

THE CLARION

ISSUE 6: APRIL 2017

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AN UNOFFICIAL MAGAZINE BY LABOUR AND MOMENTUM ACTIVISTS

Matt Wrack to Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour left:



“Be bold”

Matt Wrack, the general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union and a prominent socialist activist in the Labour Party and Momentum, spoke to The Clarion. This is the first part of the interview: in the second part, which we'll publish next month, Matt talks more about trade unionism, workers' struggles and his wider socialist ideas.

There's discussion about the idea that the “Corbyn movement” has run out of steam or is in a crisis. What's your assessment of that and what's the way forward?

There's always been people attempting to promote that story, that Corbyn isn't a leader, that he's doomed to failure, so I think we have to take it in that

context. This is the latest round. Equally there are questions being asked by people about direction and I think a lot of rank and file Corbyn-supporters are feeling frustrated that the right seems to still be very much in charge of the Labour Party; what people are looking for is a clear strategy, about how we build on the enthusiasm that led to the Corbyn movement in the first place. Of course, there are things we can and should criticise, but it remains the case that any defeat of Corbyn would represent a victory for the right wing in Labour, and that's what a lot of this is actually about.

Continue on pages 8-9

INSIDE: BEYOND THE 10 PLEDGES • MOMENTUM CONFERENCE • YOUNG LABOUR GROUPS TAKE OFF • DURHAM TAS • CORBYN AND PAST LABOUR LEADERS • THE PURGE • CLP REPORTS • FOREIGN POLICY • HOUSING SCHOOLS • ENERGY • NHS • UNION RIGHTS • “TAKE BACK CONTROL” EVENTS

ISSUE 6

This month we are excited to publish an interview with FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, who has stood up for democracy in Labour and Momentum and made an important socialist contribution to current debates.

This issue has two key themes. The first is the push back by the right in many areas of the country where people are being victimised and excluded. The other is the urgent need to argue policy in Labour. The deadline for the National Policy Forum consultation is 31 May. We need to push forward, develop and go beyond the 10 pledges from Jeremy's election campaign. Read our special articles this month for ideas on that as well as how to get more involved.

WHERE WE STAND

The Labour Party and the country are 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:

E M Johns, Rida Vaquas, Sacha Ismail, Simon Hannah, Rhea Wolfson, Jill Mountford, Michael Chessum, Nik Barstow, Dan Jeffrey

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Why we need to go beyond the “10 pledges”

By Sacha Ismail

As we explained in the last issue of *The Clarion* (“Corbyn’s leadership pledges matter”, by E M Johns), we will be publishing extensive analysis about the “10 pledges” promoted by Jeremy Corbyn during his second leadership election campaign.

As E M Johns put it: “How would they work? Do they go far enough? How could they be expanded upon? And how should we communicate our more fleshed-out ideas in a society where most people are used to being passive observers of politics, rather than active participants?”

During recent arguments in Momentum, those who — bizarrely in our view — oppose the organisation debating and deciding policy often argue that we need to stick to just the 10 pledges. For sure we can and should use the pledges as “hooks” to agitate and educate, for instance by organising stalls, petitioning and leafleting around particular demands and meetings at which the politics of the demands can be discussed.

Limiting

However, we would argue that limiting ourselves to the pledges makes no sense, for a number reasons:

1. Corbyn has not organised sustained campaigning around the pledges; by raising other or additional or more substantial demands, we are not counterposing ourselves to a real if imperfect mass movement, but rather helping to develop that movement. In any case, a real mass movement around the 10 pledges would inevitably have to discuss their politics, not just adopt them uncritically.

2. The content of the pledges is very limited and pretty vague. Nothing, for instance, about how schools should be organised or about migrants’ rights or about the right to strike. That this matters is shown by the inadequacy of what Labour says around all sort so issues. Again, a democratic mass movement will necessarily involve fleshing out the policies — but fleshing out, in turn, inevitably involves going beyond.

3. Particularly given the limitations of the pledges, issues have and will continue come up which they do not cover. This could be a serious problem. What do we say about the huge disagreements about migration in society and, in fact, in the Labour Party, when the pledges barely mention migration? Or what if there’s another banking crisis next year: do

Jeremy Corbyn 10 PLEDGES TO REBUILD AND TRANSFORM BRITAIN

An Economy That Works For All	Secure Homes For All	A Free National Education Service	Action to Secure Our Environment
Security at Work	10 PLEDGES TO REBUILD AND TRANSFORM BRITAIN		Cut Income and Wealth Inequality
Act to End Prejudice and Injustice	Secure Our NHS and Social Care	Democracy in Our Economy	Peace and Justice Abroad

we tell people “We don’t have an opinion about what should be done with the banks, because it’s not covered in the 10 pledges”? A movement which does that will nullify itself as a movement and has no possibility of changing the direction of politics.

4. The pledges ignore large amounts of left-wing policy passed by Labour Party conference — for instance on restoring the right to solidarity action and on public ownership of social care. There are many other examples. Why should we collaborate in the ignoring of conference policy which is a chronic problem in the Labour Party? Making conference sovereign is a central part of democratising the party: a sovereign conference needs to have its decisions respected and carried out, not ignored.

5. The idea that policy should be made by the leader, or by his office, is not a good one. In fact it is essentially Blairite. We need a democratic movement that debates what it wants to advocate and decides it collectively.

Again, that is fundamental if we want to change the Labour Party and change politics.

In this issue:

Foreign policy (page 10), Education (page 11), Housing (page 11), Energy (page 12), Work and unions (page 13), the NHS (page 14)

23 June!

23 June is the deadline for CLPs to submit the names of their conference delegates to Labour Party conference. For more on who CLPs can send, how to get delegated and why it’s important, see: bit.ly/23junedeadline

NPF reports undermine radical Labour policy

The *Left Futures* website has put up PDFs of all the draft policy statements from the party’s National Policy Forum, along with summaries of each statement.

It is calling for people to write responses and criticisms, which are unfortunately much needed.

Left Futures summarises: “These eight documents reveal a total lack of serious policy development by Labour. They are filled with statements of the obvious... rather than offering (even tentative) solutions... [We] expected poor quality documents like this in the Blair/Brown/Miliband years but hoped for something better under a leader who promised to put members in charge of party policy. What are the left-wing members of the commissions doing?”

We would add that the NPF is also, once again, ignoring significant amounts of policy passed by Labour Party conference — on the NHS, trade union rights, public ownership and many other issues.

Why not write a response and send them to both *The Clarion* and *Left Futures*?

• See www.leftfutures.org/2017/03/whats-in-the-npf-draft-policy-statements

31 May!

As we approach the 2017 conference the National Policy Forum wants to hear from Labour Party members about Jeremy’s 10 pledges — by 31 May! Make sure you make your voice heard and promote left policies at www.labour.org.uk/index.php/npf-2017



Momentum dayschool: safe and respectable

By Sacha Ismail,
Lewisham Momentum
activist (pc)

There must have been somewhat fewer than 500 people at the Momentum “conference” in Birmingham on 25 March.

Not a brilliant turnout for an organisation with 20,000 members, an even bigger database, a substantial office, extensive social media, and John McDonnell speaking.

One factor affecting turnout may have been that the event, which was in fact a dayschool — there was no decision-making of any kind on the agenda, or even chances to discuss the future of the organisation — was organised at short notice to replace the actual conference long-planned, much bureaucratically hindered and then abruptly cancelled. In addition, this coup has worsened general demoralisation created by the wider political situation and the Labour leadership’s response to it. Quite a few attendees told me that their local Momentum group has stopped meeting or been severely

weakened as a result.

It was noticeably younger than the Grassroots Momentum conference on 11 March, but not dramatically so. Most people present were still middle aged or older. There were people there from a good range of groups across England, at least.

The dominant political tone was: keep it safe, moderate and respectable; avoid difficult issues or anything involves organising a real struggle; avoid any possibility of discussion on the record, state and future of Momentum.

“Building to win” was certainly not an accurate description. As far as I could see, there was no space anywhere on the agenda for questions or contributions in plenaries, or for discussion beyond very specific topics or workshop “processes” in any of the sessions. This meant that no one was able to get up and criticise the coup or how Momentum is being run – or, even more importantly, strategy for the left in Labour. From more general discussion and one-to-one conversations I don’t think many people there were bursting with outrage at this, although many



were pretty critical and supportive of a more democratic, substantive and radical approach.

John McDonnell, who was the only big name speaker at the event, gave one of his increasingly usual moderate and not hugely substantial speeches, in a way that could sound radical if you’re not listening carefully and thinking it through. Maybe most people aren’t. He got cheers from the crowd but didn’t challenge anyone, particularly himself. I think McDonnell’s speech deserves a separate write up as it is indicative of the orientation and self-presentation of the Corbyn leadership.

Despite the claim at the start that the workshops were being run by local groups, this didn’t seem to

be true. Many seemed to be run by individuals from the Momentum office, individuals close to the Momentum office or at least people from the “leadership faction”. Some of it seemed pretty bland and contentless. From what I’m told, the Labour Party-related workshops were neither good basic training on how to get involved and what to do nor (certainly not) strategic discussion about the way forward for the left in the party. Instead, those who took part got a load of management speak about consensus.

The Clarion ran a stall and got a fair amount of interest, selling 60 copies and a few subscriptions, and collecting a lot of contact details.

Notts Momentum purges its members

By Theodora Polenta,
West Bridgford
Labour Party activist
and Notts Momentum
member

On 30 March, a Nottinghamshire Momentum meeting, called at short notice, voted 18-8 to go further than the imposed national constitution by excluding from all its activities members expelled from the Labour Party by the Compliance Unit.

It is clear that many of those running Notts Momentum have no desire to oppose the expulsions of socialists from the Labour Party, but every desire to exclude them from their group...

• More: theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2017/04/01/nottss-hame

What should Momentum fight for?

Statement adopted on 2 April by the Northern region of Momentum to go to local groups in the region.

We will organise in Momentum and Labour for these demands. We call for other Momentum organisations to discuss/amend/endorse them and for the Grassroots Momentum network to promote them.

- Local groups should be the basic foundation of Momentum. We need a nationally-backed campaign to get members involved in existing groups, build new ones and support them to grow.
- Momentum must help coordinate real, sustained on-the-streets and doorsteps campaigning activity. We welcome, support and encourage people to attend Momentum NHS’s national campaigning conference on 20 May.
- Serious discussion of how Labour councillors can resist cuts and stand up for communities, instead of simply encouraging people to become councillors and getting pressured into bad decisions.
- Help young people get organised and active; campaign to build vibrant local Young Labour groups and student Labour Clubs.
- Staff to be accountable to elected bodies; an to end seats which function as factional private property and for councillors, etc; a democratic conference representing groups and affiliates to decide Momentum’s plans and direction.
- Serious discussion about how to democratise Labour, including making conference sovereign. A serious campaign to get rule changes and left-wing policy submitted this year, decided democratically and circulated well in advance.
- Campaign for accountability of MPs, automatic reselection, and for workers/working-class people to become Labour candidates.
- Clear advocacy of socialism, and bold socialist policies like free trade unions, taxing the rich and public ownership.
- Vocal and active defence of migrants’ rights and free movement, as repeatedly agreed.
- Vocal and active opposition to unjust expulsions, suspensions and witch-hunts against the left. An end to the threat to expel non-LP members from Momentum and their exclusion from elected positions.
- Build support for and links with rank-and-file union members and workers in struggle, not just top union leaders.
- Support workers and communities fighting back, including in conflict with Labour councils, like Derby and Durham TAs.

Abridged. Find out more on the Momentum Northern Facebook page: facebook.com/J4LNorthern

Getting young people together

Sharifah Rahman, secretary of Darlington Young Labour, spoke to *The Clarion*.

I joined Labour from college and set up a Young Labour group there.

It was quite easy — pick an issue to discuss, find a campaign you want to support. It's really simple. It's not that complicated. We have a lot of fun campaigning and being active

We meet once a week to keep up to date and talk about what's happening. We recently started campaigning to save NHS services in our area. In February holidays we organised a NHS demo in the town centre with some good speakers. We do pop up stalls in the town centre — first one we did was to oppose the Sustainability and Transformation Plans. We talk to the public and try to educate people but also to

listen to them about their concerns. We also campaign a lot online. We have Twitter and Facebook and a blog. Our members are great; some write articles and we post them online, sharing them around social media. That's important as we don't all drive or have cars and have limited money so we try to campaign online as much as possible.

We struggled to get hold of official Labour leaflets. Most of our leaflets we've got are from local activists from Momentum Darlington and also individual local activists, for instance on the NHS. There should be socialists around in every community! Momentum Darlington have been great. It's really great to have local people who are active.

Jeremy Corbyn has encouraged a lot of young people to join and some of them are active. It's about getting them together. We need to



organise and get together. We need to create role models for young people — under this government we are exploited in very harsh ways and young people don't have a voice right now. We need to support younger people in getting organised.

My advice? If you are wanting to set up a young Labour group — don't make it too formal, but that doesn't mean don't be organised. Subscribe to regional Labour

group in your area. We get emails from Labour North so we get information about events in the local area. If you don't get much from the CLP, don't worry too much. Get some leaflets on something you're passionate about, go into town centre and leaflet. Social media, getting all that sorted — follow other Labour accounts online.

Make sure to make it fun!

Harrow activists fight cuts



By Rosie Woods, chair of Harrow Momentum

Local activists in Harrow from various campaigning groups including the Labour Party, Momentum and voluntary sector groupings have come together recently to protest cuts being imposed by the Labour council.

The council adopts the mantra of having to make 'tough choices' as a result of upwards of £86 million of cuts from the government. But even amongst those who aren't against all cuts, the council's approach is being called out as inefficient and wasteful.

The latest round of cuts saw an overall cut to the voluntary sector budget and an end to service level agreements with providers for certain services. Instead, the reduced pot of money is to be given to the voluntary sector, where groups will have to bid against each other for funding.

As a result of this the benefits advice service run by Harrow association of Disabled People is being cut. This service helps over 1000 people claim over £1million in benefits a year; the new tender is likely to produce a single benefits advice source with less expertise and capacity to provide help and support.

Local campaigners have collected nearly 3000 signatures opposing this cut. We marched to the last council meeting to protest and present our petition.

A new campaign, SOS Harrow, is being launched as a result of this campaign and we hope to organise more local action against this and other cuts, including the devastating cuts to school budgets.

“Durham lions” fight on

By Tracy McGuire, teaching assistant in Darlington and Momentum Grassroots national committee

On Saturday 25th March, the city of Durham witnessed over a thousand women, men and children marching in solidarity with the Durham Teaching Assistants and their campaign to defend their pay and working conditions.

The “Durham Lions” as they are known have fought a grassroots campaign resisting the attacks against them for the past 18 months.

2,700 Durham TAs received official notice on 15th November 2016 from the Durham Labour County Council that their pay was to be cut by 23% and that they were effectively going to be sacked on 31 December 2016 and re employed on new contracts on 1 January 2017. The date that the letter was received marked the 25th year of TA service of Lisa Turnbull, one of the main activists of the campaign. Lisa had said that

there had been rumours prior to the announcement but that this was the catalyst which determined their action. The real effect of this was that the majority of TAs, many already low paid working class women, would face a pay cut of up to £5,000 a year. The TAs reacted quickly to this. A grassroots campaign was initiated — they had decided enough was enough.

The campaign consists of a group of women who have become union members if they weren't before, the majority of which are Unison members. Many of these women have not been politically active before, but they are now! These women are at the forefront of their own campaign: organising rallies, holding talks with their unions, speaking at public meetings and instrumental in their own industrial action.

These proudly self-proclaimed lions will not allow their families to suffer the effects of the Labour County Council cuts passed down from the Tory Government and they will continue to fight for the difference in education which their profession calls for.

Bring Labour back onto the streets!

By Martin Thomas

There were 30,000 people in Trafalgar Square on 4 November 1956 to protest against the Tory government's invasion of Egypt to re-take the Suez Canal, which had been nationalised by the Egyptian government.

30,000: it doesn't sound very big. In fact it was the biggest demonstration in Britain for 30 years, since the General Strike of 1926. There had been decades when there were few demonstrations, and in those days fewer people could afford the time and money to travel to protests.

The pattern-breaking protest was organised, not by any radical left group, but by the staid, right-wing Labour Party leadership around Hugh Gaitskell.

The next year, 1957, still under Gaitskell's leadership, Labour MPs disrupted parliamentary proceedings, and the London Labour Party called a big demonstration to protest against the Tories' Rent Act, which allowed private landlords to raise rents.

It is disconcerting and disappointing that Jeremy Corbyn's left-wing Labour leadership has proved less willing to rally people on the streets against the Tories than Gaitskell was. At the NHS protest on 4 March, estimated at over 200,000 people, Jeremy Corbyn spoke, and many local Labour Parties mobilised, but the Labour Party as such abstained. Labour has called no street protests since Corbyn became leader.

Tony Benn started to define himself as a left-winger (he had previously, since becoming an MP in 1950, been very middle-of-the-road) by leading a 30,000-strong demonstration in support of the workers' occupation of the UCS shipyard in Glasgow on 23 June 1971. He did that as an official representative of the Labour front bench, then led by Harold Wilson.

On 18 November 1976 Labour's National Executive supported a 40,000-strong weekday demo, initiated by the public sector Nupe (now merged into Unison), against cuts made by the Labour government.

Jim Callaghan, the right-wing Labour prime minister of the time, did not like that. But once Labour was in opposition, even Callaghan felt obliged to call an official Labour Party demonstration against the first instalment of Thatcher's cuts. 50,000 turned out on 28 November 1979, a weekday.

Callaghan's Labour Party also supported a 15,000-strong demonstration in support of the steelworkers' strike on 28 January 1980. Corbyn's Labour Party has not yet officially endorsed a demonstration in support of any industrial dispute.

In November 1980 Michael Foot succeeded Callaghan as Labour leader. Foot, like Corbyn, had a left-wing background.

Unlike Corbyn, he had been integrated into the Labour establishment well before becoming leader. He had served as a loyal deputy to



Aneurin Bevan speaking at the 1956 demonstration

Callaghan in government since 1976.

Foot, as leader, would turn on the left. In 1983 the Labour candidate in the Bermondsey by-election of 1983, Peter Tatchell, for supporting extra-parliamentary action against the Tories; the same year he made an unsuccessful attempt to purge Militant (now the Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal) from the Labour Party.

Yet, as Labour leader, Foot put the current leadership to shame in his own support for action on the streets.

He had the Labour Party organise, and he led, large protests against unemployment: 150,000 in Liverpool on 29 November 1980, 50,000 in Glasgow on 21 February 1981.

He spoke (and so did Neil Kinnock) at the CND unilateral nuclear disarmament demonstration of 24 October 1981, 250,000 strong, generally reckoned as the biggest demonstration ever in Britain until the 2003 protests against the invasion of Iraq.

On 22 September 1982 he led a demonstration supporting the health workers' pay dispute. In June 1983 he addressed a rally at the end of the People's March against unemployment.

When Neil Kinnock became Labour leader in October 1983, he set about putting a stop to Labour being active on the streets. He set a pattern which was continued by John Smith and Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband, and should be broken by Jeremy Corbyn.

During the 1984-5 miners' strike, Kinnock came to a picket line only once and briefly, on 3 January 1985, when the strike was plainly going down to defeat.

At the next big demonstration against Tory policy - the 250,000-strong poll tax protest of 31 March 1990 - Kinnock kept his distance. Only 30 left-wing Labour MPs backed it, including Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott.

That demonstration was a high point of a movement which by the end of 1990 had forced the Tories to start proceedings to repeal the poll tax, completed in 1993, with no thanks to the Labour leadership.

Jeremy Corbyn and those around him should remember that record.

Expelled for opposing the free market!

• Responding to a court case brought by Jack Halinski-Fitzpatrick of Harrow Labour Party, Labour head office has said, officially, that opposition to the market economy is grounds for expulsion.

"Support for Socialist Appeal, irrespective of whether it is a proscribed organisation, is sufficient to warrant expulsion... one of Socialist Appeal aims [is] consigning the market economy to the dustbin of history. [Labour] recognises the importance of the 'enterprise of the market' and the 'rigour of competition' to a dynamic economy and a the value of a 'thriving private sector'."

• At its 21 March meeting, the NEC, so Ann Black reports on her blog, "agreed changes to disciplinary procedures which I hope will be published soon. In future most allegations would be investigated without suspension, with rights withdrawn only where necessary.

"Members would be entitled to see evidence and to appeal on grounds of fact and proportionality, and there would be explicit timescales, though last year's backlog would take a while to work through."



Jeremy Corbyn speaking at a rally against the Labour NEC's move to ban the newspaper *Socialist Organiser*, in 1990:

"The strength of the labour movement is the ability to express views freely... I am totally opposed to all bans and proscriptions in the Labour Party"

Right try to ban left-wingers

By Laura Ross, Broxtowe CLP

Last summer as membership of the party grew massively the right of the party, feeling threatened, recruited more people to the un-elected, secretive Compliance Unit.

Within our constituency there were a number of casualties of the ongoing cull, most noticeable Pete Radcliff, our elected chair. There was outrage across the constituency. We were united in disgust that our chair, a hardworking, committed and experienced member, had been excluded with no right of appeal, unable to even see the evidence against him.

We talked as a constituency of how we would fight the decision. We held a social to raise funds for Stop the Purge. We wrote and passed many motions in support of Pete. Pete was welcomed as a guest at meetings and he continued to campaign tirelessly in support of Labour. While campaigning in Stoke he and others raised our concerns with John McDonnell.

As our AGM approaches things have taken a divisive turn. Members on the right became vocal about Pete's presence. Fear was spread that if we continued to support Pete the CLP would be suspended. The party rule book is vague and makes no mention of excluded members. Indeed when advice was sought from Compliance and Legal the responses were different.



The right have been very successful at using the vagueness to their advantage spreading fear and paranoia. A motion was put to seek advice from the very people who had unfairly excluded Pete. As the confusion spread, the motion passed. The result has been devastating.

United

We must challenge incorrect decisions but to do so effectively we must be united. The party machinery has no more rights than the members. Momentum is uniquely placed to coordinate and mobilise nationally. Locally we stop members feeling afraid or isolated when they support their comrades.

Locally the right has divided the left at a critical time, as we begin the process of electing officers and delegates to move us forward over the next year. Next on the agenda is talks around MP selection.

The purge started last year but it is far from over. We must stand together with our excluded comrades demanding their right to a fair open appeal.

Wallasey AGM

By Wirral Momentum

Corbyn supporters in Wallasey welcome the decision to lift the suspension of the Party, and to hold Branch AGMs and a CLP AGM.

The outcome of our AGM elections will be of interest in the Party nationally — and will be covered in the media if we lose.

We are standing in the AGM because we are opposed to those like Peter Mandelson who openly boast that they try to do something to undermine the Labour leader every day. We want an open and democratic Labour Party, with policies decided by its Conference, and a much greater number of NEC members elected by the membership of the Party in the One Member One Vote NEC elections. We are opposed to unjust suspensions and expulsions from the party, including in our own CLP. Candidates who want to Stand for Corbyn with us should agree to this programme.

They should also support each other in this election process, by nominating the agreed candidates in their Branch AGMs and voting for them at the CLP AGM.

- This is an excerpt from a statement by Wirral Momentum. The full statement can be found online at: bit.ly/wallasey
- Email wallaseymomentum@btinternet.com to find out more.

Labour says support for RMT is out of order

At a recent West Lincs CLP meeting Labour members heard from RMT activist John Tilley about the strike on Merseyside by train staff against DDO (Driver Only Operation — no guards).

Despite many members wanting to back a motion in support of the strikers, the chair announced that North West region of Labour had instructed them not to pass the motion because it was “against Labour party policy and might damage the campaign of Steve Rotherham for ‘Metro Mayor’”.

Jeremy Corbyn has made it clear previously that he backed similar strikes by the RMT and Aslef against Southern Trains, John McDonnell sent a message of support to striking workers in December 2016 stating “Whether it is in parliament or on the picket line, Jeremy Corbyn and I will be there with you. Solidarity... I send solidarity greetings to all those



RMT activist John Tilley

workers engaged in struggle”. Seems that the message of basic solidarity in the workers’ movement hasn’t reached North West Region of the Labour Party.

This only shows how important it is to change Labour at every level, from ward through to the NEC and parliament — the party of working people should never leave workers to fight alone.

Wimbledon CLP banned from criticising a free school

Wimbledon Labour Party ran into an expensive spot of bother with London Region last month. In a statement to members they explained:

“We regret to have to inform members that 40,000 leaflets explaining to parents and residents why the Harris proposals for a new secondary school on the cramped Meranton Way industrial site are unacceptable, will not be delivered door to door as planned, and will be binned”.

Despite having three CLP meetings which passed policy against free schools and specifically outlined local Labour members opposition to the school on Meranton Way, London Region ordered the leaflets — costing £1000 of members’ money — to be scrapped.

For some bizarre reason some of the local Labour councillors back the Free School. Pressure from other members of Merton Labour seems to have been brought to bear on Wimbledon, who pointed to the problem of “manoeuvres of this kind are taking place within the Labour Party in Merton”.

The fact that Wimbledon was threatened with being suspended if they went ahead and distributed the leaflets shows you the extent to which the right, in alliance with the bureaucracy, will go to stifle debate and shut down important campaigns.

Two views on Labour and the Gorton by-election: bit.ly/gortonby

“We should be thinking about

Continued from the front cover

What do you see the role of Momentum as being?

I think Momentum had the potential, or has the potential — that’s the debate — to draw together the many thousands of people who got involved in politics around the Corbyn campaigns. That includes trying to organise the left in the Labour Party around socialist policies, around political education, and around democratising the party, as well as putting left candidates forward as councillors, and MPs and so on. The question is the degree to which it does that, or whether it is simply a sort of top-down cheerleading movement for Jeremy Corbyn. That seems to me to contradict with the way Jeremy Corbyn has always presented himself, as not running hierarchical structures or wanting machine politics.

There’s was that tension from the start, on the old Steering Committee, on the old National Committee, which was also between people who want to be focused in the office and those who want it to be focused in the local groups — which is where I stand. If Momentum is going to survive it needs to be focused around the local groups. You need an office but you can’t have all the decisions taken in the office.

Where does that centralised, top down approach, almost a Blairite approach, come from?

There’s a mistrust of the left-wing activists; that becomes an argument about particular socialist groups, the AWL for instance, when there was actually a much wider group of left-wing activists on the old NC, most of whom have been in the Labour Party a long time, some of whom are new — but it’s a mistrust of all of us. Comments were made at meetings about self-appointed activists. In fact, of course you’re self-appointed, nobody appoints you to be an activist, so it’s a silly and quite a reactionary idea. We want more people to be activists in this movement.

Another aspect is that, though I am a union general secretary, in Momentum I argued we should have an orientation towards rank-and-file trade unionists to draw them in, at the same time as approaching unions officially, whereas I think the approach from the Momentum office is simply to approach trade union general secretaries to see if can we do a deal around something.

When you say mistrust of activists, do you mean because they’ll be too radical?

I have some sympathy that people might say things that are potentially politically damaging to the Labour leadership. I’m not against having some sort of discipline in terms of messaging and so on. We’re trying to build the Labour Party and get it ready for a general election and so on. I don’t have a problem with that. But it has to be tempered by democracy and allowing people to debate things, and allowing local group to function.

What would you advocate in terms of both official Momentum and the Grassroots Momentum network within it?

I’m still a member of Momentum, and I participated in the Grassroots Momentum conference, and I want to see what can be built. There are differences of opinion about whether Momentum itself is viable any longer. I haven’t reached a conclusion. Generally I’m not in favour of just splitting things — but I’ve invested a lot of personal time, as well as on behalf of my union, in Momentum, just to be stitched up. It is very hard to carry on as if nothing’s happened, or to persuade people in the FBU to carry as if nothing’s happened. In terms of the FBU’s affiliation, we’re monitoring and discussing the situation and we haven’t yet decided what to do. We’ve been asked by Momentum to take up seats on the new NCG, and we haven’t reached a decision on that.

What are the most important ideas, demands and policies socialists should be raising at the moment?

One very positive thing about Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign is that it allowed us to raise issues that were off the agenda and you weren’t allowed to say. I remember talking to a left-wing economist about our FBU policy



on nationalising the banks; although he privately supported it, he said, you’ll just be isolated if you raise stuff like that, it’s too far-fetched — whereas I think we should precisely be thinking about the big things, about how society is organised.

In terms of policies we should be campaigning for — there’s 5.4 million public sector workers, we should be saying they should be campaigning to break the pay cap, but we need link that to all workers, needing a pay rise. Interestingly the TUC held a campaign and demonstration about “Britain needs a pay rise”; in fact Britain needs a pay rise far more now than it did five years ago, and yet it seems to have gone off the agenda. Then the fragmentation, privatisation and destruction of public services. We need to discuss in more detail how you could start steering the economy in a different direction.

There is a widespread understanding of the degree of inequality in this society, but people don’t really know what to do about it. We need to say, this isn’t new, this is part of the system, and how are we going to challenge that. We have to be more radical than saying people should pay the tax they’re supposed to pay. It should be pretty basic to say people should pay their tax and yet it seems as though that’s as far as the left will go. I saw an interview once with Boris Johnson where he said, companies have a duty to try to limit the amount of tax they pay. He’s actually right, but that’s about the profit system — if they’re going to maximise their profit, they should minimise what they pay, so some sort of moral appeal to them isn’t convincing. We should start raising taxing the rich, saying look at the tax that business and wealthy were paying even when Thatcher left office, far in excess of what’s being paid today.

We should raise issues about public ownership, but also control of public services. Take the railways, people talk about “Bring back British rail”; I don’t think we want to bring back British Rail in the form it was. We should have imaginative ideas that involve workers having a say, commuters having a say, service-users having a say in how things are run, in a democratic way. We should be far more imaginative and bold.

But I mean how do we counter the pressure on Corbyn to tone down?

I think we counter that pressure by building a movement. When the left

out how society is organised”



party structures should be subordinated to that conference. We need a campaign around Labour's elected representatives, whether that's in councils or in Parliament — if there's this mass party membership, then they should be reflected on those levels. We need more socialist councillors and MPs. The whole debate around accountability of MPs needs to be on a different footing. There's a lot of apologetics about it. For most people who've been involved in the labour movement for a long time, it just seems a bit weird, why people think that being elected at thirty or whatever gives you a job for life as a Labour MP. Anyone, including Jeremy Corbyn, is only an MP because they've been selected by Labour members as a Labour candidate; of course they're accountable to their electors, but they're also accountable to the party that got them elected.

The assumption at the moment is that MPs will be middle-class professionals — I don't mean teachers or social workers but actual middle-class professionals.

I find it deeply depressing that the whole political structure, including in the labour movement, is so dominated, including on the left, by people whose whole experience is university, research for a trade union or a Labour MP, and then a council position and then an MP's position — it's almost like a caste of people who then become very, very influential. The Labour Party was set up to represent workers in Parliament, and yet workers don't really have that representation.

I hear people who are described as officials of unions. To me an official of a union is someone who's been elected by workers to represent them, not someone who's got a job as a researcher or policy or whatever. In my union, all our officials, the people we call officials, are elected; we employ members of staff, and I have a great deal of respect for them, but we wouldn't call them officiala of the union. That's one of our strengths — everyone has come through the industry, everyone has been a firefighter, or worked in the fire service. That's the best tradition of the labour movement and that's what we need to see in people selected as councillors or MPs. It would make the Labour Party much more reflective of society and break down the hostility to politicians among ordinary people, and understandable and justified. It's an alien world for workers, because on one side people have gone through those sorts of bureaucratic structures, and on the other side it's all Eton and Oxbridge-educated Tories. Politics then becomes very alienating for ordinary people.

So, how much progress have we made in the last year and a half?

At local level the left has won some positions — Constituency Labour Parties are key to a lot of this. The reason I'm wary of raising concerns about progress is I think we have to remember how far we'd been thrown back and where we were starting from. Immediately after the 2015 election, people would have been quite pessimistic about the prospects of the left and socialists within the Labour Party. There was a decline in the labour movement matched by a decline in political participation and a decline in socialist ideas, and that's gone on for thirty or more years. We need to try to be optimistic. It's inevitable that a left-wing leadership is going to come under this massive pressure. That's why I reject this Owen Jones sort of narrative, that Corbyn's leadership is failing and has to be replaced. That would simply be a defeat and a setback.

We haven't made sufficient progress, and that's down to leadership but not just — we've got to do it from the bottom up.

Nationalise the banks!

In 2012 the Fire Brigades Union successfully proposed to TUC Congress that the labour movement should respond to the capitalist economic crisis and austerity by demanding public ownership of banking and high finance. Read Matt Wrack's case for nationalising the banks on our blog: bit.ly/nationalisethebanks.

has been in the ascendancy in the past, we had big networks. One of the contradictions is that in the early 80s, left leadership challenges weren't able to succeed, but you had a much bigger movement: you had the Labour left, you had other groups on the left, you had shop stewards networks, you had all sorts of left-wing campaigns which were very well established. Today you've got the most left-wing leadership ever elected, but all those structures don't exist, the movement itself doesn't. So in a sense we're trying to rebuild that movement from the bottom up. That's the key thing and there's where Momentum could have played a role. It's inevitable that people will come under pressure from the status quo, and if you're simply operating in Parliament, then the whole structure is designed to make you retreat. We can't resist that unless there's a movement built on a much wider basis.

What are the most important changes you want to see in the Labour Party?

The starting point is the mass membership — that was a fantastic achievement of the leadership campaigns, to build the start of a genuine mass membership. However, it seems there has been some decline in that in the last few months. We need to stop that. The only way we do that is by having that membership active and engaged in Labour Party structures, in meetings, debates, elections and so on. The Labour Party could play quite a big political and cultural role. In my constituency they've set up a socialist cinema club now which is getting a big participation. There's lots that could be done. Really the party should have a whole team working on how do you encourage lively participation in events.

Then there has to be a serious campaign around Labour Party democracy, which for me means first of all ending all the witch-hunting activity, bans, proscriptions, expulsions, suspensions. Virtually any time a party organisation steps out of line, as the right wing would see it, they are closed down at the drop of a hat, and it takes a long time to be reinstated. There's elements of the left that need to remember that picking on bits of the left, on particular socialist groups, is always a prelude to attacking the left more widely. That's the lesson of previous witch-hunts.

Labour Party conference needs democratising, and decision-making and

Labour internationalists

By Simon Hannah, Wandsworth Momentum

A progressive foreign policy for Britain is made incredibly complicated by the fact of Britain's place in the world as an imperialist, ex colonial power.

Our entire historical past is bound up with racism, injustice, exploitation and inequality in how we treated other parts of the world. Today, as a decaying imperial power rapidly moving down the chart of richest nation (fourth in 2014, sixth in 2017) but with the arrogance and hubris of a nation that still thinks the Colonial Office and East India Company are parts of our foreign policy.

A socialist internationalist foreign policy by a left government would aim to force a realignment of world politics away from the richest nations and towards a redistribution of wealth and resources back to countries that need them. No more looting of Africa and Asia. No more trade deals which force the growth of cash crops over much needed food across the global south.

Refugees

Complete solidarity with refugees, taking them in but advocating on their behalf across Europe. Provide specially purposed ships to the Mediterranean to assist refugees in boats. But look to the issues that are causing the mass immigration and refugee crisis — that means a political settlement for Syria that removes Assad and policies to help African nations develop sustainable economies. Britain's involvement in NATO needs to end, it is a war machine designed to keep the west in power and has no place in a genuine socialist foreign policy. Likewise we would scrap our (co-dependent with the USA) nuclear capabilities and convert the military into a defence force only. When nationalists claim we will be left defenceless we can point to Germany (no nuclear weapons) and Japan (no aggressive military force for decades) as examples to prove it is possible. It should go without saying that a Labour Britain shouldn't back any more US led wars of domination and it should seek political



solutions to problems instead of military might.

Britain would use its position to motivate and support the legitimate claims of poorer nations against the rich, on issues like trade, aid and social policies. Our aid budget should be increased, but it should go directly to communities and organisations that can best use them, not be used to prop up elites or monarchies in the global south.

It means solidarity with the Palestinians and condemnation of Israeli apartheid policies. Support for the right of return for Palestinians.

Finally we have to develop a European strategy which sees us fighting for a socialist internationalist alliance of European states, based on non-protectionist measures, human rights and economic policies that benefit the majority, not the capitalist elites. Only a Europe of hope and socialism can hope to stem the growth of the far right across the continent.

That means solidarity with any nations or parties fighting austerity or neoliberalism and a campaign for a United States of Europe only a socialist basis.

Corbyn and the Putin axis

By Omar Raii, UCL Labour activist

Never have things looked better for Vladimir Putin.

With Brexit, the election of Trump, the strength of the Front National in France and the rise of other right-wing forces in Europe, the allies of the Moscow have gone from strength to strength. And yet one of the most depressing things about this rise in confidence of Putinism has been the relative lack of opposition to this from the left. Nowhere is this more evident than with Corbyn.

No doubt much of this influence comes from the Stop the War Coalition types as well as Seamus Milne, who has famously been a keen advocate of ignoring the war crimes of any country that isn't a NATO member. Jeremy Corbyn himself clearly comes less from a pro-Putin background but from a (somewhat naïve) position that is simply about being anti-war. But while opposing British imperialism is important, silence or even tacit acceptance of Russian imperialism, which for example continues to occupy parts of Ukraine and Syria, is unacceptable for principled socialists and anti-imperialists.

When Aleppo was pounded Guernica-style by the air forces of Putin and his ally Bashar Al-Assad, Corbyn barely said a peep. This silence was particularly shameful given that in the previous decade Corbyn had been so loud and clear in his condemnation of the bombing of another Arab country, Iraq, by another imperial power, the US.

This problem, the softness on the Putin axis, is however not unique to Corbyn and the Labour Party. In France, Jean-Luc Mélenchon once declared his support for Putin's operations in Syria, as he was "eliminat-



ing ISIS". In Germany, some members of Die Linke visited Russian-occupied Crimea in order to observe the sham referendum in 2014. Last year a Spanish Podemos MEP was happy to visit Damascus and sit down to meet with Bashar Al-Assad.

Socialists should take a far clearer stand. While opposing the hypocrisy and opportunism of western imperialism, we cannot ignore the blatant crimes committed by "enemies" of the west.

Russian socialists have always managed to oppose Russian imperialism. Why can't we?

The Housing Crisis: we need a socialist housing programme

Pete Gilman, Islington Axe the Housing Act

Britain faces the gravest housing crisis since the war. A crisis which will be dramatically worsened by the Tory's Housing and Planning Act (2016) and their subsequent housing white paper. The act has three main objectives.

First the ending of council housing. The Tory key to this is ending security of tenure for council tenants, and "regeneration".

Second to transform housing associations (HAs) from social landlords into landlord companies and private property developers, by ending regulation of HAs, and encouraging them to impose 80% market rents. The Tories say HAs belong in the private sector. "They should not be charities."

Third, the "privatisation" of planning which gives greater power and rights to property developers by curtailing the powers of local authorities to withhold planning permission or impose "affordable" housing on new developments.

The act must be repealed in its entirety. Jeremy Corbyn and the overwhelming majority of Labour agree. Unfortunately this is not the case with the party's right wing, who either equivocate or support the act. In housing articles after it was passed, Progress did not raise one word of criticism of the act. What they did say is they support "regeneration."

Regeneration means council estates are handed over to private developers, emptied out, demolished, and replaced with luxury housing, e.g. the Heygate estate, the Aylesbury estate, Cressingham Gardens, and the scandal in Haringey where the council have gone into partnership with private developers in a £2 billion deal to demolish thousands of council homes and replace them with highly lucrative luxury housing.

The Tories and Progress call this regeneration, we call it social cleansing. Labour needs a housing programme that includes the following:

- The total repeal of the Housing and Planning Act. We must not submit to the Act's supporters on the Labour Party right wing.
- Build 100,000 council homes a year, every year. According to both Shelter and the National Housing Federation this is entirely possible, and totally necessary. This should be funded by central government not from council rents. We want council housing not luxury housing, and an end to "regeneration".

School cuts are part of a bigger picture

By Jade Baker, Lewisham NUT and Crofton Park Labour branch chair

Between now and 2020, 98% of schools in England and Wales will see a real terms cut in their funding through a combination of redistribution of school funding geographically (in the new schools funding formula), and increases in national insurance and pensions contributions for employers.

The average primary school will see a reduction of £87,117 (£339 per pupil). The average secondary school will have their budget reduced by £405,611 (£477 per pupil).

What would a Labour program to address the crisis in school education look like? It would say more than just "give more money to schools" which seems to be the most the party is saying at the moment.

In much the same way as the current crisis in the NHS is not just about money, and is not just solved by an injection of cash, the crisis in education is bigger than just a lack of funding. Given that 61% of secondary schools in England are academies, and 21% of primaries, an injection of money would be largely being poured into an unaccountable system where so-called "super-heads" are regularly paid six-figure salaries (the highest paid secondary school headteacher is paid £395,000).

Huge amounts of the schools budget is also being poured into largely



London Labour's poster on the housing crisis

- Maintain security of tenure for all council tenants, and extend it to HA tenants and those in private rented accommodation.
- Give HA tenants the right to ballot to transfer to council tenancies if they so choose instead of forcibly becoming private sector tenants.

Private sector housing is a disaster. Tenants are ruthlessly ripped off, have little or no security of tenure, and ever increasing numbers are in short term tenancies which leads to stress, instability, and continuous disruption of the children's education. Shelter has reported 85,000 complaints against private landlords, 62% of which related to life-threatening hazards.

Labour must create a regulatory body with legal powers of enforcement to oversee the entire private housing sector. Additionally, implement a charter of rights for private sector tenants along the lines of Jeremy Corbyn's "The Regulation of the Private Sector Bill." Further, all private landlords must be required to go on to a central registry which entails them signing up to a legally enforceable specific code of conduct towards their tenants.

These are the measures needed to deal with the housing crisis. They are practical, would be immensely popular, and could win Labour the next election.

unneded free schools. In the budget Phillip Hammond announced an extra £320 million in schools funding ... but only for new free schools. Yet in February the National Audit Office found that the Department for Education had spent £863 million on land acquisition for free schools — not to mention extra money building them — but that most of these new schools were not built where they were needed. They estimated that of the 113,500 places to be created between 2015 and 2021, 57,000 would be unnecessarily replacing places in existing schools.

Labour has committed to no new academies, but this is potentially unworkable in practice without a wider program for publicly owned and run education. The academies program has decimated local authority services. Many simply don't have the resources to support the schools still under their control, and this will only get worse as council budgets shrink further. We must demand not just a halt to new academies, but the reconstruction of local-authority-run education, and the return of all schools to democratic control.

Opposing the change in the national funding formula, and the looming cuts to schools across England and Wales is vital, but should be part of a wider set of demands: Reverse academisation, end the free school program and bring schools back under local authority control; put limits on "super-heads" pay; cancel PFI debts for schools; and fund school renovation and rebuilding.

Nationalise the Big Six!

At the launch of a new campaign to nationalise the energy companies, a Unite activist and Npower worker explained why taking them out of private hands is a crucial campaign.

The UK energy market is a really monstrous creation.

It is illogical even according to the illogical laws of capitalism. So, for instance, the electricity that comes out of the socket and the gas that comes out of your hob is from the same source, regardless of the energy supplier you're with. What we call energy suppliers are not actually the people who supply you with your energy.

A bit of history first of all. In the late 1940s, after the war the Labour government nationalised a patchwork of private and municipally owned gas and electric companies into regional gas and electricity boards. Then in the 1970s the regional gas boards were centralised into British Gas, still then a nationalised organisation. In electricity you still had the National Grid, which was set up as a publicly-owned body in the 1930s. Then you had the Central Electricity Generating Board, which owned all the power stations and all generation at that point, also publicly-owned.

The Thatcher government was the first to start privatising the industry. By the early 1990s a complex system of market economics meant that a huge number of companies associated with every part of energy production existed. But then the companies with the most money, i.e. big multinational companies or nationalised energy companies from other countries, started buying up the smaller companies. That soon produced what we now know today as the Big Six, who own elements of generation, elements of distribution, all the metering, the data collection, and all the supplier functions. We ended up with these six vertically-integrated companies: E-on, SSC, NPower, Scottish Power, British Gas, EDF.

All these companies, to some extent, own generation. 92% of customers are with the Big Six. So the Big Six make money off both sides. They make money off generation: waiting until the price of energy is high and then selling it to the grid; and they make money on the other side, buying the energy or the nominal energy from the grid when the price is low, and charging you for it.

The smaller green energy companies do the same, it's just they promise to invest in green energy to offset that. But what they sell you is what is coming off the grid, the same as what anyone else uses. It's not separate.

Why nationalise the Big Six?

Public ownership is important to scrap market relations. Even if you have a municipal model or mutual model, it is purchasing from the National Grid under these crazy market relations. By taking the whole sector into public ownership you can scrap that whole market relation. It's monstrous, if you think about it. Light, heat, and power are basic human needs and we're leaving their supply down to prices and brokerage. If we let the sector be run on the basis of a competition between human interest and big capitalist enterprises, the big capitalist enterprises will win.

The Big Six are huge in terms of their workforce and their resources, so if we do want to transform the energy sector, and we want a workforce that can take the agency into their own hands to do that, then you need the workforce of the Big Six to be a part of that process.

A lot of the workforce could be turned over into supporting energy efficiency, supporting insulation and so on. We had a certain amount of workers set about work like that under the obligations placed on energy companies by the previous labour government. That's useful work that people could take up, instead of just hounding people for bills.

I think we need to nationalise the generation side, in terms of safeguarding baseload and keeping the lights on. If we are to transition to a non-fossil fuel energy system, we need central investment and that requires public ownership of the big energy organisations, which means the big six. That includes investment in the grid, in distribution, in large renewable projects, which, at the minute no-one will pay for. And also



we need to invest in renewing nuclear power infrastructure so we have something that can supply baseload in the place of the fossil fuel plants, so as to keep the lights on.

If you have a patchwork of mutuals and municipally-owned (or not-really-municipally-owned) organisations, then that doesn't have the democratic accountability to workers or users that you could achieve through full nationalisation of the energy sector.

I don't think that this could be enacted through a benevolent state. Even if we got a Corbyn-led Labour government that could be pushed to nationalise the Big Six, I don't think that the benevolent state will be the force to do that. The agency of the workers themselves has to be central to taking over the industry. It is in our interests as energy workers to nationalise this so as to protect our conditions of work and life; and it is in our interests as humans to do this to fight climate change.

Unions in the energy sector remain strong due to their bargaining power (they could literally turn off the lights if they wanted). That should be mobilised in a conscious way, not just to fight for terms and conditions or for jobs, but to fight for an energy sector that's run on need, not for profit, but for the good of all.

Rather than hoping that one day a Labour government might nationalise the sector and have it run by civil servants, we can get a living, breathing, democratically accountable system that provides power for all of us without ruining the planet.

Get involved in the campaign

Trade union, Labour Party, climate change and student activists have set up a "Nationalise the Big Six" campaign to fight for public ownership and democratic control of the energy sector, so we can reorganise it on the basis of need, bring down carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty. They held a launch meeting in London with an Npower worker and a student Fossil Free activist speaking on 16 March, chaired by Momentum NCG member Sahaya James.

More information, ideas how to get involved and active:

Blog: nationalisethebigsix.com

Facebook: [Nationalise the Big Six](https://www.facebook.com/Nationalise-the-Big-Six)

Email: nationalisebigsix@gmail.com

Sign the statement: nationalisethebigsix.com/statement

Fighting for security at work

E M Johns argues that Labour needs to put workers' rights at the heart of its policies.

Corbyn has pledged to legislate for security at work for everyone. This centres on banning zero hours contracts, extending workers' rights, mandatory collective bargaining for larger companies, and making it easier for trade unions to organise.

This is an unambiguously pro-worker agenda. It starts from the position of what workers need in order to have a good life, without muddling this up with any business-friendly (i.e. boss-friendly) language. In more detailed, fleshed-out form, they could form the basis of a workplace policy by which the state regulates for a decent standard of living, but which recognises that the collective action of workers is the most effective guarantee of winning and keeping hold of better working conditions. The party's Workplace2020 initiative, which seemed to go by the wayside during the last leadership campaign, should be revived so that we can take this agenda to the shop floor, develop it in collaboration with rank-and-file trade unionists, and win our colleagues round to it as a coherent political platform.

So what can a Labour government do? Pay is the most obvious starting point. The National Policy Forum's document covering work manages to wax lyrical about the problem of in-work poverty without giving a mention to the obvious solution, higher wages. The party should never stop saying Britain needs a pay rise. Millions of public sector workers who have suffered under the pay freeze, and private sector workers, for whom the increased cost of living is eating into any pay rise they might

Labour and the self-employed

By Stephen Wood

"With the number of self-employed people expected to overtake public sector workers, Labour will act to address real issues they are facing."

There has been a sizable increase in so-called "bogus self-employment" where jobs that at one time would have afforded strong employment rights have been scrapped, by unscrupulous bosses and Governments, with only a limited fightback from the labour movement.

So from hairdressers who have to rent space in salons, Uber drivers, even contractors on a building site, they can all find themselves having to do their own tax, pay their own national insurance and have no guarantee of sick or holiday pay. Some recent court cases have exposed the falsity of this and Labour has timidly taken up the issue arguing that there are half a million people who find themselves in this situation.

From 2001 to 2016 there was an increase of 1.5 million in self-employed workers. Given how many of these are not really self-employed then a clear strategy for the labour movement should be fighting for their rights as workers. Phillip Hammond's proposed rise in NI was then a potential attack on workers and the Government climbdown is good but Labour's overall response on this is less clear.

A new video accompanying details of a Labour "roundtable" on self-employment states that they will "bring together business organisations, trade unions and self-employed groups to lay out a serious and realistic strategy to provide a fair deal for the self-employed at a time of major labour market changes..."

"We are proud to be the party of working people, small businesses, and the self-employed."

Labour should fight bogus self-employment, but that does not mean becoming a party of small business and the self-employed. Labour should stand up and fight for working-class interests and working-class representation. Will that mean that some self employed or even small businesses back Labour and radical socialist and pro-worker policies?

They may well do, but that is a different matter from Labour orienting itself as a middle-class party.

THE #ZeroHOURS HALL OF SHAME



ONE MILLION UK WORKERS ARE ON #ZEROHOURS CONTRACTS

DELIVER QUALITY JOBS | END PRECARIOUS WORK

get, should be told again and again they'll be better off under Labour. We should hammer away at the demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage until it's in the national consciousness, the way \$15 campaigners have done in the US.

A statutory living wage is much easier for the government to enforce than the myriad other daily battles and gripes which make up everyone's working conditions. This is where mandatory collective bargaining comes in. But even under that framework, employers will do everything in their power to cut corners and drive conditions down. We can legislate for higher wages, and even the abolition of zero hours contracts, simply enough; but it's much harder to legislate against a bullying boss, a management who makes you work through your breaks, or a workplace culture that expects you to do parts of your job in your own time. Welcome as the introduction of collective bargaining would be, these kind of issues will have to be tackled by combative organisation in the workplace.

Abolition of Britain's many anti-union laws would make this easier. John McDonnell has long championed this, and proposed a Trade Union Freedom Act to positively enshrine the right to strike and other rights.

Recently, however, the leadership has talked openly only of repealing the latest Trade Union Act (against which the movement put up scarcely any meaningful opposition). We ought to bring back and popularise the idea of a positive 'bill of rights' for trade unionists.

Legislating for such rights, for sectoral bargaining, even for the closed shop, cannot solve our problems in the workplace. But it can create a situation where our collective action on the shop floor can be stronger, bolder, and more militant.

And that's ultimately the way we'll tackle insecurity at work.

Labour democracy and solidarity strikes

Labour Party conference 2015 voted unanimously for a motion that committed the next Labour government to "legislate for strong rights to unionise, win recognition and collective bargaining, strike, picket and take solidarity action", on the basis of a motion promoted by the Right to Strike campaign.

Yet the motion has not been acted on, and even Jeremy Corbyn, who supports the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws including the ban on solidarity strikes, increasingly only mentions repealing the 2016 Trade Union Act.

Fighting to restore the right to solidarity action is absolutely fundamental to workers defending their interests. It is also essential to standing up for Labour conference's right to decide party policy rather than being over-ruled or simply ignored.

Labour must lead fight to save the NHS



Dr Alex Scott-Samuel is a longstanding NHS and Labour Party campaigner who is an activist in Momentum NHS, and has just been elected as chair of the Socialist Health Association, the official Labour Party health campaigner. He is joint chair of the Politics of Health group.



Where are struggles to defend the NHS at? Did the big demonstration on 4 March open up new possibilities?

It was a very impressive demonstration even though it wasn't well reported. It's done a lot to raise public awareness and increase social solidarity around the NHS. The neoliberal hegemony we've had for the last forty years means that individualism has increased and social solidarity has been marginalised. Big fights are coming up like the Sustainability and Transfer

Plans, the "accountable care organisations" and so on. We in the resistance need to move onto a more active phase of fight back. It's time that we started more raising public awareness through demonstrations, pickets and occupations around NHS services provided by the private sector as well as targeting companies like profiteers like Virgin and Boots.

For sure the junior doctors' strike did a fantastic amount to raise health workers' awareness of the political context of what is happening to them. NHS campaigners need to be working with all NHS workers and professionals far more closely in this struggle, and care workers as well.

You're the new SHA chair. How would you assess the SHA's role before now and what do you want to see it doing in the near future?

I wasn't expecting to win! I had a feeling that in the same way that Corbyn has massively expanded the Labour Party and created a lot of enthusiasm and that I was expressing that kind of enthusiasm, I hoped that would bring in support. But I was well aware that the SHA is a very broad church and many of its members have joined under Blairite neoliberalism, just like the PLP, and so are not necessarily enthusiastic about renationalisation. I don't have a problem with the SHA representing a broad range of opinion, but I want to see the NHS reflecting the current leadership as well as conference policy.

What are the most important demands and ideas Labour NHS activists should be raising?

The most important is renationalisation of the NHS. The content of the NHS Bill summarises what I mean. At present the current threats to the NHS are most clearly represented by NHS devolution, by the Five Year Forward, by the STPs. In many cases Labour local authorities, the majority, are either signed up to or passively going along. At the moment Labour is primarily campaigning around cuts, but those other issues are every bit as important.

What role for Momentum NHS?

Momentum NHS has done some excellent work in terms of producing resources, raising awareness and through social media. But now we need to gear up from greater expansion and organising activity and campaign around the country, particularly in England. And more than

Momentum NHS campaigning conference, 20 May



Momentum NHS organisers met at the Momentum dayschool in Birmingham on 25 March, and agreed to call a national campaigning conference to mobilise Momentum, Labour

and union activists and organisations in defence of the health service – on Saturday 20 May, in London. They want as many Momentum activists as possible there and as many Momentum groups as possible represented. More details soon. For more information email momentumnhs@gmail.com, visit the "Momentum NHS" Facebook page or go to peoplesmomentum.com/nhs

that in the Labour Party – within the Labour Party I see Momentum as a socialist thread which needs to infuse and enthuse the party throughout the country through activities within it. So that when we have Labour days of action on the NHS, Momentum needs to be part of that, in CLPs, where I hope Momentum NHS is much more visible in terms of contacts in every constituency.

What's your assessment of how the Labour Party and its leadership is doing on this, both in terms of message and activity?

I was delighted to hear that Jeremy Corbyn is now a member of Keep Our NHS Public. It would be great to hear more from Jeremy, John McDonnell and other members of the Shadow Cabinet, including Jon Ashworth about the issues of NHS privatisation and the importance of renationalisation. Not just when we get a Labour government, but right now, promoting the agenda of the NHS Bill which Margaret Greenwood has been taking forward in Parliament.

It was good this morning to see in the Guardian that Jon Ashworth was finally linking the cuts in the NHS with the privatisation agenda.

What does Labour's NHS policy say?

Although the press, the Labour National Policy Forum and the party's Shadow Health Team are doing a good job of ignoring it, Labour Party conference passed a new, much more radical policy on the NHS and social care last year, as a result of work by Momentum NHS. For what it says go to our website:

theclarionmag.wordpress.com/2016/11/23/labournhsolicy

Transforming the world in the age of Brexit

The *Clarion* met up with Deborah Hermanns and Holly Cook, two activists from The World Transformed collective, to discuss the project and future plans

Clarion: What is ‘The World Transformed’?

Holly Cook: It is a recognition that there is a value in creating places where debate can happen. The World Transformed has lots of people involved and we are only two people. If you interviewed another two people then you would get a different answer.

Deborah Hermanns: TWT isn't perfect. There is more we can do, but it is important to create space. We want a lot of left activists to get involved and be more positive — give us a chance! This is an experiment outside of the comfort zone of normal left events.

Clarion: The Article in the *Guardian* talked about creating cultural spaces, but said nothing about strikes or action

DH: Well, you cannot say everything in an article but I think they are 100% connected. We need a Labour Party which is campaigning, not just in elections. The LP needs to become a social hub of the community. That will happen through those struggles, around housing or the Picturehouse strike.

HC: I think there should have been more in the publicity around struggles. But the angle we provide is about providing cultural spaces for debate because that is what we do. There are strikers who know more than us about struggles!

Clarion: Do you worry some people are demoralised by the lack of struggle and talk of culture is a diversion?

DH: I don't think we are disagreeing. But it wouldn't be right to attack the leadership about the lack of struggle straight away, but to open up those debates.

HC: An example would workplace organising versus housing campaigns. You don't counterpose them. This is a similar example. We believe in workplace organising, but we believe the left should be doing other things as well. This shouldn't be an excuse not to do other things.

DH: There will be a focus in sessions on strikers and labour movement activists. But this is also about repackaging and reframing these ideas.

Clarion: People talk about a “labour movement way of life”, a series of different things that make people feel part of a wider movement, not just a series of meetings.



DH: These meetings are happening in the context of Brexit. In Croydon we wanted it to feel like the community as a whole coming together after the trauma of Brexit. The dividing line isn't about specific workers in some workplaces, it is about the wider picture.

Clarion: There is perception from some people that TWT is part of the Lansman Momentum leadership faction — any comment?

DH: I think it's very unfair. TWT is not homogeneous, it is very diverse. Lots of critical voices towards the coup. We still want a strong relationship with Momentum

as the biggest force on the Labour left. But one of the reasons why Momentum is holding TWT up is that we are doing good things. Momentum wish they were doing the kind of things we are doing.

DH: What is exciting about TBC is that we are working with local Momentum groups across the country. We had a training in January with 50 people there, from 16 to 60 years olds. That training was great and it felt like that kind of thing should be happening all the time. We aren't political like Momentum, though we want to work with Momentum both locally and centrally on different events.

Clarion: For the festival this year at LP conference, is there any aspect of the event that can be used to key into the discussions on LP conference?

DH: The biggest thing we want to change about TWT is how it relates to LP conference. There are lots of ideas throwing around, spaces for delegates to meet up and coordinate, policy debates and preparations and creating spaces for people who can't attend officially so they can watch the conference - perhaps with commentary - and then talk about it afterwards. We want to look at the big issues and debates and bring them more into the festival.

HC: The potential to create an organising space for delegates to meet and be briefed will be very important.

For more on Take Back Real Control visit the website at takebackrealcontrol.com. There will be meetings in Tower Hamlets, Sunderland, Bradford and other places.

Take Back Control of what?

Rida Vaquas reports on the Brexit session at the 25 March Momentum conference run by TWT.

Momentum Conference was a political event devoid of any meaningful politics: the opportunity to argue for policies or debate the Left's future strategy was notably absent from the conference, which focused on workshops centred more on communication skills than ideas.

The workshop about Brexit run by TWT, in this sense, proved a notable exception — in that the people in attendance were very clearly determined to discuss politics, and broke the intended formatting of the workshop to do so.

The workshop itself was advertised as a way to “move beyond the Leave/Remain binary”. Time and again, the idea was applauded that Brexit was happening and we couldn't affect it. It would be damaging

for us to try. We should instead stick to talking about topics that are more ‘our turf’ such as health and housing and local issues. We should, according to multiple speakers, dissociate ourselves from Brexit as the Tories' mess and have no part in intervening in it.

I cannot think of a strategy more dangerous than this. On a practical level, this would mean ceding all control on the terms of Brexit over to a reactionary government which will use this to launch an attack on our class.

Moreover, even issues like health and housing are affected by Brexit: should we, for instance, talk to voters who voted Brexit because the NHS is under ‘too much pressure’ from immigrants without making the argument that underfunding and privatisation are not the fault of immigrants? Whether EU nationals are guaranteed the right to stay in the UK, for example, will make a significant impact on the staffing levels of the NHS, and we should talk about this.

Ultimately, if we truly want to “take back control”, we should start by launching a fight to take back control over the terms of Brexit and not absent ourselves from the struggle.

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Young Labour gets going

By Daniel Round, Stourbridge Labour/Dudley & Sandwell Momentum

When I was elected Stourbridge CLP Youth Officer last summer, I immediately recognised that the establishment of an active Young Labour group was my most urgent task.

There are well over a hundred members and supporters under the age of twenty-seven in the constituency, but this hadn't translated into a growth in participation among young members. The need to harness the talents and enthusiasm of these members - many of whom had never belonged to a political party before and were unsure about how to get involved — was clear.

After our first meeting in August 2016, Stourbridge YL has held monthly meetings with expert guest speakers on a variety of topics, from STPs to austerity, Fairtrade and the war in Syria. In total, we have probably had around twenty-five different attendees, with each meeting usually drawing in around ten – a core group of seven or eight plus two or three non-regular attendees. Because there is a core group of regulars, I have been able to delegate certain tasks and responsibilities, such as chairing meetings and organising outreach efforts, according to members' interests, skills and circumstances.

In addition to these monthly meetings, our YL group has also been involved in community projects and fundraising efforts, working with local groups to raise money for homeless people (£200 worth of sleeping bags in January!) and planning benefit nights at local venues. We all know that re-embedding Labour back into the hearts of our communities is a crucial task - one that Momentum has identified as essential and achievable grassroots work now that we have around half-a-million party members nationally. In working with local charities and community groups, YL has been at the forefront of our rebooted efforts to reconnect from the bottom-up in Stourbridge.

The CLP Secretary and I encouraged members to share their skills. Our YL group has a great pool of talent – young members have designed posters for CLP socials, organised study groups, written for the Stourbridge Labour blog and co-ordinated fundraising campaigns. Recently,

Stourbridge YL member and CLP IT officer Ellen Cobb produced an excellent video about precarious employment. It is fast approaching 10,000 views on Facebook alone!

Allowing members to organise autonomously and utilise their skills and talents has helped to entrench a sense of community and responsibility. As a result, young members are fully on board with the broader work that we do as a party, especially our campaigning activities. For example, we can now count on a good turnout of young members to come along to street stalls and knock on doors without having to pester – simply, they want to contribute in any way. Having twenty people in the town centre on a Saturday morning with around half in their teens and twenties, as opposed to ten or so mostly older members, allows us to engage more successfully with a broader section of the general public, and on a wider range of issues.

Assisted by a proactive CLP Secretary and a supportive executive committee (on which I sit), Stourbridge YL has been fortunate - we have been able to go about building our group without any real push-back. However, I can certainly see how having a less supportive CLP would hinder the efforts of YL groups and youth officers. I am certain that the hostile attitude towards change among some on the Right of the party has held back the establishment of active YL groups in many CLPs. I would encourage anyone looking to establish a YL group under such circumstances to work with people on the Left of their constituency party to try and carve out more open, democratic space within the CLP. YL should be at the heart of our movement's process of renewal, and so all efforts to build successful YL groups - as we have done in Stourbridge — should be fully encouraged by the Labour Left.

Final thought: a Stourbridge YL colleague recently told me that he is "genuinely really proud to be part of this group, achieving great things". It is always important to remember that taking pride in what we do and achieve together — collectively, as socialists — is in itself, in many ways, transformative. Local YL groups provide entry points into Labour politics for so many.

If we build and empower these groups, we will see transformation beget transformation.