

# THE CLARION

ISSUE 2: DECEMBER 2016

£1 (UNWAGED 50P)

AN UNOFFICIAL MAGAZINE BY MOMENTUM ACTIVISTS

## Don't let the nationalists win DEFEND FREE MOVEMENT



By Michael Chessum, Another Europe is Possible

The racist backlash after the Brexit vote, and with Trump's election is going to be a major test for the Labour Party and Momentum in the coming years.

The squeamishness about free movement in some parts of the left stems from a false economy. Supporting immigration controls could be electorally useful - a sort of unprincipled tunnel vision. But it isn't how to win an election: if people want immigration controls, they'll vote for the real thing. The job of the left is to convince people of the reality - that public services, housing and wages are not in crisis because of migration, but because of the decimation of industry, the fire sale of social housing, the hyper-exploitation of the 21st century workplace, the defeat of the labour movement, and so on.

There is no particular democratic mandate to end free movement with Europe: 48% of people voted directly to continue it, and of the 52% who did not, not all will have wanted it to end. In the coming Brexit negotiations, Labour and the wider left must make retaining free movement - along with workers' rights, environmental protections and human rights - one of its key demands.

### False economy

There is a simple answer to the argument that immigration is to blame for low wages: 0.3%. That is, according to the Bank of England, the average figure by which wages deflate for each 10 percentage point rise in

migrant labour in a given sector; in the lowest-skilled sector, it rises to 1.8%. The statistical measure is important: a ten percentage point rise is not 10% becoming 11%, but 10% becoming 20%. Since 2007, median wages have fallen by more than 10% in real terms. It clearly isn't because of immigration.

This matters because over the next few months, the left is going to have its commitment to freedom of movement tested. But as the government goes into long, complex Brexit negotiations and parliament votes on the triggering of Article 50, Labour is in a position to shift the debate and win concessions. Sadly, in Labour, unlikely voices can be heard making arguments that were once confined to the right of the party: that free movement has not worked, that it is eroding identity or wages or public services; and that free movement is not a priority.

### False arguments

Of course, most people on the left who argue that wages are falling because of migration are not saying what they actually think. They think they are channeling what "working class people" want, as if working class people are not also migrants and had not, collectively, been responsible for the most inspiring and effective anti-racist movements in world history. This is not "listening", it is patronising people: since when has the left's starting point been to say what is popular?

Too often we are caught on the defensive about immigration. But above all, the freedom to move is a class issue.

Continued on page 3

INSIDE: FIGHTING TRUMP • PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE DEBATE • STUDENTS AND YOUTH ORGANISE • MOMENTUM DEMOCRACY • JACKIE WALKER • LABOUR IN NI

# EDITORIAL

In this issue we start a debate around the **Progressive Alliance** and why we think that isn't the right way to go. We know this is a very big discussion in the movement and we would like to carry more on it, from various sides, in next issue so please email us at [theclarionmag@gmail.com](mailto:theclarionmag@gmail.com)

Below we publish our draft editorial statement which is the direction we think a magazine like *The Clarion* should be going in. If you would like to be involved in this project then please get in touch.

The Labour Party and the entire country is standing at a crossroads.

Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader in 2015 opened a space for socialist politics to re-emerge into the British mainstream. His re-election in 2016 confirmed that there are at least hundreds of thousands in Britain of people who want to see an end to austerity, to neo-liberalism and to the worst misery inflicted by the capitalist system. There are hundreds of thousands of people who at least aspire to a better society than capitalism. The socialist left of the labour movement has a historic opportunity now – we must seize it.

That means an open discussion on politics and principles, assisting the grassroots of the labour movement to develop our own policies and programme for a Labour government and for transforming society, building on and critically engaging with policies proposed by the leader's office, the unions, the constituencies, and other parts of the movement.

It means democratising the Labour Party, preventing further coup attempts against the leadership, and preventing further unjust purges, suspensions, and expulsions. It means facilitating debate on Momentum, its purpose and its future.

*The Clarion* is a space for and a contribution to those debates. In addition to news and reports from the movement, our coverage will particularly focus on

- Debate and discussion on class and class struggle today, and how we go beyond “new politics” and “progressive politics” to revive working-class politics.

- How we make socialism, a new society based on common ownership and need not profit, the basic, unifying goal of the left; and fight for bold socialist policies in the here and now.

- Fighting nationalism, building working-class solidarity across borders and between workers of different backgrounds and communities.

- To take a serious and consistent approach to equality and liberation struggles.

- To stand up for rational debate and against nonsense, against the culture of clickbait, conspiracy theory, and instant denunciation which has taken root in some parts of the left.

We welcome involvement from comrades who are in broad agreement with these points. We aim to complement rather than compete with existing publications on the Labour left, and to critically engage with ideas from across the left.

## THE CLARION PANEL:

Edd Mustill, Rida Vaquas, Sacha Ismail, Simon Hannah, Rhea Wolfson, Jill Mountford, Michael Chessum, Nik Barstow

# CONTENTS

## FRONT PAGE

Defend freedom of movement Michael Chessum

## PAGE 3

Against Trumpism: class politics Sacha Ismail

## PAGE 4

Reports: Sheffield, Battersea, Lewisham

## PAGE 5

Manchester Labour Students Emma Runswick,  
Deej Malik-Johnson and Luke Neal  
Momentum Youth Josie Runswick

## PAGES 6-7

A Progressive Alliance? Edd Mustill, Dale Street

## PAGE 8

Reply to Paul Mason on Momentum Nick Wrack

## PAGE 10

Jackie Walker debate Pete Firmin, Jill Mountford  
Stop the Labour purge: reinstate Chris Marks

## PAGE 11

Organising in Northern Ireland Leonie Hannan

## BACKPAGE

The fight for education Anastazja Oppenheim

This issue of *The Clarion* was printed on 17 November 2016

Printed by Mixam, Watford

Email: [theclarionmag@gmail.com](mailto:theclarionmag@gmail.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/theclarionmag](http://www.facebook.com/theclarionmag)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/clarion\\_mag](http://www.twitter.com/clarion_mag)

Website: [theclarionmag.wordpress.com](http://theclarionmag.wordpress.com)

Address: BM Box 4628, London, WC1N 3XX

## GET INVOLVED:

- I want to contribute content to future editions of *The Clarion*
- I want to take out a trial subscription of 5 issues for £5
- I want to be a local distributor. I will take 5 issues each month for £4  . I will take 10 issues each month for £8  (send £20 for 5 issues, £40 for 10 issues).

Name: .....

Email: .....

Phone: .....

Address: .....

Send money via PayPal to the email address [theclarionmag@gmail.com](mailto:theclarionmag@gmail.com)

# Against Trumpism: class politics

By Sacha Ismail

Donald Trump's victory is a disaster, but it is one that has been a long time coming. It is the same problem posed by Brexit, by UKIP and by the rise of the populist right in many countries.

Labour's right are using Trump's victory to press arguments that the left must embrace "patriotism", i.e. nationalism, and migrant-bashing, to address people's "concerns" and "identity". The left can never win that game – playing it will only strengthen the right and far right by accepting their premises. "Winning" would mean losing the things which meaningfully define the left as a left.

The problem with the Clintonites and with the Labour right is not that they have been insufficiently nationalist! It is that they want a "left" stripped of class content – but whose class content is in fact defined not by the needs of workers but by the needs of capital. This pro-capitalist, neo-liberal "left" has little possibility of relating to the millions battered by economic crisis and driven by a feeling that politics cannot go on as before, or of developing an alternative class-based pole of attraction.

## Demoralisation

What allowed Trump to win while losing the popular vote was that he sucked up white working-class voters in previously industrialised, heavily unionised states regarded as safely Democratic – Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania. Racism was a major factor, but it is racism shaped by working-class demoralisation and the decline of meaningfully working-class institutions, above all trade unions.

Blairite-type politics, like the more purely capitalist mainstream of the Democratic Party, cannot conceive of reconstituting a working-class political force capable of confronting the populist right on its chosen ground of class by championing real working-class interests. That is why the Corbyn-haters avoid discussing such issues, preferring to present the left as middle-class and hostile to working-class people.

That accusation would be better levelled at the Labour right. Their professed concern for workers' interests, combined with cringing before the demands of the rich, is laughable. Nonetheless, it is true that the left has a mountain to climb.

The labour movement *has* got weaker. Socialists *are* primarily based among "middle-class" – in fact white collar, big city, more formally educated – workers. The main beneficiary of the capitalist crisis, so far, is the nationalist right, and its current is flowing strongly.

## Hope

Yet in Britain, America and many other countries the labour movement is still a force – potentially a mighty one. Movements like those around Corbyn and Sanders show a desire for left-wing answers among millions of people. If we organise people, build up the movement while educating for socialist ideas and vision, and wage more and stronger struggles for working-class interests, the big picture can change fast.



**Working-class demoralisation and racism is a toxic mix that must be fought**

A lot of that work needs to be done at the grassroots – in local Labour Parties, in workplaces and trade unions, in communities. Strong leadership would help. We need to build leadership from below – but we can also address demands, proposals and criticisms to our comrades at the top.

## Aggression and ambition

The movement we must build will be a million miles from Trump's. But what we do need, but lack so far, is the kind of political daring and aggression Trump and his supporters have displayed.

With the millions disillusioned with mainstream politics, the left and labour movement must begin a discussion around plausible ideas, proposals, slogans about how they can *fight* for their interests, against the growing wealth and power of the rich.

We should take the slogan of the nationalist right, "Take back control", and make it our own – insisting we need to take control back not from migrant members of the working class, not from foreigners, not from "Europe", but from the exploiting class that dominates the world.

That enemy faces us, first of all and most importantly, in our own country. And our potential allies, other workers, are in other countries, all around the world.

If we cannot get Labour and the labour movement fighting hard for workers' interests and socialist ideas and policies, then Trump's election may well be a harbinger of similar disasters in Britain.

Corbynism so far falls short of what we need – the left needs to be far more ambitious if we want to shift the political environment.

## Defend freedom of movement (continued from front page)

The British government now requires you to earn £35,000 or more per year in order to live here. Rich people can move, work, study and buy up property wherever they like. Ordinary people can't. Borders are like capitalism: the poor get exploited and confined to whatever piece of land they were born in, while the rich get state bailouts and a borderless world.

The freedom to live where you want – like the freedom to dress how you want or love who you want – is a freedom worth fighting for. For a brief moment the European Union provided its citizens with that freedom. Not always for the right reasons, not without problems. It is our job to defend and extend such freedoms.



## “Sheffield needs a pay rise”

Trade unionists in Sheffield have launched a major campaign for employers in the city to pay at least £10 per hour, under the banner ‘Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise.’

The campaign was formally launched at a packed meeting in October addressed by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and others.

Sheffield TUC, which has launched the campaign, is clearly in it to win it. They say:

“UK plc is beset with rock bottom wages, zero-hours contracts and a lack of well-paid jobs with union recognition.

“A recent Resolution Foundation Report showed Sheffield is the lowest paid city in the country. Sheffield TUC is determined to do something about this. Our “Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise” campaign will expose Sheffield’s worst employers, many of whom are household names.

“We will organise street events and link in with union branches and working class communities in the city. We will lead focused union organising drives for the TUC target of £10 per hour as a minimum rate for ALL workers.

“We will work with national trade unions and link up with the highly successful US trade union campaign for \$15. This will be backed up with a local media campaign aimed at uniting the people of Sheffield behind us in a mass campaign to drive up wages in Sheffield.

“We deserve better!”

*“A recent Resolution Foundation Report showed Sheffield is the lowest paid city in the country. Sheffield TUC is determined to do something about this.”*



### Aydin Dikerdem elected to Wandsworth Council



Momentum activist Aydin Dikerdem, has been elected as a councillor in Wandsworth. The race was a nail-biter for local activists as Labour had only won the council seat in 2014 with 75 votes after the Tories held it since 1978. Sadly, the previous Labour Councillor died over the summer.

Labour activists had to work very hard to keep the seat Labour and make sure

local people are represented by someone who will stand up for their interests.

Aydin told the local Labour Party: “My top priority is to focus on the housing crisis.

“I know how hard it is to get a place of your own in Battersea so I want more genuinely affordable homes for local people.”

Wandsworth is seeing huge changes with the Nine Elms redevelopment and expensive housing going up that local people cannot afford.

With many Momentum activists involved in the campaign it really showed what unity can do. Aydin won the election by a huge majority – 1551 votes to the Tories’ 987!

Local activists were ecstatic. Such a huge swing to Labour, a pattern in local results in the last year, opens up the chance of winning back Wandsworth Council, which has been held by the Tories for 40 years.

## Defeat in Deptford, lessons to learn

By Duncan Morrison, Lewisham Deptford CLP EC member (pc)

On Thursday 10 November, at the Lewisham Deptford CLP AGM, the right won every executive position, by margins of between roughly 15 and 3 percent. It is now more securely in control of the CLP than it has been for years.

There is quite a lot of evidence that the Deptford membership leans left: last year, for instance, a CLP all members’ meeting nominated Corbyn. Membership has grown massively in the last year. Momentum is strong and active in Lewisham, and the largest concentration of Momentum activists is in this constituency. We had high hopes of taking control. So what happened?

It comes down to this: for most of the ward AGMs, the right was better at mobilising people than we were.

Despite a substantial effort, in key wards we failed to turn enough people out. In most cases there were large turnouts – we didn’t do

too badly, but the right did much better.

There were absurdities like Brockley ward, where the left had 45 percent of the people but got only 11 percent of the delegates, with 89 percent who ignored the left-wing EC nominations the ward had made. But that still begs the question: why couldn’t we do better in Brockley, where the left is strong and we had excellent, hard-working organisers?

The right has a series of advantages, not least the networks, influence and staff provided by the MP, Vicky Foxcroft and dozens of Labour councillors. I would argue the left has another major disadvantage: an ingrained culture among Corbyn-supporters, shaped by the way politics has gone over the last twenty years, which does not see turning up to meetings or being active as particularly important.

Without getting people more active, in the first instance by coming to meetings, then we will not take control of enough CLPs to

change the party’s direction.

Without holding the key positions, left-wing policy is not entirely meaningless, but it has limited significance. For instance, in a heavily-supported online ballot last year, Lewisham Deptford members voted 3-1 to oppose Trident renewal. The CLP has done nothing about it, and won’t until we get a new leadership.

None of this is to blame new members who are not eager to turn out. The right do everything they can to make meetings unappealing and prevent positive activity. Existing activists need to find ways to engage more members and draw them into participation and activity.

The last thing we need is to reinforce a political culture which implies that having elected the right leader means job done, and that it shouldn’t matter whether you come to meetings or not.

# Manchester Labour Students move left

By MLS activists Emma Runswick, Luke Neal and Deej Malik-Johnson (PC)

Over the last year, socialists have made a successful intervention into Manchester Labour Students (MLS), a notoriously Blairite grouping. Its transformation is far from complete, but our efforts deserve recounting.

In recent years, Manchester Labour Students (MLS) has acted as the organised right wing of Manchester Students' Union. It has been a hotbed of party careerists with little internal democracy.

It represents both Manchester Met and the University of Manchester but has far greater organisation in the latter institution. Across the same period the SU has generally been run by the soft left.

The local student movement has a history of struggle, with four student occupations since 2010. The mobilisation around Corbyn's election, however, compelled a left which was fractured across different campaigns to collectively turn towards the opportunities in Labour Students.

From September 2015, MLS had a massive influx of new members, but refused to have members' meetings. They claimed this was because of the need to focus on campaigning in the Oldham West and Royton by-election.

The left took on the organising work that MLS ought to have been doing. A new member took the initiative and called a meeting

under the title Labour Left Students for Corbyn, to which 80 people turned out. There was a popular feeling that we should try and make MLS reflective of the socialist ideas of its new membership and leadership.

Together Unison and a student-worker campaign – Keep the Caterers – fought against the redundancies through a strike ballot, demonstrations, a student occupation of the Vice Chancellor's office and disruption of management meetings.

We used our positions on the MLS Committee to organise caucuses and recruit heavily, notably amongst BAME people.

The tactics employed by the right in the first term continued throughout the year, with extensive attempts to refuse to let members have a say in the group's direction. Despite the difficulties, progress was made in allowing all members to meet monthly to discuss and vote. In this context, proposals for action from the radical left have become the standard policy agreed by members.

This transformation has not been without setbacks and the level of political education needs raising to incorporate more discussion about the idea of socialism, working-class political representation, and rank and file organisation and class struggle.

MLS has changed, from a club which was essentially run by two people and only organised campaigns around election door-knocking, to one with a high level of engagement and a democratic political culture.



**Staff at the Ritzzy are back out on strike and they need your help!**

**Picturehouse and Cineworld won't even meet with staff to discuss around a living wage, sick pay, maternity/paternity pay - but this time the Hackney branch are out striking with them too, making the campaign bigger and stronger.**

**Please donate to the Picturehouse Strike Fund!**  
[www.crowdpac.co.uk/campaigns/250/picturehousestrike](http://www.crowdpac.co.uk/campaigns/250/picturehousestrike)  
 Thank you for your support

# Momentum Youth and Students get organised

By Josie Runswick, Momentum Youth and Students NC LGBT rep

One branch of Momentum has already managed to run a democratic conference - the Youth and Students wing (MYS). On 5 June, over a hundred activists from across the country met in Manchester and elected a committee of twenty.

MYS committee continues to function, and will be meeting on 27 November to confirm who it will send to the National Committee in early December and step up the planning work it has been doing.

However, the elected committee still have no power over its own social media feeds, and no access to mailing lists.

Every effort at organising our own members has to be run through the officials at Momentum HQ.

Momentum now has a paid member of staff organising Youth and Student members, but we were made aware of that appointment by a friendly Steering Committee member hours before it was confirmed. Were it not for our friend on the inside, we would never have known.

Also, we don't know where our activists are, and we haven't got enough active groups. MYS London has met, and we have many members in the North-West, but we're not organised enough.

Eventually, we hope to have groups (and representatives) in every region of the UK, groups which will be able to run local campaigns with the backing of a national committee which supports their right to struggle.

## STRIKE LINKS

- Please donate to the Picturehouse workers' strike fund crowdfunding: [crowdpac.co.uk/campaigns/250/picturehousestrike](http://crowdpac.co.uk/campaigns/250/picturehousestrike)
- Download an official collection sheet, model motion for union branches and Labour Parties, and letter from BECTU introducing asking for support, see the Lambeth Unison website [lambeth-unison.org/2016/11/14/support-the-ritzy-strikers](http://lambeth-unison.org/2016/11/14/support-the-ritzy-strikers) (Lambeth Unison is hosting their materials)
- For more see Facebook A Living Wage for Ritzy Staff A Living Wage for Hackney Picturehouse Staff



# Do we need a progressive

The soft-left, cross-party political organisation Compass has been calling for a “Progressive Alliance”, involving electoral pacts between Labour, the Greens, the SNP and the Lib Dems. The idea has received support from some in the Labour Party, including Corbyn-supporter Clive Lewis MP.

The dominant view among *Clarion* supporters is against this kind because it submerges the labour movement and cuts against the revival of working-class politics we need. However, we want to use our pages to develop this debate. Please feel free to send contributions to [theclarionmag@gmail.com](mailto:theclarionmag@gmail.com)

By Edd Mustill

The idea of an anti-Tory “Progressive Alliance” is in some ways hard to critique because its advocates have not yet concretely defined what it would involve. Probably no-one in Labour would flat-out oppose working with other political parties where there is common ground (in fact, we already do).

But the Alliance seems to propose more than this, that there should be a formal electoral agreement between ‘progressive’ parties. Clive Lewis, a high profile supporter of the idea, has even said that such an agreement is the only way we can beat the Tories electorally.

This begs two questions: who would be involved in such an alliance, and what would be its political basis? At its narrowest, the alliance is thought of as co-operation between Labour and the Greens. Some supporters want to include the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties. At its widest, it includes all of the above, plus the Liberal Democrats, as Caroline Lucas advocated in the aftermath of the Brexit vote.



Clive Lewis, Caroline Lucas and Compass want an electoral alliance

The limitations of an alliance in terms of pure electoral maths are clear. (See the box on p7.) To overcome this, the alliance would have to create more political momentum by putting forward a bold and coherent platform. A negative “Project Fear” message of anyone-but-the-Tories simply won’t cut it, as recent election results around the world have shown us. But it’s hard to imagine an alliance of such disparate parties coming up with agreed positions on the big political questions of the day. On the constitutional question, the Scottish Nationalists want to end the union and

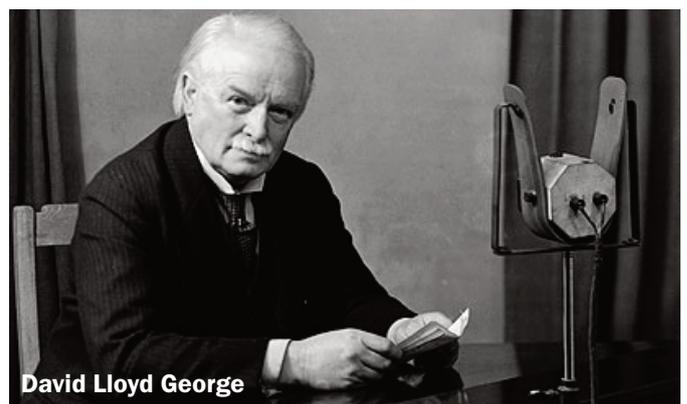
the other parties don’t, so what does a compromise look like on that issue? On economics, the Liberal Democrats proved themselves as great defenders of economic orthodoxy by going into coalition government with the Conservatives for five years. A formal pre-election agreement with them would likely include compromises which would strengthen the right wing of the Labour Party which still supports liberal economics.

## Socialist or progressive?

Are socialists “progressives”? Are we part of a wider progressive movement which includes liberals and centrists? This is an old question which has resurfaced in the last couple of years. Some inside and outside Labour argue that the party should spearhead a “progressive alliance”.

From the Labour Party’s foundation, a debate raged about the extent to which it should co-operate with the Liberals. Many of its first MPs were elected either due to a secret pact in 1903 by which the Liberals didn’t stand against them, or because Liberal-supporting unions decided to switch their allegiance to Labour.

At the time, radical Liberalism was embodied by David Lloyd George. He was part of the reforming Liberal government of 1906-14 which introduced social programmes like national insurance. A skilled orator, Lloyd George was not averse to using stronger class-war rhetoric than many of his socialist contemporaries. He attacked the aristocracy and famously described the



David Lloyd George

House of Lords as “five hundred men chosen at random from the ranks of the unemployed”.

This progressive Liberalism arose at least partly as a direct response to the growing power of the labour movement and socialist ideas. No doubt inspired by sincerely-held beliefs, progressivism was also a rallying cry for the ruling class to change its ways or be swept away altogether.

During the First World War and the period of industrial unrest immediately before it, Lloyd George’s Liberals proved themselves

# ve alliance?

There's a world of difference between accepting the need to do deals with other parties in a hung parliament situation and approaching an election in formal agreement with those parties. The former approach allows Labour to develop and put across its own programme, and gives everyone in the country the opportunity to support it and vote for it. The latter approach does not.

A narrower agreement between Labour and the Greens is easier to foresee, but there are few places where it would make sense for a local Labour Party to stand aside for the Greens for electoral gain. In most places where the Greens have emerged as a serious political force locally, they have done so precisely in opposition to the Labour Party.

An alternative approach would be for the Greens to seek affiliation to Labour or some sort of unique non-oppositional relationship such as the Co-Operative Party has, but this would likely meet strong resistance from within both organisations.

## COLD HARD ELECTORAL MATHS

The 2015 elections under a Progressive Alliance in England and Wales could yield:

**12** seats Labour lost because  
of Greens or Plaid

**5** seats Lib Dems lost because  
of Green vote

**10** seats the Lib Dems lost due to Labour  
votes

= maximum **27** extra seats

to be hostile to organised labour, using troops to suppress strikes and imposing military discipline on trade unionists, not to mention enthusiastically supporting a "war to the finish".

### Richmond Park

When Labour MPs Lisa Nandy, Clive Lewis, and Jonathan Reynolds recently argued that the party should step aside and allow the Liberal Democrats a free run at the Richmond Park by election because "in this coming Parliament progressives will need every vote they can get", they are re-treading some old ground. They seem to favour extending this alliance to future elections to establish single anti-Tory candidates, subject to the approval of local parties. Look at the time; 1903 already.

Historically, Labour was only able to come to power in the 1920s not by blocking with the Liberals, but by splitting a large chunk of their support away from them.

We are in a different electoral landscape today of course, but those advocating a progressive alliance with the Liberal Democrats should acknowledge that it will include a political force actively hostile to the labour movement. The Lib Dems proved themselves thus in the 2010s just as Lloyd George did in the 1910s.

# SNP rhetoric and reality

*Glasgow Momentum supporter Dale Street was commissioned to write an article for the issue of Red Pepper published as part of The World Transformed. TWT did not include it, instead including a piece by "Radical Independence" activist Cat Boyd arguing Momentum will never take off in Scotland and another by ex-SNP minister Kenny MacAskill!*

*This is an abridged version of Dale's article. Longer version online.*

...

**In May Compass chair Neal Lawson penned an open letter to the SNP calling for a "progressive alliance" with Labour (and maybe Plaid Cymru, the Greens and the Lib Dems).**

Adopting SNP language, Lawson denounced "English Tory rule, the *Daily Mail* and the City of London". He said he was "jealous of the political conversation you had as a nation over independence".

Lawson fails to grasp the nature of the SNP. The SNP is a conservative, intolerant, flag-waving, centralised cult.

It is the only party in Britain which bans parliamentarians from publicly criticising party policy and fellow parliamentarians. Its activist base specialises in conspiracy theories. Like all good nationalists, they engage in endless accusations of betrayal, treachery and sell-outs.

There was no meaningful "political conversation" around the referendum. 2014 saw class politics overwhelmed by nationalist scapegoating, tribalism and irrationality.

Riding the nationalist wave, the SNP won 56 seats in the 2015 general election. By 2016 anti-austerity rhetoric had served its purpose. "Austerity" got 17 mentions in the SNP's 2015 Westminster manifesto – in its 2016 Holyrood manifesto just once. With good reason, given the gap between SNP rhetoric and SNP reality!

Scottish education spending has slumped. Teacher numbers have been cut; class sizes increased. Literacy standards are falling, while class-based educational gaps grow. 20% FE funding cuts have meant losing 130,000 places and 3,600 teaching jobs. Youth from the poorest backgrounds are now less likely to go to university than their counterparts in England.

The SNP has cut real-terms health spending, and 4,500 NHS jobs. It now spends a lower proportion of its budget on health than the Tories. Private health spending is up 47% since 2011.

SNP cuts in council funding are more than double the cut in the Westminster grant to Scotland (24% vs 10%). While services and 39,000 jobs have been axed, a council-tax freeze has saved owners of the highest-value properties £300m.

Labour proposals to avoid this year's round of council cuts – £350m, 15,000 jobs – by a 1p income tax rise and maintaining the 50p top rate were voted down by the SNP, backed by the Tories.

The SNP plays with anti-Tory rhetoric in Westminster (usually – it backed Heathrow expansion!) while implementing and even adding to Tory austerity in Scotland.

The SNP's overriding goal is independence. It is not interested in alliances – not even with the Scottish Greens. Its strategy is to stifle dissenting voices. Hence its determination to destroy Scottish Labour, backed up by the SNP 'Trade Union Group' campaign for unions to disaffiliate.

Instead of attempting a suicidal "alliance" with a party committed to its destruction, Labour should grasp the opportunity opened up by Corbyn's re-election, reasserting class politics and mobilising for a radical socialist alternative to nationalism.



# From social movement to socialist movement – a reply to Paul Mason



Nick Wrack is a Labour Party Socialist Network activist and a member of the Momentum NC from the London region. Here he replies to Paul Mason's recent article announcing that he has joined Momentum.

The well-known left-wing journalist and writer Paul Mason has written a series of articles on Mosquito Ridge

setting out his own ideas and advice on how Corbyn and the movement around him should progress.

I am a Marxist. Only Paul can explain whether that puts me in the “die-hard Bolshevik re-enactment groups” or whether I adhere to a “zombie ideology”.

Of course, behind any organisational difference, such as we see

now in Momentum, there are political differences. But Paul is wrong to see this as a binary argument between the ‘hard left’ “negative, factionalist tendencies” who want delegated democracy and those who argue for “a horizontal, consensus-based organisation, directly accountable to its mass of members” who want OMOV. There were supporters of OMOV who voted for the motion of censure at the London Regional Committee.

The recent debate in Momentum has erupted not over the substantive merits or otherwise of OMOV (one member, one vote) or of delegated democracy but over the undemocratic trampling on democratic process by seven members of the Momentum Steering Committee.

Paul doesn't even begin to engage with what led to the recent motions of censure of the Steering Committee by at least four regions of Momentum. To my knowledge he hasn't contacted the main opponent of the SC decisions, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack.

The complaints have not been primarily about OMOV but about the process by which OMOV has been imposed on the Momentum conference without any decision being taken by the Momentum National Committee.

I will openly admit that I do not yet have a complete answer to

## Momentum democracy: the story so far

**June-September 2015** – First leadership campaign. In London mainly run centrally but in many towns grassroots campaign groups are set up.

**October 2015** – Momentum announced as national organisation without democratic structures. A sort of steering committee of left MPs seems not to function. Leadership campaign data held by Momentum Data Management Company, director Jon Lansman. Three or four leadership campaign staff continue working for Momentum on temporary contracts.

**December 2015** – An article in the *Independent* reveals that there will be a national committee meeting in January. Groups/supporters have not been informed. Plan emerges for NC to be picked by small, centrally-appointed regional “boards”!

**December 2015-January 2016** – Revolt among Momentum groups and activists, and then also the office staff, and the plan for an appointed NC collapses. NC set up with regional networks comprised of two reps from every group. The other reps are unions, left Labour organisations (some of dubious existence, e.g. blogs), equality/liberation and student/youth representatives.

Regional networks at very short notice get to comment on key documents regarding structure, objectives and ethics. Delegates only see documents at the meetings themselves.

Various positions announced in press, without any discussion or democracy, eg against campaigning for mandatory re-selection and taking no position on EU referendum.

**February 2016** – NC meets. Papers only circulated the afternoon before. The NC takes a number of unexpected positions and electing some democratic-minded socialists to the new Steering Committee. No minutes circulated despite this being raised. The meeting agrees relatively open membership structure (all who support Labour and not its opponents in elections).

Proposals passed at SC and then not carried out, with various excuses, eg for action on expulsions and suspensions; this continues through the year. No SC minutes.

**May 2016** – Second NC. Again papers sent out the day before. NC votes overwhelmingly for left “remain” position on EU. (After the London and Northern regions submitted motions, the office had

announced an online ballot on the issue – “remain” won heavily.) NC votes for a national conference directly representing local groups by end of February, and to oppose wave of expulsions and suspensions of Momentum supporters.

**June 2016** – Momentum Youth and Students conference called against wishes of SC. 200 attend, elects committee. MYS social media controlled by an unelected individual who won't hand it over. SC cancels July NC, citing coup and new leadership campaign.

**August 2016** – Momentum staff and thousands of pounds handed over to leadership campaign without any consultation even of SC! Regional Coordinators imposed without consultation and told to operate phone banks and activities under JC4L, not Momentum. Michael Chessum moves on the SC to call NC in August or September. Rejected.

**September 2016** – SC agrees NC will meet 29 October. Delays in announcing. Moved several times, eventually 5 November. Repeated delays and obstructions in circulating papers on national structures. More and more staff appointed, no transparent procedures, in violation of what was agreed at February NC.

**28 October 2016** – SC meeting called at 20 hours notice, votes 6-3-1 to cancel November NC, then votes 7-2-1 to impose online policy votes instead of a meaningful conference. Many oppose setting new NC date – but committee votes for date in December. This will be eight months since May NC, despite NC agreeing to meet every three months.

**29-30 October 2016** – Four regional networks meet and, by large margins, condemn SC majority's actions, electing new NC delegates, strengthening pro-democracy NC majority.

Three SC members including FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack, other NC members and several regions call unofficial national meeting in Birmingham on 5 November.

**November 2016** – 5 November meeting attended by 19 NC members and 16 observers from regions, groups, MYS, etc. Discusses democratisation and makes proposals to bring Steering Committee under control.

• By Momentum NC members Jill Mountford and Ed Whitby

the constitutional difficulties posed by Momentum's rapid growth to 20,000 members. No sensible socialist wants to do anything to exclude or limit the involvement of any one of those members. Social media and the internet open up possibilities that were not available in the 1980s or 1990s. So all proposals are up for discussion and should not be dismissed (by either side) in a cavalier fashion.

But the SC did not allow the local groups to discuss the various papers and to make their own proposals. It did not even allow the NC, which is surely a higher authority than the SC, the opportunity to discuss the issues. It did not send out the documents to the 20,000 members. The papers have still not been posted on the Momentum website for all to see and comment.

I have heard the justification for OMOV from some of its advocates, "trust the members". Well, why haven't the papers been sent out to all the members, or posted online for them to see, so that they can think for themselves? And why haven't the proponents of the different methods been given direct access to the members to explain why they support a particular proposal rather than another?

If you want to avoid a hierarchical structure, is it a good idea to have all the Momentum supporters' data – phone numbers, emails, addresses etc – owned by a company with little if any transparency about who controls it? No amount of OMOV will improve things if Momentum can essentially be controlled by one person threatening to pack up and take the data away.

Do we need elected officers who are accountable to the members? Is it right that one person

can make decisions about Momentum's finances without reference to other officers? If the answer is yes, we do need officers but they must be accountable, then isn't that a form of hierarchy?

The issue, surely, is not about having a hierarchy. It is whether it is a necessary layer of bureaucracy or not; whether it is exercised transparently or not; whether it is accountable or not; whether the officers can be recalled or not.

### Accountable

My concern is that we are able to hold leaders to account. To do that we need effective and efficient ways of communicating as members, of meeting together to discuss and make decisions. Quite often, a concern will be answered or recede in importance following discussion.

The socialist left should always be prepared to be self-critical and question the way it works. We know that many union and Labour Party meetings are as dry as dust, uninteresting and devoid of politics. We don't want to replicate that in Momentum. So anything that can improve on this is to be welcomed. Are the new methods better than the old?

At the same time, many of the 'old' methods have survived precisely because they work. Constitutions, rules and 'standing orders' can protect members' rights and can be used to hold leaders to account. Delegated democracy has developed because there is a practical difficulty in getting large numbers of people together to make decisions on complicated issues.

But if 20,000 can watch the conference online and vote online, what is the purpose of anyone attending? If only the self-selecting few attend, who decides on the agenda, the speakers? If someone sitting at home objects to a perceived abuse of procedure how do they intervene to raise a point of order, to challenge the chair etc?

## DISABILITY RIGHTS AND OMOV

Janine Booth, Chair of the TUC's Disabled Workers' Committee and Hackney Momentum member, writes in a personal capacity on how disability relates to the debate on online voting and "digital democracy"

[theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/disability](http://theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/disability)

Paul Mason unintentionally raises another problem with OMOV. He accepts that he, as a journalist, is in a privileged position. He does not have to engage in any Momentum local group. He can post an article online and thousands will read it. It is unlikely that they will read the replies from lesser-known Momentum members.

This leads to an obvious inequality that does not exist to anything like the same degree when decisions are taken in face to face meetings when everyone is on an equal (horizontal?) level. Face to face

discussion is by far the most effective way to conduct debate and to arrive at decisions.

OMOV may lead to a 'scissors' effect within Momentum, that is, to a widening gap between the 'active' and the 'passive' members. Our aim should be to involve as many members as possible in discussion and decision making. Members should feel that they own the organisation and have a democratic say in what it does and how it is done. In any political organisation

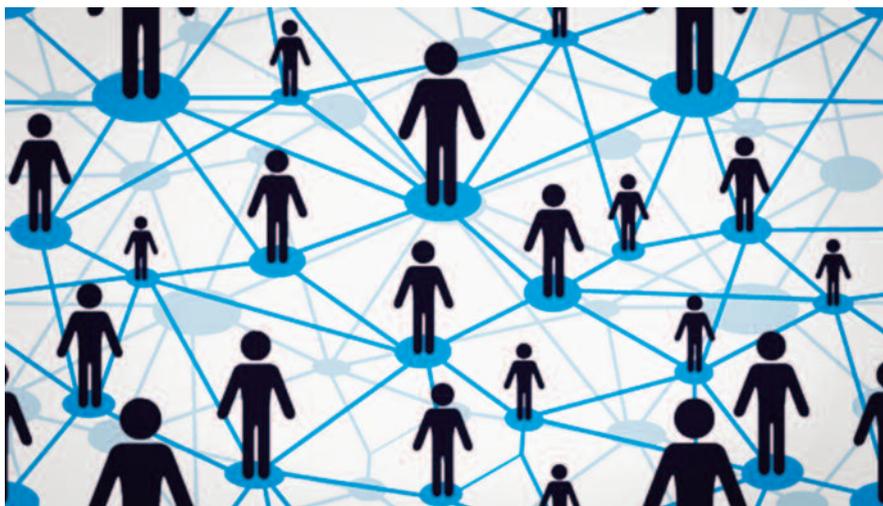
some will be more active than others, whether because of commitment or difficulties of engaging – disability, child care, shift work and so on. We have to find ways of making sure that those who want to participate but can't, are enabled to do so. This may involve online participation.

But if we have online voting it is possible that we will end up with decisions that reflect the choices of passive members – those who, out of choice, do not attend meetings and who don't follow the debates and discussions; who are happy to click a 38 Degrees-type motion but not to go out campaigning or canvassing – and ignore or override the views of the active members who do the campaigning work and run the local groups. We could end up with the passive layer deciding on campaigns and policies that carry no support from the active members who will be the ones expected to implement them.

This will lead to demobilisation, demoralisation of the activists, and the eventual shrivelling of local groups. Without the local groups Momentum will not survive. Perhaps, though, that is what some would prefer – no unruly local groups; just a passive bloc of members who will vote for left-wing slates for the Labour Party NEC drawn up by unaccountable cliques.

The problem with this, however, is that it will not bring about the vital change in local constituency Labour Parties. Change in the Labour Party requires that Momentum supporters turn up at ward and CLP meetings, argue their politics and vote for candidates who will represent them. Building a mass online membership will not be enough. We cannot change the Labour Party, let alone society, by clicking on a touchpad or mouse at home.

• This is an abridged version of the longer article first published on the LSN website [www.socialistnetwork.org.uk](http://www.socialistnetwork.org.uk)



Are we all just networked individuals, as Paul Mason believes?



## The Jackie Walker debate

The decision by the Steering Committee to Here two Momentum activists, including Jill

### It was wrong to remove Jackie as vice chair

By Pete Firmin, Brent Momentum activist

Early in October, Momentum's Steering Committee, at a hastily called meeting, decided to remove Jackie Walker as its vice-chair. Since then, several Momentum groups around the country, including my own, have criticised this decision.

These moves arose from comments Jackie made at a Labour Party official training session at party conference in Liverpool. No serious criticism of Labour for holding a training session on anti-Semitism separate to other racisms, in contravention of what the Chakrabarti report recommended, no criticism of the party for handing the training session to the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) to run, despite the fact that its views are extremely contentious among socialist Jews. No calls on the Party to take action against the JLM for recording the session without consent or for releasing the recording to the media.

No, instead of picking up these points, leading Momentum members led the charge in denouncing Jackie for distortions of what she said. Manuel Cortes, General Secretary of the TSSA, one of two unions affiliated to Momentum, threatened to withdraw support from Momentum if Jackie wasn't removed as vice-chair. Currently Momentum operates from a floor in the TSSA offices. Imagine the outcry from the left if a trade union leader tried to dictate Labour policy in such a way.

Other leading members of Momentum also went to the media – anonymously – to denounce Jackie and announce – in advance of any decision – that she would be removed from her position.

Leading figures in Momentum were quite clearly dancing to the tune of the JLM, which had gone on the offensive after the Liver-

pool training session, calling for Jackie to be expelled from Labour. The JLM was never satisfied with the Chakrabarti report, which did not give them the carte blanche they wanted to denounce critics of Israel as anti-Semites, or with Jackie's reinstatement by the party after a previous suspension for allegations of anti-Semitism.

Much of what Jackie said has been misquoted or taken out of context. As someone who was there I have a good idea of what was said (and what wasn't). To give only one example, Jackie said at one point "I haven't heard a definition of anti-Semitism here that I can work with". Jackie wasn't the first person at the meeting to raise this point. She spoke in the context of the "trainer" attempting to push the discredited definition which includes criticism of Israel. Moreover, the JLM are attempting to back that up with a rule change which says that if someone is accused of anti-Semitism they are guilty.

This in the context of the weaponisation of anti-Semitism by opponents of Corbyn, the victims often being Black women – besides Jackie, Malia Bouattia and Shami Chakrabarti herself.

Encouraged by the furore by leading Momentum supporters, Labour moved in and suspended Jackie from membership

Even if we take at face value the claim that Jackie was removed because Momentum lost confidence in her, this does not stand up to serious scrutiny. Jackie was at the training session not as a representative of Momentum, but as an individual party member. Yet many a "Momentum spokesperson" has appeared on TV espousing policies not agreed by anyone. What action has been taken against them? None.

And basic solidarity would require that when someone is under attack you defend them, not add fuel to the flames.



## Stop the Labour purge: reinstate Chris Marks

A statement from Manchester Trades Union Council

Chris Marks, the secretary of Manchester Trades Union Council, has been expelled from the Labour Party for holding particular political views.

Chris is not being accused of being a member of another political party, being offensive to anyone, or any of the other range of accusations levelled at many others who have recently been suspended or expelled. He has been presented with no evidence of his alleged misdemeanours.

Chris has been a member of the Labour Party for 11 years and was an active party member in London. Since coming to Manchester in 2013, he has been active in Manchester Withington Labour Party, regularly canvassing and carrying out Labour Party activities. He was the secretary of Withington Ward branch and attended the Withington CLP Executive committee. Throughout this time he had constructive working relationships with people from all shades of opinion within the party.

Chris is a high profile Labour Party member and trade unionist in Manchester. His public profile is particularly high following his speech on behalf of MTUC to 3000 people just after the parliamentary coup against Jeremy Corbyn. This rally in Piccadilly Gardens was representa-

tive of a long held tradition in Manchester that people who wish to express their views come together in large numbers to do so.

Chris recently moved to the Manchester Central constituency, whose MP Lucy Powell was one of only two people who publicly opposed the rally. Party activity has been suspended so he has not had the opportunity to be actively involved there. However he has continued to put forward Labour Party policy and is recognised in the trade union movement as an active member of the Labour Party.

MTUC considers this to be an unreasonable decision by the Labour Party and one which appears to be counterproductive to the Party's own aims. Having young Labour Party members in prominent positions in the trade union movement only does the party's reputation good among workers in the city and helps to encourage other young trade unionists to become actively involved. We ask the Labour Party NEC to reverse this decision and reinstate Chris to Labour Party membership.



Chris Marks, Secretary of Manchester Trades Council

Chris will be speaking at the National Conference to Stop the Labour Purge in Nottingham Saturday November 26. We urge labour movement organisations to pass a motion to support the conference and send delegates. Text of the model motion can be found at [bit.ly/2gaIc5L](http://bit.ly/2gaIc5L) and tickets for the event bought at [bit.ly/2enIjKp](http://bit.ly/2enIjKp). Facebook: Stop the Labour Purge

remove Jackie Walker as vice chair has prompted debate across Momentum. Mountford who is on the Steering Committee, debate the issues involved.

## It was the right decision

By Jill Mountford, Momentum Steering Committee member

I voted at Momentum's Steering Committee to remove Jackie Walker from the position of Vice Chair.

Jackie was elected by the SC to serve as Vice Chair, with Jon Lansman as Chair, in February. In fact, originally the two of them were appointed only as Chair and Vice Chair of the SC, *not* of Momentum as such (this was made quite explicit), but somehow over time these positions morphed into supposedly leading the organisation as a whole.

I want to make two arguments: one about the left and anti-semitism, which I will focus on in this article; and another about the problems with the way Momentum is run and its general political orientation, which I will touch on here but also publish something specific about in the next few days.

Why I voted to remove Jackie; her defence and what it tells us

I would like to quote a recent article on antisemitism at length to explain my position:

“Walker said Holocaust Memorial Day which principally commemorates the Nazis’ planned, industrialised mass murder of Europe’s Jews, should also refer to other genocides. In fact, it does; and, anyway, as someone pointed out, the objection is like going to a funeral for a murdered family and complaining that the ceremony does not give equal attention to all other murder victims.

“Walker also questioned people being concerned about Jewish

schools having to organise extra security, saying that all schools have security. After such events as the murders at a Toulouse school in 2012, by a killer who said he did it just because the children were Jewish, this was at the very least obtuse.

“Violent antisemitic incidents in Europe ran at about 150 a year in the 1970s and 80s; since the 1990s they have risen to between 500 and 1,000 a year. In France, for example, 51% of all the racist acts recorded in 2014 targeted that country’s 0.8% minority of Jews. Walker’s response, and that of many of her supporters, has been to say that the issue of antisemitism is being “exaggerated for political purposes”.

“The response shows an underlying problem. When other victims of prejudice complain about racism, anti-Muslim behaviour, sexism, homophobia, the first reaction is to examine the cause of complaint. Too often the first reaction to complaints of anti-semitism — unless they are about gross neo-Nazi-type acts — is to impugn the motives of the complainers...”

### Take responsibility

Now, I’m not saying Jackie’s statements were clearly antisemitic; but they were statements which Momentum could and should reasonably be concerned about when they were made and defended in public by its Vice Chair. They show serious insensitivity and even indifference to questions of antisemitism (which is not changed by the fact that Jackie has Jewish background). The idea that something is either out-and-out racist or there can be no issue at all makes no sense.

Jackie was not removed from the Steering Committee, let alone suspended or expelled her from Momentum. Deciding to remove her from a position which she was originally elected to by the same committee seems to me perfectly reasonable and proportionate.

# Organising Labour in Northern Ireland

By Leonie Hannan, Belfast Labour Party Vice Chair (pc)

The Labour Party in Northern Ireland has gone from 350 members in May 2015 to over 3000 now. There was a first surge in the summer of 2015 and a second prompted by the anti-Corbyn coup.

When the party was much smaller, it was quite depoliticised. The focus was almost exclusively on the right to stand in elections. Now we are seeing new members motivated by politics and the need to contribute to the party's new direction.

People are joining because they are motivated by Corbyn and his policies. Corbyn won 70pc and would have got more if the majority of our members, who are disproportionately new, had been able to vote. Corbyn’s agenda resonates in Northern Ireland, which is a post-conflict society suffering deeply at the hands of the power-sharing government and their implementation of Tory cuts.

LPNI attracts members from across communities, people who feel disillusioned with sectarian politics. We have BME members and many LGBT members – who don’t always feel comfortable in some of the other political parties.

We have members who describe themselves as Republicans alongside members with Loyalist views and many in between. This is something extremely powerful. For left politics to make an impact here, we have to draw people from across the sectarian divide around issues that affect all communities – the effects of poverty, loss of jobs, social, educational and health inequality, homophobia and racism and the continued repression of reproductive rights.

We have trade unionists joining. There is high union membership here in Northern Ireland, many as part of affiliated unions. It is a disservice to those affiliated members not to have the possibility of full political representation.

Historically, the Labour Party has preferred a relationship with the Social Democratic and Labour Party. The SDLP is sometimes referred to as a “sister party”. But it does not and cannot attract support from both communities because of its status as a nationalist party. Its commitment to equality only goes so far. It describes itself as pro-life and has vocally supported the current anti-choice abortion law.

The other point is that 3000 people didn’t just join the SDLP. They made themselves clear when they joined the Labour Party and I think they should be listened to.

In terms of what we need to campaign on, Northern Ireland has suffered a series of devastating job losses. JTI Gallagher let workers go in May, Caterpillar announced job losses in September, there have been cuts across the voluntary and community sectors, library services and many others. There are the same issues as elsewhere about precarious, ununionised work.

- More: [theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/09/leoniehannan](http://theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/09/leoniehannan)
- “Let us organise”: an open letter to the Momentum NC from Momentum supporters in Northern Ireland [theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/momentumni](http://theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/momentumni)

# THE CLARION

ISSUE 2: DECEMBER 2016

AN UNOFFICIAL MAGAZINE BY MOMENTUM ACTIVISTS

## How do we defend education?



By Anastazja Oppenheim, NUS National Executive Council (pc)

How do we defend ourselves from the current wave of attacks on post-16 education? No topic generates more emotion and argument in the National Union of Students right now than the National Student Survey.

In April, NUS National Conference voted to boycott the NSS as a way of fighting the Tories' Higher Education "reforms". To activists, this seems like common sense. We don't want to participate in a survey that will be used to raise fees and slash courses. A national boycott can disrupt the implementation of the "Teaching Excellence Framework", giving us some badly needed leverage.

However, to many student union sabbatical officers, things look different. Some fear a boycott would damage their "good relationship" with the university, while others claimed to be worried about losing a tool for gathering student feedback.

### More radical campaigns

We've seen long, passionate articles written by officers in defence of a survey which most students spend no more than a couple of minutes filling out, either nagged by never-ending phone calls, or bribed with the chance of winning a free iPad. A survey that is already being used to penalise academics, and has been proven to have a disproportionate negative impact on women and BAME workers; and that will now be used to harm future students.

Officers at over 30 SUs signed a call for a national ballot on

whether NUS should publish a "risk assessment" of the boycott. If it passes, it will force NUS to delay working on the campaign and spend thousands of pounds on a useless exercise. The idea to risk assess not filling out a form is ridiculous, especially in the light of full-fledged attacks on public Higher Education. The national ballot is clearly a bureaucratic attempt to undermine a democratically agreed policy.

To maximise the boycott's impact and minimise damage to individual institutions, we need to make sure it is as widespread as possible. We need to pass motions at our SUs and put pressure on officers, alongside agitating for a boycott on our campuses. It takes one person to do a lecture shout out, maybe two to drop a banner or set up a stall – and reach hundreds of students.

Beyond and linked to the boycott, we need a much wider campaign, starting from this demonstration – press articles and open letters, lobbying, public meetings, local demonstrations, direct action and occupations... An active NSS boycott will make such action more effective and vice versa.

We need demands which go beyond the defensive, articulating a socialist vision for the future of education. Jeremy Corbyn's suggestion of a life-long National Education Service service is good – but from how schools are run to abolishing international fees, from the level and means-testing of grants to restoring FE funding and establishing democratic control of colleges and universities, it needs a lot more content. Let's get started.

• Anastazja is a member of Momentum and of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.



THECLARIONMAG@GMAIL.COM



@CLARION\_MAG



FACEBOOK.COM/THECLARIONMAG