and Engels disappeared with the defeat of the Paris Commune and the beginning of a new epoch in the expansion of world capitalism. But it had sown the seed of the future.”

Anti-Catholic and “anti-Catholic”

By Paddy Dollard

The film “Philomena”, released in late 2013, has been criticised as an “anti-Catholic” polemic by people whose own allegiances invite the comment: “you would think that, wouldn’t you”?

In fact it is not a polemic in the sense of being one-sided or tendentious. It is a dramatisation of a true story, a story more or less typical of many thousands of stories and many tens of thousands of lives damaged or destroyed by the ill-treatment of children in Catholic-run institutions in Ireland. (And a story recounted again in a recent TV documentary, “Ireland’s lost babies”).

Philomena in her teens, in the mid-1950s, had an “illegitimate” child, a boy. She was abandoned by her parents, and imprisoned in an institution run by nuns. She was forced to work there without pay for four years, told that she could not leave unless she paid the nuns a hundred pounds — a vast sum in the money of that time to somebody like her. Philomena and the others like her were, to put it plainly, forced into a form of slave labour, working in such enterprises as nun-run laundries (profitable commercial businesses, many of them).

Her child, a boy, was put up for adoption, against Philomena’s will. He was adopted by prosperous Americans and taken to their own country.

The child was not given by the nuns to the Americans, but sold. The trade in such babies was commercial, a business run by the Catholic Church for profit.

Fifty years later Philomena, with the expert assistance of a British journalist, tried to find her son.

Those are the hard facts of Philomena’s life, and of the story the film tells.

With one kind exception, the nuns here are not the “nice”, “good”, “benign”, “nurturing” humane creatures too often they are in films, even now. But there is no lack of “balance”. The point of view of the nuns and of the Catholic Church is presented vigorously. That may be one of the things its Catholic critics object to.

For there is of course a great lack of “balance” in the facts and what they say to us about those who ran such institutions and about those whose lives they blighted, wrecked, or destroyed outright.

Apologists for the Catholic Church might indeed think that some of the “balancing” elements in the film speak in fact for the anti-Catholic side. One of the nun-villains of the 1950s part of the story, now an old woman living in retirement, vigorously asserts that what was done to people like Philomena was not wrong. It was just. It was punishment, deserved and properly meted out, for the sexual sins of the young women whose children were taken and who were themselves pressed into years of slave labour for the financial benefit of the church.

The nuns believed when they did terrible things to young women like Philomena, they did God’s work, acting as God’s



Philomena Lee, victim of the Catholic Church

representatives and instrument.

This character is very vigorous and forceful, speaking from her deepest conviction and intact self-righteousness, telling the truth as she had it then, and has it still. She knows nothing to apologise for or feel bad about.

She herself has lived her entire life in chastity and sexual abstinence. She thereby gained the right, and, as God’s instrument the duty, to punish those, like the young Philomena, who transgressed sexually.

That is how such people thought, and many still think. That is the doctrine. (Philomena herself, so she tells the journalist, felt guilty and sinful because she enjoyed the sexual activity. She deserved punishment. In her view too, the nuns acted on behalf of God. That is the attitude that led the many Catholic lay people who knew something of what was being done to accept it).

The film’s main “anti-Catholicism” consists in letting the villains of the story it tells speak the self-justification that motivated, justified and guided them. It consists in having them defend their behaviour in terms of their basic religious convictions. That is telling it how it was.

FACTS

On that level of course it is “anti-Catholic”. How could it be otherwise? The facts themselves are profoundly “anti-Catholic”.

And therefore? The truth should not be told? If the truth speaks against some institution it should be classified as “anti” that institution, as “prejudiced”, and dismissed and discounted for that reason? Some such believe is the only basis on which this film can be denounced as unfairly or unjustly anti-Catholic. It is the implicit demand that the “anti-Catholic” truth should be suppressed.

One of the main reasons the Catholic church in Ireland got away with monstrous mistreatment of children — and adults — for so long was that the Catholic Church and nuns and priests were immune from criticism. Immunity backed by the power of the state.

Renowned writers such as Frank O’Connor had some of

their work banned in Ireland simply because it depicted members of religious orders in their commonplace human terms and concerns.

From that to “Father Ted” with its priest protagonists, one a sweet natured idiot and the other a conniving dishonest chancer, was progress. It was one of the greatest revolutions in modern Irish history! (In fact, “Father Ted”, though written by Irishmen, was produced outside Ireland, for Channel 4.)

One of the liberating changes in Ireland in the last two decades has been the loss of the Catholic church’s immunity from criticism.

Such a viewpoint might be defended by people other than religious apologists for the Catholic Church. Try translating it into current “left wing” parlance and “politically correct” preoccupations.

After all, vast numbers of Catholics are oppressed people. Think of the millions of “illegal immigrants” from Latin America working in the USA. Think of Polish and other East European migrants in Britain. Think of the Northern Irish Catholics in England had to face, and to a lesser extent still face. Think of British imperialism in Ireland now.

The truth here is not just “anti-Catholic church,” comrade! If you see it in proper perspective this truth is “racist”. Therefore it should not be told, or, anyway, should not be dwelt upon, as this film dwells on it.

The parallels with the conventional left’s attitude to criticisms of Islam and observations about the attitudes of Muslims are all too obvious.

For instance, it is a fact that a wide spectrum of people from a Muslim migrant background are culturally conditioned to think of the typical behaviour of women in Britain as the behaviour of, or indistinguishable from the behaviour of, “prostitutes”.

This attitude will naturally affect the behaviour of some Muslim men toward such women, including young women and girls. Men from all backgrounds abuse young women. But recent “exposures” make it plain that a factor in abuse is religious upbringing. Fear of being “racist” made it difficult to discuss such things publicly for a very long time. It is still difficult.

So too for a long time with the fact that a lot of “mugging” street crime was the work of (poor) young men of Afro-Caribbean background. Official statistics did not take account of such things. Generally it was not reported or discussed. Even so, the truth was widely known, and the effective embargo on telling that truth allowed racist agitators to talk about the Establishment’s conspiracy to suppress this truth. That is, fear of being “racist” allowed the hard-core fascists to be more effective racist agitators.

Whether it is “anti-Catholic” or not, the horrible truth dealt with in Philomena should be told. Not telling it, for many decades played a major part in allowing it to go on.

The truth, and the right to tell the truth, are immensely important.

War, hell, and hope

War poems
By Janine Booth



The revolutionary socialist newspaper *Workers’ Dreadnought* (1914-24) published this poem on its front page, heading an article entitled “Soldiers ask what they are fighting for” on 20 October 1917.

Britain was over three years into a war which its rulers had initially told their citizens would be “over by Christmas”. By this time, many, many families had lost loved ones, and poverty and hardship were biting at home. Belligerent governments were casually dismissing peace efforts, and it was not even clear what they aimed to achieve or under what conditions they might agree to end the war.

Milner wrote his poem in iambic pentameter, often associated with a “heroic” voice in English poetry. It speaks of the silencing of peaceful voices and the carnage to human

life and surroundings, building up through the first stanza to an intense and moving description of the horror of war.

The second (shorter) stanza, though, speaks of cause for some optimism — that nature still moves and life goes on. Moreover, a new hope comes from a country “o’er the azure seas”, from which “tidings of a new born peace” are coming. I think he is referring to revolutionary Russia.

1914-1917

Hushed are the silvery notes that filled the world
With peace; those tiny throats that once could ring
A chord of human gladness now are hurled
Before its heedless pace, no more to sing
On, on it comes, across the wasted sheaves,
The furrow that was once a sparkling stream;
And in its trail, a darkened cloud, that weaves
A spell of terror — some incarnate dream.
For War — the very name embodies Hell —

With unrestrained passion, sweeps the sky
To torture man, and sound the solemn knell
Of Death, spurning a woman’s piteous cry.
Man cleaves the heart of man. The dying sob
Of those who, broken, lie, remains unheard,
Crushed by a cannon’s roar. The awful throb
Of some inhuman missile has but stirred
This carnage into some more ghastly form,
And Love lies slain by those who deemed her all.

But look! A tiny spark of hope remains
Among the ashes of a world’s despair;
And in that gleam, unsullied by the stains,
The lusts of war, there lies an answered prayer.
The stream flows on, tho’ crimsoned by the blood
Of guiltless men. And o’er the azure seas,
The echoes of a thousand voices flood
The world with tidings of a new born peace,
The fellowship of man. And it shall bring
New hope, new life, new love, new everything.

The origins of “Islamic State”

By Stephen Wood

The IS (“Islamic State” movement), originally ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), has now eclipsed Al-Qaeda in ferocity and publicity. How?

ISIS has been written off as a product of Western and Syrian intelligence agencies managing to pull together a number of disenfranchised senior military figures who have had expert training.

Much of that narrative just isn't true.

The most important figure in the rise of ISIS died five years before it came into being. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who would lead the proto-ISIS group until he was killed by a US airstrike in 2006, travelled as young Jordanian Bedouin to Afghanistan in 1989.

By 1989 there were no Russian troops left for him to fight. Mostly he wrote reports for various Islamist newsletters and attempted to make contact with local figures who would later go on to form the Taliban. Al-Zarqawi returned to Jordan determined to form an organisation that could fulfil his primary aim, the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy, and its replacement by an Islamic State.

His virulent hatred of Shia Muslims would later put him at odds with other leading figures in the international network of salafi-jihadi groups, including with the leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden.

After being arrested for stockpiling weapons, al-Zarqawi was sent to prison. He continued to network with other Islamist radicals from Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq. He built an influential network of Islamists, many of whom had experience fighting and plotting attacks across the Middle East.

Al-Zarqawi was never considered a scholar of Islam. He was an enforcer, known primarily for being brutal and intimidating.

Upon his release from prison in 1999 he went to Herat, on the Afghan-Iranian border, determined to setup a training camp, primarily for his Jordanian followers. He met with Bin Laden and persuaded him to provide funding for his group, Jund al-Sham (Soldiers of the Levant).

In later years US intelligence would suggest that Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi were close. But they saw each other as rivals and had major disagreements regarding their respective plans.

“FAR ENEMIES”

Bin Laden and the burgeoning Al-Qaeda were tactically oriented to fighting what they viewed as the “far enemies”, notably the USA and Israel.

That meant reducing civilian casualties, attempting to win over a range of Muslims internationally to fight the “far enemies”, and downplaying Sunni sectarianism against Shia and other minorities.

Al-Zarqawi was obsessed with the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy, and was fiercely sectarian in a way which is said to have unnerved Bin Laden.

After being injured following the US invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11, al-Zarqawi went to Iran. There, despite his virulently anti-Shia ideology, he was sheltered alongside various AQ operatives and began to regroup his organisation through fundraising and travelling between Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. He remained wanted by the Jordanian Government for plotting to attack the Radisson SAS Hotel.

He entered Iraq in 2002 to seek medical treatment. By 2003 he had founded Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad), which would eventually, after mergers and splits, become ISIS.

Following the US invasion of Iraq the organisation conducted most of its operations from within Iraqi borders. It was still largely made up of foreign fighters, combatting both US forces and the Shia dominated Iraqi government.

Prior to the invasion the US had identified al-Zarqawi as a key link between AQ and Saddam Hussein. In fact, al-Zarqawi had no links to Saddam Hussein, although some generals would defect to JT as the insurgency progressed.

JT was never an official AQ affiliate and al-Zarqawi is said to have admonished his supporters outside of Iraq who took guidance directly from the leadership of AQ and not directly from him.



The origins of IS date back to the group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq after 2003

In 2004, in a deal to get extra funds and fighters, al-Zarqawi formally pledged allegiance to Bin Laden, and renamed JT Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (Al Qaeda in Iraq).

There remained differences. The AQ leadership believed that AQI's regular targeting of Shia places of worship, settlements and civilians would put off Muslims abroad who might otherwise back AQ.

In 2006 a US airstrike killed al-Zarqawi. He was replaced by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir and Abu Omer al-Baghdadi, both of whom were killed in 2010.

By 2006 AQI were at the height of its powers. But then the US managed to recruit a large “Sons of Iraq” movement among Sunnis who wanted to push out the foreign-fighter-dominated AQI. That movement, and the US troop “surge” of 2007, all but destroyed AQI's base in Iraq.

Figures such as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi kept the organisation going in diminished form.

Subsequent years of Nouri Al Maliki's Shia-dominated Baghdad government pursuing anti Sunni policies helped to establish the chaos that allowed AQI, now re-named ISIS, to regain influence.

The Maliki government forcibly demobilised the anti-AQI Sunni force that the US had nurtured.

It did not do as it had agreed with the US, and integrate these fighters into the regular Iraqi army.

When, in June, Iraqi troops fled before ISIS, it showed a sectarian Shia army unwilling to defend historically Sunni territory.

Among Iraq's Sunni Arabs, a mixture of indifference to ISIS and incipient sympathy for it helped it grow. It now has many native Iraqi Sunnis in its ranks.

Was the US to blame? Partly, in that, along with Iran, it propped up al-Maliki and his government despite its failure to integrate the army and Iraqi institutions.

The current leader of ISIS and “caliph” of “the Islamic State”, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is an Iraqi national. He worked to convert Sunni Arab discontent with the Iraqi government into recruitment for a force that would fight Shia and “un-Islamic” forces.

Former Ba'thists are less sympathetic to ISIS's ideology, but remain part of their periphery, providing military advice and gaining from ISIS conquests, particularly of oil fields.

ISIS is now largely self-funding, and does not rely on the rich individuals in the Gulf states who helped to keep it going at the beginning of the conflict in Syria.

After AQI was defeated, it renamed itself the Islamic State in Iraq and its brief merger with the official AQ affiliate in Syria produced the name ISIS. ISIS's focus on sectarian warfare and attacking other Syrian rebels rather than the Assad government led to it being shunned by many of its former allies and officially rejected by AQ.

ISIS now has a proto-state with the ability to collect taxes and oil revenue. It trades oil, through middlemen, largely back to the Iraqi and Syrian governments whose territory it is occupying.

The *New York Times* has stated: “Millions of dollars in oil revenue have made ISIS one of the wealthiest terror groups in history. Experts estimate the value of the output from the dozen or so oil fields and refineries under its control in Iraq and Syria at \$1 million to \$2 million a day”.

Al-Zarqawi was most likely responsible for the execution of British aid worker Ken Bigley. ISIS knows that most European countries will negotiate and pay ransom for captured civilians.

Some on the left suggest that ISIS is solely a product of the US. The US trained ISIS and fostered it by invading Iraq. That is largely untrue.

The US's support for al-Maliki, despite his broken commitments to the Iraqi Sunni population, has helped to boost ISIS, attracting supporters who are not wholly in favour of its overarching ideology. But the US did not invent Sunni-Shia intra-Muslim sectarianism.

There is a theory that the US backs ISIS in order to benefit from ISIS's oil revenues. But in 2012 the US produced 7 million barrels of oil a day, compared to the 40,000 being produced in ISIS-controlled territory.

US senator John McCain has met with leaders of the Free Syrian Army and other militias. Allegations that he met with ISIS are false. The blog <http://snowdenhoax.blogspot.co.uk/> has debunked in detail the story that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was trained by the CIA and Mossad.

Conspiracy theories, resting on the assumption that nothing can stir without the unseen hand of shadowy US and Israeli intelligence agencies, are politically paralysing rather than enlightening. Edward Snowden's lawyers have publicly confirmed that there is proof of the so-called US-ISIS link in anything that has been released from the data he has exposed.

Some members of ISIS have benefited from US-funded military training: that is not the same as ISIS being a US creation. ISIS has taken weapons from the well armed Syrian and Iraqi armies; that does not equate to them being armed by the US.

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Basic income and the 21st century working class

John Cunningham reviews *A Precariat Charter* by Guy Standing (Bloomsbury, 2014).

Until reading Guy Standing's book *A Precariat Charter* I had not come across the term "precariat" although I understand that it has been in circulation for some time, as early as the 1950s. So what is it?

According to Standing, the precariat is "an emerging class characterised by chronic insecurity, detached from old norms of labour and the working class". The precariat has few of the democratic rights associated with citizens and are, in fact, denizens — another word that had me reaching for the dictionary.

A denizen is an outsider, someone who is frequently denied many of the political rights of the citizen, someone who was once described (in the nineteenth century) as in "a kind of middle state between an alien and a natural-born subject".

As Guy Standing points out the precariat is not homogeneous. He divides it into three main sub-groups. The first is people who have been "bumped out of" the traditional working class. These tend to be less well-educated, their job-skills are redundant, they are inclined to look to the past and are "more likely to listen to populists peddling neo-fascist agendas".

The second group is the more traditional denizen — migrants, refugees, Roma, ethnic minorities, asylum seekers — whose anger at their lot may be tempered by "a pragmatic need to survive".

The third group is growing constantly and consists of the educated, "plunged into a precariat existence after being promised the opposite".

If we accept these divisions it is easy to see how, for example, those in the first group might come to resent those in the second.

Standing gives his reader a brief description of Italy's Five Star Movement (M5S) as an example of the precariat (or something approaching it) "in action". With unemployment at 11%, 9 million in poverty and all the major political parties discredited there was a political vacuum in Italy into which stepped the M5S. In the 2013 national elections the M5S won 163 senators and parliamentarians. Although the M5S certainly caused a stir, as Guy Standing points out, "Sadly, it did not offer a threat to neo-liberalism; its economic populism had more than a tinge of neo-fascism".

M5S made a strong appeal with its advocacy of environmental issue, a basic income for everyone and a call to end "prestige projects" such as high speed train lines. Other policies however, were little short of disastrous, with calls for more freedom for capital, public sector job cuts and attacks on welfare. The author suggests that this movement is still at "the primitive rebel stage" and it will be some time before a sober assessment of its significance will be possible.

During the recent European elections other groups, such as Spain's Podemos ("We can") made quite stunning electoral impacts. Podemos appears to draw its support from many sectors of Spanish society but particularly the unemployed and calls for a retirement age of 60, a guaranteed minimum income, abolishing tax havens and tackling corruption, which is endemic among the Spanish elite.

The majority of the book, just over half, is given over to a detailed rundown of the "Precariat Charter", a grand total of 29 articles. There is not enough space to discuss these 29 articles in any kind of depth and, certainly in this respect, the book defies easy summary. Instead, I want to concentrate on what I suspect will be one of the most contentious issues wherever this book is discussed. This is the advocacy, in article 25, of a "universal basic income". The full article:

Article 25: Move towards a universal basic income

Governments should move towards instituting a basic income as a citizenship right. In a global market economy, uncertainty and inequality will only worsen unless new measures are introduced. It is vital to overhaul the social protection system.

A universal basic income, as defined by Guy Standing, entails the state paying a guaranteed basic income: "a monthly amount sufficient to provide every legal resident with basic security". At the centre of the struggle of the precariat is the need for economic security, something on which social democracy has reneged offering only various forms of means-testing, "behavioural conditionality and workfare". The basic income will provide basic security for everyone regardless of age, gender, race, marital status, labour status and so on. The basic income should be paid in cash (no restric-



tive "coupons" which can only be exchanged at specified outlets) and should be available to everyone as an individual, not for example, to family units. Probably most important of all there should be no restrictions placed on it.

This will be cheaper, less bureaucratic and, importantly, more dignified than welfare payments as there is no provision for "means testing" — a potentially stressful, intrusive and humiliating experience which should be avoided on basic humanitarian grounds. The amount paid out should be enough for every individual to "survive on but not enough to provide full security".

He then goes through the various justifications and objections to the idea of a basic income. This is quite a lengthy discussion and I can only try and summarise a complex set of arguments. He outlines first, the ethical justification which has almost existential dimensions. The essential point is that the wellbeing and prosperity of any person in society is a result of a complex process which is the end product of the labours of past generations: "Why should people living in these well-endowed places [in southern England] have lives so much more comfortable and secure than the descendants of those who built the country's wealth and power?"

GLOBALISATION

Standing then discusses the economic justifications of the basic income. This mainly revolves around globalisation and the changed nature of the labour market, in particular its flexibility.

With the demise of the old certainties regarding work and welfare, "more workers will be paid wages that are uncertain and inadequate to provide a dignifying standard of living, however hard they labour. Topping up low wages with tax credits is expensive, distorting, inefficient and inequitable, as well as moralistic in its selective conditionalities. A basic income would not be distortionary, as it would be universal and allow bargaining and freedom of choice".

Now we come to the criticisms of the basic income idea. The main points (accompanied by my summary of Standing's reply in italics) are:

1. A basic income is unaffordable. *Income is derived from dispensing with subsidies, tax-breaks and means-tested benefits. A basic income would actually generate more tax revenue (workers would move out of the shadow economy) and have beneficial cost-saving effects on health and schooling.*

2. It would be inflationary because it would stimulate demand and raise prices. *Basic income would be phased in to substitute for other spending while increased demand would stimulate the supply of goods and services produced within local economies.*

3. A basic income would reduce pressure to pursue full employment. *At present full employment means pressuring people into low-paying, unsatisfying, resource-using labour. There are better ways of organising our lives and work should be chosen by the individual. He/she should not be forced into a job they don't want.*

4. A basic income induces idleness. *This is an insult to the*

human condition. The available evidence (from studies in Canada and Brazil) suggest that this claim is simply wrong and people would not be content with just a basic income. "The real disincentive to labour is means-tested benefits, as poverty and precarity traps make it irrational to move from benefits to low-wage labour".

5. It would encourage migration. *Any benefit justifies pragmatic rules and in this case it would be sensible to restrict entitlement until people have been in legally in the country for two years.*

6. It would encourage lower wages. *This is what tax credits already do. The bargaining position of workers would be strengthened by the basic income enabling them to fight exploitation.*

7. There are claims that a basic income would undermine the solidaristic base of the welfare state. *This solidarity was always rather limited and now hardly exists. "A universalistic base would set the scene for a broader form of solidarity".*

Clearly there is much to debate here, for example how would the broader form of solidarity mentioned in point seven be achieved? The Charter also aims to abolish subsidies — what does this entail? Where do existing organisations (trade unions, tenants' associations, consumer groups, charities, co-operatives etc.) fit into the scenario outlined by Standing? His attitude to the existing "traditional" unions is relatively clear, although not spelled out in detail: they need to adjust to this new world or face extinction at worst or marginalisation at best. Standing argues that the basic income would enhance collective social action rather than diminishing it.

In 1980, the French theoretician André Gorz wrote a book, translated into English (in 1982) as *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*. Some of what he argues pre-empted *A Precariat Charter*.

In his book Gorz argued that, "The right to a 'social income' (or 'social wage') for life in part abolishes 'forced labour' only in favour of a wage system without work. It replaces or complements as the case may be, exploitation with welfare, while perpetuating the dependence, impotence and subordination of individuals to centralised authority."

I'm not sure if any of Standing's ripostes answers the point Gorz is making and, again, there is clearly room for debate here.

To sum-up, I think this is an important work which deserves a thorough discussion on the left, however uncomfortable this might make us feel. In this year of the 30th anniversary of the miners' strike — that last great fight of the "old" proletariat — there can surely be no greater service to the memory of that struggle than to seriously discuss why it was, without a doubt, the last of its kind and what has now taken its place. This is not a discussion about whether or not the working class still exists (of course it does!).

It is more a discussion of what it means to be working class in the 21st century. The answer to that question should not be a defensive knee-jerk reaction but a robust, open, no hold barred debate, in which Guy Standing's book will, I think, play an important role.

Andy Burnham put on the spot



Burnham is pressured into addressing NHS lobby

By Gemma Short

On 21 September over 200 NHS campaigners from across the country gathered outside Labour Party conference in Manchester.

We lobbied to demand Labour make serious commitments to rebuilding the NHS.

Andy Burnham, shadow health secretary, was spotted going into the conference centre and persuaded to come speak to the crowd.

Burnham confirmed his support for Clive Efford's bill to parliament which seeks to remove the parts of the Tory Health and Social Care Act which force private tendering of NHS services. The bill, Burnham assured us, would return NHS run services to the position of being the "preferred provider". Burnham was heckled with calls for the

NHS to be the "only provider".

Burnham is in fact quite the fan of private providers within the NHS. But only, he says, with the correct checks and balances.

Burnham evaded the question directly put to him by lobby organiser Jill Mountford: what about reversing cuts to NHS funding?

The lobby also heard from Anita Downs, a nurse from the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, Pete Radcliff, Broxtowe CLP, Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Labour Parliamentary candidate for Lewes, and others.

All called on the Labour Party to commit not only to repealing the Health and Social Care Act but also to eradicate market forces and fund a full rebuilding of the NHS.

• More information: bit.ly/nhslobby

Care workers strike over 9.5% pay cut

Staff at Your Choice Barnet (YCB), who work with a variety of vulnerable adults, were on strike for two days last week.

The strike was in addition to two days the previous week, where they held a joint rally with visiting Doncaster Care UK workers.

The dispute is over a 9.5% pay cut being imposed by YCB management — an arms length organisation devolved from the council. As well as defending their pay, strikers are also demanding to be taken back in house.

The strike is very well supported amongst staff, and picket lines are lively and well attended.

Negotiations are happening with YCB management this week. Further strike dates have already been set for 13 and 14 Oc-

tober to put pressure on management.

Unison is demanding that Barnet Council also attend talks, and that the council writes off debt and penalties it is imposing on YCB.

• Send messages of support to: john.burgess@barnetunison.org.uk



Cash wins RMT election

By Ollie Moore

Mick Cash has won the election for General Secretary of the rail union RMT by a large margin, with nearly 9,000 votes to the 4,000 of his nearest rival, Alan Pottage.

John Leach, supported by Workers' Liberty, came fourth, with 1,428 votes. Steve Hedley won 1,885

votes, and Alex Gordon won 1,176.

The election turnout was low, around 20%.

Although Cash's election material used militant rhetoric, his record is far more moderate. Cash has a more cautious and conciliatory attitude to industrial strategy than his predecessor Bob Crow. It will be a step backwards if his leadership makes it harder for mem-

bers to take action against their employers. Cash is also infamous for failing to vote against the Iraq war when he represented the RMT on the Labour Party Executive — hardly suggestive of a rebellious or oppositional spirit.

Grassroots RMT members will have to organise independently to create a counter-pressure on the leadership.

More refuse strikes

By Jonny West

Refuse workers in Brighton have named further strikes on 25 and 30 September and 3 October, as their work-to-rule begins to bite.

This is part of a re-grading and equal pay dispute.

The strikers want the job of HGV drivers to be regraded to a higher grade on the pay scale.

This would bring them in line with equivalent roles across the Council and at other local authorities.

ISS cleaners vote for strikes

By Ollie Moore

Tube cleaners working for ISS have voted by a 92% majority for strikes, and action-short-of-strikes, in their dispute against biometric fingerprinting machines.

Some cleaners have been locked out for three months for refusing to use the machines, and have had to fight within their union, RMT, to get access to funds



to support their dispute and keep themselves going while locked out of work without pay.

So far, the union's leadership has not called action to activate the ballot.

The rank-and-file Tube-worker bulletin said: "This is not good enough. Cleaners are amongst the most vulnerable workers on London Underground; RMT prides itself on being an all-grades, industrial union. It needs to fight as hard for cleaners as it does for any other grade."

Outsourced GMB members at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich have voted by 90% for strikes to end a two tier workforce. See: bit.ly/1wJ537c

Reinstate Noel Roberts and Alex McGuigan!

Tube union RMT is fighting for reinstatement for two of its members, sacked on what the union says are spurious and unjust grounds.

Noel Roberts was "medically terminated" by LU, despite doctors, local management, and occupational health declaring him fit for work.

Alex McGuigan was sacked after failing a breathalyser test which failed to take into account his diabetes, which could have given a false positive.

Alex's urine sample was only tested for drugs. Standard practice is to test for alcohol after a positive breathalyser test.

A second sample, which should be retained for independent tests, was destroyed.

• For details see rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

Industrial action resumes in Tube cuts fight

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT has reinstated its overtime ban for London Underground station staff in its fight to stop staffing cuts and ticket office closures.

The ban begins on 24 September, and, with some stations relying on overtime to function, could lead to significant disruption.

With the recent departure of London Underground Chief Operating Officer Phil Hufton, and Labour Greater London Assembly member Val Shawcross asking questions about the impact of staffing cuts, the profile of the dispute has begun to in-

crease. Unions should use the opportunity to rebuild momentum and escalate their action.

A recent joint letter from RMT and TSSA, a smaller Tube union, suggests developing unity between the two unions is possible. TSSA should join RMT's overtime ban, and both unions should name strikes.

RMT's London Transport Regional Council already has policy to push for strikes on or around 14 October, the day of the public sector pay strike.

A one-day strike would have little impact, but a Tube strike on 14-15 October could be effective if properly built for.



Hands Off London Transport campaign action on 16 September



Solidarity

No 337
24 September
2014
30p/80p

Strikes on 13, 14, 15 October

By Gemma Short

The ballot over NHS pay in Unison returned a yes vote with 68% in favour of strike action and 88% of action short of strike action.

Unison has called a four hour strike in all NHS services, from 7-11am on October 13. This is a different day to local government workers, who will be called out on October 14, and PCS (civil servants), who will be out on the 15th.

It is good that Unison has shown leadership in calling action on a ballot with a low turn out. However many NHS staff who are not part of emergency cover work 9-5, meaning many will only be asked to strike for only two hours.

NHS pay has taken one of the biggest hits in the public sector. Health workers' wages have dropped in real terms between 12 and 15 per cent since 2010. This year 60% of health workers are being offered no rise, and others will get one percent. The strike on October 13 will be important in raising the idea amongst health workers that this does not

have to be the case.

Activists in the NHS should have conversations in their workplaces and Unison branches about what services should be exempt, and how to maximize numbers on strike. These conversations will also build understanding of the dispute in the workplace and collective confidence amongst members to take action.

The PCS (civil servants) union executive voted on 23 September to strike on 15 October. Strikes in the public sector will be spread across three days. This is not necessarily a bad tactic. However, workers may not feel as confident coming out in smaller groups.

Both Unison and PCS now have a concrete demand for pay. In local government Unison is demanding whichever is higher out of a £1 per hour increase, or the living wage. In the civil service PCS is demanding a £1200 or 5% pay increase. This

goes some way to addressing the 8% pay cut suffered by workers in the last four years.

Activists in health already have concerns over the strategy the union will take. Many, in local government too, may fear their union leaderships leading them into a "deal" to wind down the action.

Activists should take control of the dispute, starting with organising strike committees in the run up to the strike days.

Strikers' meetings will give workers an opportunity to discuss the dispute and make demands on the union leaders to call more action.



NHS staff staged protests about pay across Wales last June

Labour promises tainted by austerity

Tom Harris reports

With under seven months to go until the General Election, the Labour Party held its annual conference in Manchester on 21-24 September.

So close to an election, the conference was expected to launch the key campaigns.

Speeches from senior Party figures were mixed at best. The rank and file did not get much input.

The Conference Arrangements Committee was able to rule out half the "contemporary motions" submitted from constituencies, as it has routinely done in recent years. The party machine got the CLP delegates voluntarily to forgo two of their four chances to get a subject debated, by bamboozling them into voting for priorities the unions had already selected.

The machine kept the Middle East and Scotland, and spiky NHS motions, off the agenda.

And eight out of 11 rule change proposals from CLPs, brought forward from last year, were ruled out.

The unions were carefully not rocking the boat, in line with their stance at the Milton Keynes Policy Forum, where all the unions bar BECTU voted

against a constituency delegate proposal to commit the next Labour government to ending cuts.

On the face of it, some of the commitments made by Ed Miliband and others are positive. £2.5 billion has been pledged to the NHS, which Miliband claims will be spent on 20,000 more nurses, 8,000 more GPs, 5,000 more care workers and 3,000 more midwives by 2020.

Yvette Cooper also announced that a Labour government would scrap the Tories' net migration target, saying the arbitrary figure had led to the government penalising international students and breaking up migrant families. Both of these announcements should be welcomed by socialists, but they are not nearly enough.

More worryingly, Ed Balls used his conference speech to warn of yet more fiscal austerity, and outrageously argued that a freeze on child benefit was a necessary measure to balance the books. Such a cut will hit working-class families hard, and do nothing to win over crucial voters in the election.

Socialists argue that the richest in society should pay for the capitalist crisis — Ed Balls clearly thinks ordinary children must pay instead.

BRITAIN NEEDS A PAY RISE!

Join the TUC march and rally on Saturday 18 October in London.

Assemble 11am, Blackfriars Embankment

For more information, see britainneedsapayrise.org



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19 November, London

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Miliband made promises on the NHS