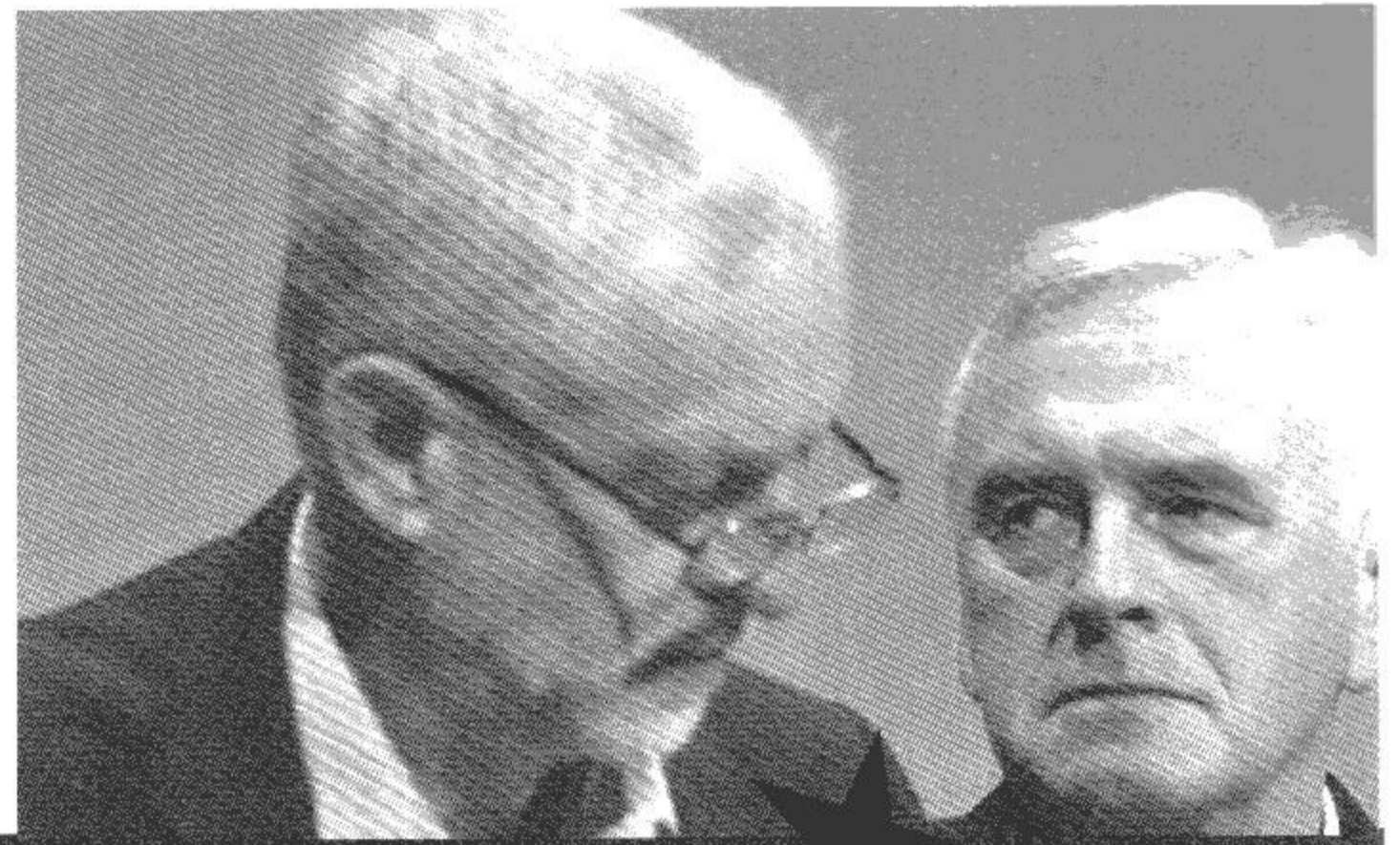


“... The situation the councils are now in is if they don't set a budget, a council officer will do it for them.”

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# Socialist Voice

Number 23 | January 2016

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE | INTERNATIONAL WORKERS LEAGUE - FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

£1



:: READ MORE Page 8&9 ::

**In memory of  
Kathy Laid**



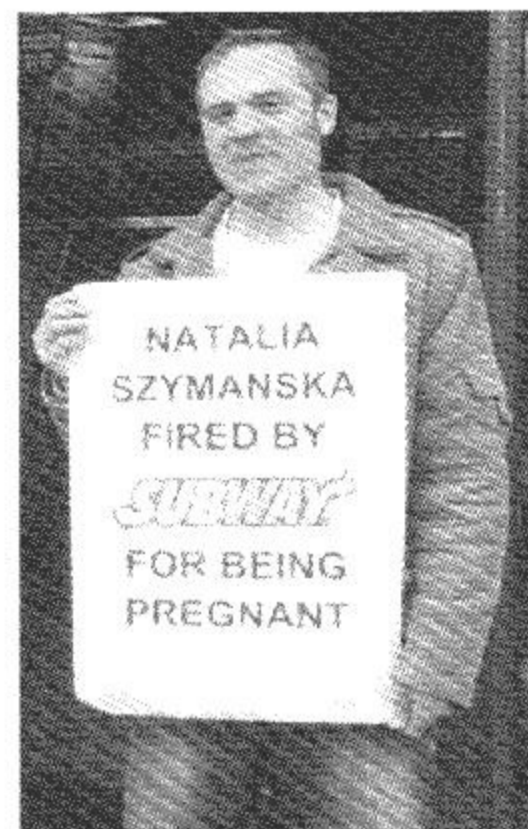
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# Socialist Voice

**Monthly newspaper of the ISL**  
International Socialist League,  
British section of the IWL-FI  
(International Workers' League)


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 *International Socialist League*

**WRITE TO US!**

We want to know your opinion about our newspaper. Write to ISL at "News from Nowhere", 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY

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## Join the International Socialist League!

**1** The ISL aims to build a party that represents the interests of workers and youth because none of the main parties can represent their full interests.

Today the Tory government is unleashing one of the heaviest attacks on workers' rights in the post-war period.

They want to erase all the rights won by workers in the post WW II struggles.

The ISL know these attacks have to be met with strong resistance and genuine militant trade unionism united with community struggles.

We campaign for unity of action in the struggle with workers, youth and other left forces. But neither the TUC nor the Labour Party fights for united class action culminating in a general strike against austerity. Both have held back the working class fight against austerity especially since the pension strike of 2011. We cannot wait another five years.

**2.** Capitalism offers only crises, wars, poverty, racism, sexism, oppression and environmental destruction.

Those who rule us criminalise our struggles and divide us: Black against White, men against women, unemployed against employed, old against young, indigenous against immigrant and so on.

We fight fascism and every type of oppression: racism, homophobia, sexism, amongst others. Oppression is meant to divide us and divert the struggle against austerity and capitalism.

**3.** A different social system is possible, one based on a planned economy, on the needs of the vast

majority which can eradicate hunger and unemployment internationally.

A social system that will lead towards the emancipation of every man and every woman.

Only a workers government and nationalisation under workers control without compensation can achieve this. The Labour Party even under a left leader does not want this.

**4.** Today there are only two roads: either capitalism which will drag humanity towards destruction, or workers take in their hands the direction of the economy. That is why it is necessary and urgent that workers organize themselves for a program of class independence from the rulers and their government.

**5.** The perspective of class independence of the working class requires the construction of another left, revolutionary, fighting socialist internationalist party. This is the aim of the ISL.

**6.** A socialist economy can only be won by a revolution. But to do this a revolutionary party is needed.

**7.** For this ambitious purpose a party only in Britain is not enough.

An International revolutionary party is needed. No type of reformist party can lead the struggle for workers control (e.g. Greece) to end the dictates of the EU or the IMF.

In the UK no variant of the Labour Party will lead the fight for socialism.

That's why the ISL, with dozens of other parties on different continents, is building the IWL-FI, the largest and most dynamic revolutionary organization in the world! Come and join us!

**We raised £1600 in our financial campaign to develop ISL materials such as a web site and more publications.**

**F**rom 30 October to 2 November the II European Seminar on Women of the IWL took place with the participation of about 50 people, mainly from Europe. The seminar is part of the programmatic discussion towards the next IWL world congress. The aim was to advance in the study of the role of the oppression of women within the capitalist system, as well as the theoretical and programmatic development of our



parties to respond, in a Marxist way, to the struggle for women's liberation.

Over four and a half days the study and discussion considered the dialectical relationship between oppression and exploitation in understanding the situation of working class women, the

## IWL European seminar on women

relationship between the struggle of women and the struggle for socialism. The strategic and programmatic agreements and differences, between Marxism and different feminist theories that have emerged since the 1960s were also discussed.

# Corbyn and the fight against austerity and war

## ISL STATEMENT

The Labour conference and the parliamentary vote on bombing Syria has shown, for all who have eyes to see, that left Labour will not fight its right-wing.

In the name of unity Corbyn has said that he will not remove pro-war or pro-puts members from his shadow Cabinet. In a letter to party members Corbyn and Labour Deputy Leader Tom Watson, one of 66 MPs who voted for military action stated that calls to remove pro-war MPs was "abuse and intimidation" and that such calls "have no place in politics. And the party as a whole will not accept such behaviour, from whatever quarter it comes".

Although a free vote was granted, the idea that calls for removal of right-wing MPs has "no place in politics" further strengthens the right and underlines that Corbyn cannot break from the right-wing.

### Syria

The Labour leader was in a strong position to apply the whip to oppose the government – but his decision was to allow a free vote. The leading Labour protagonist for war Hilary Benn, shadow foreign secretary, however, got his way.

A majority of the National Executive Committee are against bombing as were the Unite and Unison leaders. Furthermore Corbyn had a mandate to oppose war and bombing from the membership, 75 per cent of who responded to a Labour membership survey, (a sample of 1,900) were against the air strikes, and there is a growing opposition on the streets in the UK and Europe.

For Labour MPs Corbyn said support or opposition for bombing was a "matter of conscience", as if, perhaps, imperialist bombing could be done for humanitarian reasons!

There is another aspect of Corbyn's anti-war outlook which needs to be examined.

Stop the War Coalition, while opposing the bombing seem to be uncritical of Assad, re-published an article by Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite that included:

"The truth is that there needs to be a peace agreement between the Assad regime and its opponents leading to a



Corbyn succumbed to right-wing pressure for a free vote

transitional administration which could then take on IS. For years, the Prime Minister has worked against such an agreement."

However, this is the same "perspective" as the USA and EU imperialism who are bombing and want to shore up the brutal dictatorship of Assad that has killed more Syrians than IS.

Articles on StWC web site argue that it is impossible to fight IS and Assad at the same time. Stop the War Coalition and Corbyn need to clearly explain their position on Assad.

### McCluskey's shoot to kill

Len McCluskey recently attacked Corbyn's criticism of the shoot-to-kill policy adopted in Paris, after the terrible events. Everyone should know what such a policy means, as with the infamous case of the killing in London of Brazilian electrician, Jean Charles De Menezies in 2005, by security police and there have been many others in Britain and France.

Corbyn should do more than just criticise the "shoot to kill policy" he should campaign to ban this policy in Britain and all the deaths that have occurred in custody by the police. No case has ever lead to persecution.

As Stephanie Lightfoot-Bennett, sister of Leon Patterson who died in police custody, explains: "United Families and Friends was set up to fight for justice, change and accountability. Of 4,800 deaths in custody since 1968, no state official has ever been convicted." <http://www.irr.org.uk>

### Economic programme

At the Labour Party conference John McDonnell said of Karl Marx that "People might disagree with his conclusions about what to do with the system, but actually to understand how the system works he comes up with some interesting analyses that have been built in to traditional

and fairly classical economics" (such comments have a tradition in the Labour Party see Bill Hunter's archive article on the Labour Party in this issue).

For McDonnell Marx's theory and practice on how to end capitalism is more than a step too far.

Instead the Corbyn leadership chose a panel of economic advisers including radical capitalists like Joseph Stiglitz, and Danny Blanchflower who was part the Bank of England's interest rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee 2006 and 2009. The committee seeks to use worn out Keynesian ideas and they are radical capitalist thinkers who want to save capitalism not overthrow it.

### Labour Party – establishment party

The class struggle has provided the Labour left with many opportunities since the 1980s to fight austerity, but they have failed. Previously under the leadership of "Ed, the Red", chosen by the trade union leaderships, decisions were made to unite with the right-wing despite facing huge pressure from the working class at every important decision. They consistently moved to the right.

Two significant examples are Miliband's refusal to support the 2010 students strikes, and the public workers pension strikes in 2011. However there is no indication that the Party will act differently because of a Corbyn leadership.

The Labour Party is an establishment party, a bourgeois workers party and Corbyn is not a revolutionary. He aims to save the Labour Party from its current decadence, and maintain unity without changing its capitalist character.

It is therefore like Podemos and Syriza, because alternatives such as TUSC (Trade Union and Socialist Coalition) or Left Unity have failed to become a rallying point for the masses.

We say to the youth and the working class that Corbyn will not lead the way out of our misery, but we will defend any progressive measure implemented by Corbyn against right-wing Labour or Tory attacks.

But for progressive measures to have any effect at all, they must be part of a revolutionary programme, that is part of the class struggle for socialism.

# Retreats by Corbyn means workers will have to fight Labour

ISL STATEMENT

The Labour Party conference and subsequent events have seen many retreats by the Labour lefts because of pressure from Cameron, the Labour right and union bureaucracies.

Yet many left and revolutionary groups are running to the Labour Party as their saviours, and if they are denied membership they say they will seek to work very closely with them. The majority support Corbyn uncritically and have forgotten the bourgeois nature of the Labour Party.

Labour remains a reformist, bourgeois-workers party as demonstrated by the right-wing MPs pro-war and austerity positions, and the abandoned promises and actions of the left-wing, some of which we discuss below.

Many believe Labour should not now be challenged, that suddenly it has become the party of the working class and can lead the fight against austerity and for socialism under Corbyn. However there is silence on any policy retreat by Corbyn.

We believe it is essential to identify and analyse any step back. Corbyn made many promises during his election campaign and already many have been abandoned to the Party policy forums — which can take many months or even years to agree policy.



The Corbyn retreats means that workers will have to fight Labour's council cuts just like they did under Miliband

## Tuition Fees

The promise to scrap university tuition fees formed a major part of Corbyn's appeal to young voters and young people on the left. At the Labour Party conference, on tuition fees no concrete proposal was made, just, "nothing is ruled in, and nothing is ruled out".

## Staying in the EU

Corbyn was pressurised into declaring his full support for Britain staying in the EU, during his election campaign. A series of negotiations between Corbyn,

the GMB union, Hilary Benn, and the shadow Europe minister Pat McFadden, left the Party committed to campaigning to stay in Europe.

## House building

Corbyn said housing was a number one priority and repeatedly said there would be a tough stance against house builders who sit on their land - so-called land banking. Yet on 29 September shadow housing minister John Healey announced that Labour's review of a decline in home ownership would be chaired by Peter Redfern, CEO of Britain's biggest house builder Taylor Wimpey.

## People's Quantitative Easing

John McDonnell's "People's Quantitative Easing", was dropped after the election.

## Energy

Corbyn abandoned plans to nationalise the "big six" energy companies. Lisa Nandy MP, shadow energy secretary, told the Labour Party conference, "Jeremy and I don't want to nationalise energy. We want to do something far more radical. We want to democratise it."

A position similar to the Green Party who do not mention nationalisation of the big companies.

The only way to democratise the



Conservative or Labour council cuts, both kill

big trans-national companies is to nationalise them under workers control. Corbyn will never go as far as demanding nationalisation under workers control. "Democratisation" does nothing to change the balance of forces that the big companies, finance capital, the stock exchanges, and the banks have today.

#### Railways

The promise of rail nationalisation is hugely popular but Corbyn's policy will only be addressed when private contracts come to their end. And only then could rail services be taken into public ownership, which means that by 2025 only 25 per cent of the network could be in public hands.

#### Trident

Trident was not even discussed despite Corbyn having campaigned against Trident renewal for many years

#### Syria

Corbyn allowed MPs to have a free vote – see article on Momentum in this issue.

#### All policy is for discussion but we need action now

We can already see that what was said during the leadership campaign is not automatically policy. There will be a long policy making process, and "all policy is up for discussion and there is a review of how we will set policy in the future," Corbyn's spokesman to the Financial Times, 1 October.

This means that the Party remains a block to the struggles of workers. We cannot wait, the new Labour leadership is trying to deceive the fighters and the working class with false promises and saying nothing when promises are abandoned, except to wait until 2020 for a united Labour Party to save the working class - this is a false unity.

But the Government is fighting a capitalist war, a war of austerity against the working class and an imperialist war that is devastating Syria and the Middle East.

2016 will continue with austerity, cuts and war. The world crisis of capitalism is far from over, oil prices and mining commodities slump and the world economies are competing to export a production crisis, such as with China. The International Socialist League continues to advocate the need to fight now — for a programme and mobilisation against war, austerity and cuts and above all building of a revolutionary party.

## Labour: set the budget & make the cuts

MARGARET MCADAM

**M**omentum is a new organisation created and strictly controlled by the Corbyn wing of the Labour Party. Rather than organise an open and democratic working class conference to develop a programme of action against austerity and war, Momentum already demonstrates that it is controlled from the top.

Momentum's perspective is to take those who are against austerity into the Labour Party to control working class struggles from within, thus allowing people merely to vent their anger at the same time steering them away from taking the struggle to the streets.

Many left groups have high hopes of being able to work inside Momentum, this includes Left Unity, SWP, SP, Socialist Resistance and others.

One immediate problem for the left who want to work in Momentum is that Labour councillors who voted for Corbyn's leadership have been welcomed into the organisation. However, at the same time these councillors continue to vote for the implementation of austerity and cuts as they have for the last five years.

So, why was Momentum created when Corbyn was a founder leader of the People's Assembly? The People's Assembly has lost credibility with many activists, because amongst other reasons they would not back calls for a General Strike and failed to engage actively with campaigns fighting council cuts.

Labour Councils plan to make even deeper cuts in the light of continuing austerity from the government, and just accept that most services will be gone, either destroyed or sold off, within two years.

The new Labour leadership has made it possible for their councillors to justify the line, "if we don't make the cuts then someone else will", while failing to lead any movement on the streets to fight the government's harmful and dangerous cuts.

John McDonnell said in a Guardian interview, 25 September, "The situation the councils are now in is if they don't set a budget, a council officer will do it for them. There is no choice for them anymore." This was reinforced when quoted in a letter, signed by Corbyn and McDonnell to the leaders of Council Labour Groups on 17 December.

So, the Corbynites think it is impossible



to fight the government over council cuts. They declare themselves an anti-austerity party (in words), but tell councillors to vote for budget cuts (in practice).

Many anti-cuts activists have fought this position for many years – as services and jobs have disappeared without a murmur of resistance from most of Labour Councillors. Is the Party now ordering activists to remain silent?

#### Momentum and war

Under pressure from the right-wing Momentum is now drawing up a code of conduct so that members of other parties will not be allowed to be part of the leadership and decision-making. In other words Momentum will be run from the top by hand-picked Corbyn loyalists.

This decision came as Britain commenced bombing and Momentum stated that it is "not a threat to MPs who voted for bombing. We have made clear that we will not campaign for the de-selection of any MP and will not permit any local Momentum groups to do so."

Even the suggestion of de-selection, which is a democratic principle, is being hysterically attacked by right wing MPs and the media. Under pressure and true to form Corbyn abandons the principle.

How can the working class have any trust in a party that is so virulently opposed to democracy?

The building of a movement for socialism by necessity has to involve millions of workers and cannot begin by denying the fundamental principles of workers democracy. Millions of workers will only fight for Socialism if they are convinced that it is controlled from below and based on the democratic control of leaders, which includes the right of de-selection, that is right of immediate recall. That is what democracy looks like which cannot be found in parliament.

# Left Unity: A retreat by the majority

MARTIN RALPH

Approximately 150 delegates attended the Left Unity national conference in November (75 on Sunday). Voting was based on one person one vote with no limit on attendance from each branch, so as the conference was held in London it was biased towards the London delegates. And as there seems to be a more pro-Labour perspective in London than elsewhere, policy in this regard reflected a London centric position.

The report on Left Unity's membership indicted that 900 members left this year while 400 joined, current membership being 1475. One reason for the departures can be the lack any criticism of Corbyn's retreats, thus creating the illusion that "everything is possible" with Labour under a Corbyn leadership.

## Weakening the fight against reformism

The conference did reject the motion to dissolve Left Unity as a party. But agreement not to stand in by-elections or the Greater London elections was carried by a narrow margin, 69 for 65 against and 5 abstentions, to "temporarily suspend our national electoral work" and "to encourage LU members to join Momentum". (see comment on Momentum in this issue).

John Pearson representing the Stockport branch opposed this and put forward an amendment "... Conference directs that there shall be no question of Left Unity declining to contest seats identified by our branches, wherein Labour candidates will not publicly pledge to vote against cuts".

However this was lost - by 47 to 87 votes.

Voting for the amendment included branches from Stockport, Wigan, Leeds and Birmingham Left Unity branches; and others including ISL members from Liverpool (also representing Old Swan Against the Cuts).

Kate Hudson, a main leader of LU, said at the end of the debate "until the national council has discussed this, we will not stand in any parliamentary elections. But existing local campaigns can continue."

This will inevitably weaken the struggle against the Labour Party, unless



members and local branches stop this political retreat.

Predictably there has been a widespread retreat by many left groups, which was also visible at the conference. The Communist Party of Great Britain (London and Sheffield) put a motion calling the election of Corbyn "a revolution".

And many spoke as if the Labour Party was already the party of the working class, others agreed it was a bourgeois workers party but believe could become the leading party of the working class. The CPGB attempted to summon Lenin in support of their position - but Lenin never argued that the Labour Party could be transformed into a revolutionary party, nor lead the struggle for socialism and internationalism.

All who spoke in the debate on elections supported Corbyn, but no one outlined any programme nor mentioned any of the retreats that have been made by his tendency. Just a few discussed the working class and what must be done to end austerity.

The working class must be primary and lead all its struggles. Thus we defend and will fight to improve services, take action against the attacks on trade union rights, defend jobs, oppose racism and oppression and all imperialist war. That will include the necessity to fight the Labour Party, whilst at the same defending any anti-austerity or anti-war action by left Labour, as with opposition to the bombing of Syriza.

## Has the Labour Party changed?

As Lenin said in 1920 "...the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the

workers..."

The CPGB think Lenin's evaluation doesn't apply today just because of the Corbyn leadership. However Corbyn will not break with the right-wing and won't fight them. (See further articles in this issue)

In 1920 Lenin advocated that the British Communist Party apply to affiliate to the Labour Party, because many workers were joining that party and revolutionaries were allowed a free and independent voice.

The conditions at that time meant that, according to Lenin, "a party affiliated to the Labour Party is able, not only to severely criticise but openly and specifically to mention the old leaders by name, and call them social-traitors."

"This is a very original situation: a party which unites enormous masses of workers, so that it might seem a political party, is nevertheless obliged to grant its members complete latitude...at the Labour Party Conference, [the right-wing leaders] were obliged to openly raise the question of affiliation to the Third International, and that all party branches and sections were obliged to discuss the matter. In such circumstances, it would be a mistake not to join this party."

"In a private talk, Comrade Pankhurst said to me: "If we are real revolutionaries and join the Labour Party, these gentlemen will expel us."

"But that would not be bad at all. Our resolution says that we favour affiliation insofar as the Labour Party permits sufficient freedom of criticism. On that point we are absolutely consistent."

## Support workers who stand against Labour

The best, most honest and combative workers are not seeking to join the Labour Party today, they remain repulsed by its treacherous actions. Workers cannot wait five years to mobilise against all the attacks by this government and councils (including Labour led councils).

Therefore we call on Left Unity members to support working class anti-cuts groups who stand against Labour councillors. The ISL will continue towards building a revolutionary party, while agreeing common actions that strengthen working class solidarity and struggle.

# Youth fight casual contracts

SV interviewed Joanna Walker who lives in Liverpool. A 25-year-old who works in the hospitality industry, she has been on the minimum wage and a zero hour contract (ZHC) in every job she has been employed in over the last seven years. Sometimes promotion has led to an increase of 17p per hour, at other times up to 50p, but never adequate.

## SV. What does your industry cover?

The hospitality industry covers food, drink, hotel, cafe, bar and restaurant work. We are the workers who keep the city centres running for other workers, business people and tourists. It is a low-paid industry, without job security and normally without proper training.

## SV. The government intends to increase the minimum wage in April 2016 by 70p an hour from £6.50 for those aged 25 and over. What's your view on that?

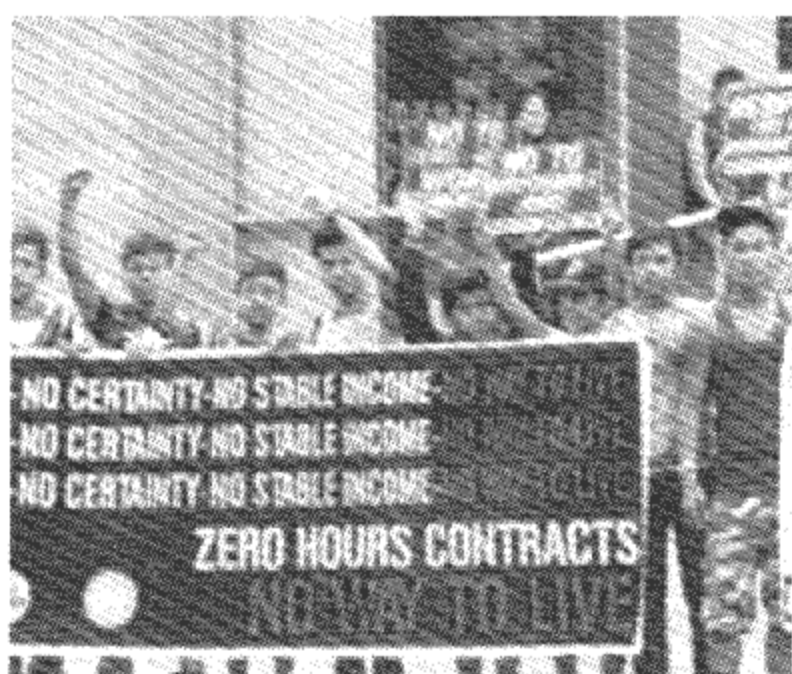
They are calling the new rate a living wage, but I do not think it is. I do not understand why it is only for those aged 25 and over.

Those under 25 are doing the same job but from April next year they will get less pay. If you are under 25 you get the minimum wage, which will go up to £6.70 for 21 and over, a 20p wage increase!

This is a new division between under and over 25 year olds, and it is sly because they do not explain why they are bringing it in.

## SV. What will it mean for those looking for work?

In my opinion people over 25 will find it a lot harder to find work if they want a part-time job because many employers will terminate someone's contract when they become 25 rather than pay more.



Campaigning in the Philippines against the working conditions at MacDonaldis, it is the same fight across the world



Many employers will hire people who they can legally pay less.

## SV. Can you describe your working?

Some employers are decent but there are places where employees are told to go work and after an hour or two are told to go home because there are not enough customers or they want to make life difficult for a worker.

My bus fare costs me £4.40 a day. If I work for 3.5 hours after tax and bus fares I earn just £15 for the day. Those who work out of hours can work until 4am or 5am in the morning, but there is no help with taxi fares and their rate of pay does not increase.

Often job descriptions do not exist. The laws are so loose; the government website says employers must give a worker "at least a job title", which means they do not have to give a job description.

If you only have a job title you never know what you are supposed to do, so companies can ask you to do anything and imply that what they are asking is part of the job.

The government makes it easy for the bosses.

Even if you progress and are made a supervisor you don't get any training or know exactly what your job is. You might get shown how to do cashing up, opening and closing the cafe, but often nothing is written down.

There is almost no health and safety training. Where courses are available you have to pay for them yourself.

Managers in some places are hated.

They often think in terms of numbers and money, and often do not run a professional business structure and are not very good at management.

The companies do not care about us. They are making money because we are on the minimum wage and ZHC. These are not nice jobs and you get nothing out of them.

By 2020 the minimum wage will be £9 per hour, which means nurses and other professions will be getting a little more than the minimum because their pay rise has been frozen to one percent for the next four years. It's as if the government is pushing many sectors onto the minimum wage.

## SV. What is needed?

Neither the government nor employers are getting rid of ZHC so, defending jobs is difficult. Low pay on casualised contracts is a terrible combination and it must end.

Everyone should receive a living wage and it should be more than it is, £10 an hour now, and not in 2020 or later!

Health and Safety training should be mandatory.

Taxis should be provided for those who finish after midnight. And all casual staff should only pay half bus fares.

I think it is clear what is needed: job security, job appreciation, a real living wage, a proper job description for all, and decent conditions.

Young people and everyone on casual contracts should get organised because nobody is going to do it for us.

**End the bombing of Syria****All Refugees welcome here!****Support the Syrian rebels to defeat IS and al-Assad!**

The British government supported by 66 Labour MPs voted to bomb Syria, which the EU as a whole supports as it joined the French Presidents "call to war". The day after the vote Cameron announced that the war in Syria will last for two or three years, in other words years.

Cameron claims to be against terrorism yet he supported the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, the killing of millions of civilians, and supported rendition and torture centres across the world like Guantanamo Bay.

The decision to bomb IS will not eradicate them. However, those fighting for a democratic and independent Syria and civilians people will be killed. Since the US began bombing IS, thousands have died. Recently they killed hundreds of civilians in Raqqa, a city with nearly half a million inhabitants, with the help of French and Russian bombing.

The West refuses to arm the democratic resistance and revolution in Syria. At the same time they do nothing about the Turkish Government's collaboration with IS in Turkey (see article on this page) and Syria, nor are the West worried about Erdogan's genocide against the Kurds

The bombing of Syria has nothing to do with defending European people from terror. It is US and EU's way to attempt to stop the revolutions that began in the Middle East and North Africa and the resistance of the Palestinians to Israel. And to protect imperialism's oil interests.

IS is reactionary to the core and their killing of civilians in France helps European governments, and the French government, to remove democratic rights across the EU, while the attacks by the fascist organizations deepens the xenophobic attacks on Muslims.

Osborn pronounced the need for greater deeper cuts because there is no money social services but there is no hesitation in spending money on war. Austerity, the removal of our democratic rights, blaming British Muslims for actions they did not commit and committing to a long war means this government is primarily a government of war.

That is why we say: Stop attacking Syria, Stop attacking Muslims; All refugees welcome here; arm the resistance against Assad and IS in Syria.

# Against repression and xenophobia in Europe!

## No imperialist intervention in Syria and Iraq!

EUROPEAN SECTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS LEAGUE



The European immigration crisis that began in mid-July is getting worse. There are 1.5 million refugees and many more will try to arrive in 2016. Governments are building more fences; Austria and Slovenia are fortifying their borders, and Frontex has announced the creation of a special force of 1500 agents to act in "emergencies" and racism and xenophobia rise. Governments are increasing restrictive laws (France and Belgium being the most severe) and the growth of far-right parties like the National Front in France is based on anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric.

European imperialism, with France and United Kingdom in the lead, started a military offensive in Syria with the excuse of defeating Islamic State (IS). They joined Russia and the USA, already engaged in causing the death of thousands of civilians and strengthening the reactionary regime of Bashar al-Assad, the main terrorist in the region, who is responsible for over 400,000 Syrian deaths.

**No to war**

During the first three years of the Syrian revolution it was impossible for the great powers to make a direct military intervention. Since the emergence of the IS – which originated from the imperialist invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan – imperialist military intervention will not only fail to defeat IS, but will strengthen it.

The international coalition led by the US has carried out more than 7000 air attacks. Russia has intervened directly in favour of Bashar al-Assad and committed atrocities such as bombing hospitals, schools and popular markets.

John Kerry, US Secretary of State, said that Assad is not the main enemy in the region. The bombing is exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria – in addition to the death toll there are 4 million refugees and 10 million displaced people – those forced to seek refuge in Europe is increasing.

As if military intervention of four nuclear powers in Syria was not enough, most of the world Left, led by the Castro-Chavez and Stalinist currents continue to support the Syrian dictator even after the crimes and massacres of the last four years against unarmed civilians in the territories controlled by the insurgency.

The IS are identified as the only enemy by NATO. In fact NATO is now allied to Russia and Iran, who are allegedly anti-IS, and defend Bashar al-Assad because they say he is the "lesser evil".

An international campaign against imperialist military intervention in Syria and Iraq is urgent: it needs to be against the bombing, against the massive economic aid from Iran and Russia to Bashar al-Assad, and against the military coalition recently established by Saudi Arabia to "fight against terrorism".

Behind this "counter-terrorism" hid the economic and political interests of global and regional powers. The world's worst terrorists are the world leaders.



## ISIS and Turkish government attack peaceful demonstrators

CANAN SAGAR



### Against cuts in freedoms and xenophobic discrimination

The speeches of top European leaders focuses on the need to stem the flow of refugees. The EU has announced that it will give priority to researchers, entrepreneurs and students because it aims to use people who can benefit business and the rest can die like animals in Syria or the Mediterranean.

The priority for European leaders is to strengthen border control and finance repression in neighbouring countries in Asia and Africa. The plan is to use Turkey, where the vast majority of refugees flee. About €3bn is earmarked for Turkey for the construction of detestable detention centres and to strengthen its border forces and intelligence services.

In Germany there is a growing number of attacks on refugees. France has cut democratic freedoms and a state of emergency has been implemented. In the US, the ultra-reactionary Donald Trump has advocated preventing the entry of Muslims. Examples of Islamophobia are unlimited.

We advocate open borders and the granting of visas to all who apply, punishment for all acts of racism and xenophobia, and the guarantee of basic refugee rights.

For a plan of mobilisations against the war and for the rights of refugees

Different groups, in different European cities, are calling for demonstrations against the bombing and to defend the rights of refugees. We support the broadest unity to fight against intervention in Syria and against restrictions of entry to refugees and migrants in Europe. Only social mobilisations can defeat the biggest terrorists in the world: imperialism, their governments and the multinationals supplying this global system of exploitation and oppression. The unity of native and immigrant workers is essential at this time. International solidarity of the oppressed of the world is key to moving towards a socialist Europe of workers and peoples.

International Workers' League - IWL  
 CR - Corriente Roja - Spanish State  
 PDAC - Communist Partito di Alternativa  
 - Italy  
 MAS - Alternative Socialist Movement  
 - Portugal  
 LCT - Ligue Communiste des  
 Travailleurs - Belgium  
 ISL - International Socialist League -  
 England

The suicide bomb attack that took place in Ankara on the morning of 10 October 2015, caused the death of more than a hundred people and more than five hundred people were wounded. A number of people remain missing.

The peaceful demonstration was organized by the trade unions KESK, DISK, (federations), TMMOB (engineering) and TTB (Doctors), other organisations and parties such as HDP, EMEP (opposed to the government) and the SGDF (youth section of EMEP) were also present.

The bomb attack took place in the areas where HDP, EMEP and SGDF had gathered with their banners. Two explosions were heard.

No police were injured because they were not close to where the bombs exploded, and at that time internet links in the area went down. For these reasons demonstrators have accused the government of complicity.

Some demonstrators chanted, "this is a huge crowd and those who cannot tolerate it terrorise the gathering".

TTB doctors at the demonstration helped the wounded and the dead. While they helped, the police brutally attacked innocent peaceful demonstrators and the doctors with tear gas. When riot police, who arrived before the ambulances, they attacked those trying to help the dead injured with water cannons and tear gas.

The wounded were carried to hospitals in private vehicles. A crowd who gathered in front of the Numune hospital, chanted the slogan 'Erdogan murderer!' The murderer for the past 13 years is known!

Doctors that helped were later prosecuted and punished just because they helped those who had been attacked and injured by the police on the demonstration.

On 20 July 2015, a similar attack by a ISIS suicide bomber took place in Suruç, during a press conference held by members of SGDF (a socialist youth federation) and many were killed. They were preparing to travel to Kobane in Syria with books and toys and to build parks for the children. Once again peaceful humanitarian campaigners

were killed with no security personnel present.

The security forces: army, police and guards operate under the orders of the dictatorial regime of Erdogan. After the Suruç massacre the Turkish State took steps to further escalate violence in that region; and killings have continued on a daily basis in the South East.

At the same time a curfew has been declared in many parts of Kurdistan. Following the curfew, in Sırnak Cizre 13 year old Cemile was killed in front of her house by security forces. Her body was then kept for three days before she could be buried.

After the Ankara massacre, the trade unions and mass organizations organised a two day general strike. But the opportunist AKP government took advantage and declared three days of mourning.

But the government is complicit or shuts its their eyes to these brutal events: the killing of civilians, children and innocent people. They do not mourn for their deaths.

The AKP government and Erdogan regime has consistently brutally and openly attacked Kurdish people as well as the people fighting for social rights.

### The repression continues

Erdogan increased his majority in the national election, although many believe he rigged the vote to win. After 'winning' he pressed ahead with severely limiting press freedom, attacking democratic rights and security force killings.

On 22 December, Human Rights Watch stated that 15 people have been killed during curfews between September and November in the south-east. But the Kurdish people are fighting back.

We call on all trade unionists, workers and all concerned organisations to show solidarity with the Kurdish people, the Turkish unions and social movements who are fighting for their rights. And also the youth and workers who are trying to build support for the struggle of the democratic forces against Assad and ISIS in Syria.

## Kathy Laird, farewell to a friend, fighter and comrade

MARTIN RALPH

**K**athy died on Wednesday 9 December 2015, during the day while she was resting. She was 62 years of age.

It was shocking news, almost unbelievable, that someone who a number of us in Old Swan met on average three times a week, each week over the last three years, was gone.

Our sympathy goes to her partner Joe, daughter Sarah, grandson George, her sisters and her brothers.

For us it feels like a figure has been cut out of a Manet painting, something is wrong, she should still be here!

However our feeling of loss is expressed it is obvious from the conversations and messages that we are receiving that many other fighters against austerity and war feel the same shock as we do. She was loved beyond the area of Old Swan.

She not only attended all the meetings she could but she was a doer, a front-line fighter.

Each of us brings something unique into the struggle because we express our love of humanity and our passion for a better, socialist working class world through the prism of our life experiences. Kathy struck so many people as someone you could trust, someone who loved being active and loved the fight, especially when we had a victory.

We will publish a tribute to her and choosing photographs for it will not be difficult because she is in the great majority of them.

Kathy was a member of Old Swan Against the Cuts (OSAC) and the International Socialist League (ISL), a dedicated, loyal and hardworking member of both.

Some comrades are lucky enough to give all they have to the struggle because they have many years in the movement but for Kathy she had started only recently to become a political activist.

She told us once she asked her daughter what she thought about her joining the ISL, which she came across inside OSAC. Her daughter said if that's what you want to do, then you should. And when she joined her passion and determination shone through.

For OSAC she became the minutes secretary in February 2014. She agreed to do that task before she really knew what it meant but within two meetings she understood and carried out that task with great pride and seriousness. When



asked after a year if she would prefer someone else to do the minutes, she replied "that is my job". That was true, she made it her job and everyone was thankful to her for doing it.

She not only attended almost every meeting she took to the streets helping OSAC run our weekly stall in Old Swan, and attended many demonstrations and meetings. She loved the sight of people mobilising and new people getting involved and she knew what the working class had to do in the fight against austerity.

Kathy was one of the hardest workers in our campaigns and during elections she would often go out delivering mountains of leaflets. She had no fear and she was well known in Old Swan area.

Kathy was very astute. When asked for example what she thought of a meeting

she could succinctly make a good summary.

When she joined the ISL she had never read Marx or Trotsky, but she started reading and attended all ISL Marxist educational weekends. After Bill Hunter died she helped the organising week with sorting out of various archives.

When disagreeing with a point someone made Kathy began to refer to the writings of Trotsky! Kathy had recently expressed her desire to attend international meetings including Brazil to meet IWL comrades.

Kathy was a working class woman and we hope, and we are sure, that many more like Kathy will follow in her foot steps..

Kathy liked being part of a group of fighters and had begun to attend the euphemistically called "exec" meetings at a local pub Friday nights. Kathy loved socialising and having a pint (or two) of lager.

The Saturday before she died, 5 December, Kathy was with us on the Liverpool demonstration opposing the bombing of Syria and welcoming all refugees.

Whether in the fight for the libraries, against council cuts, outside the DWP against benefit sanctions, attending a strike rally, supporting protests at the city college or marching against bombing Syria, she was always with us. With us then with us now, and always.

Our thoughts and condolences to Joe, Sarah, George and all Kathy's family and friends.

Kathy will be there in the fight for working class women, for all workers, for evolution and socialism always.



## “Power to the People”

MARGARET MCADAM

**A**t the end of 2015 we are celebrating the lives of three lost comrades – Bill Hunter, Cecelia Toledo and Kathy Laird. All dedicated their lives to end the immiseration and pain that capitalism inflicts on the majority of humanity.

Kathy was new to the revolutionary struggle yet throughout her life she strove with her whole being to help others, and like many working class women, as her sister Margy said, “Kathy always put herself at the back of the line.”

Kathy had refound herself through her learning of Marxism and was developing a new confidence and energy to fight wider international as well as local and national problems.

Kathy never had a bad word to say about anyone. She always had a smile, a joke or a song for everyone. But she was fierce when it came to the hypocrisy of capitalism and the pain and agonies it inflicts on ‘ordinary’ people.

Kathy’s service was sad but all were filled with pride and inspiration remembering her life and sombre feelings were lifted as Kathy’s departure was accompanied, so appropriately, by John Lennon’s (Kathy’s favourite Beatle) ‘Power to the People’.

### A natural born socialist

LARRY BOWLES

**K**athy was our comrade in Old Swan Against the Cuts. Never did I think that I would be writing about the sudden tragic death of our sister and comrade.

If there was such a person as a natural born socialist it was Kathy. Before she became involved as an activist, Kathy spent her life looking after people. Always treating people as her equal and helping those who could not help themselves.

And at the same time she could stand strong in the face of adversity.

To be loved as a wife, mother, sister and grandmother says everything.

In her involvement with OSAC she quietly grew in confidence after reading writings by Trotsky and the Communist Manifesto and with the help of Martin Ralph and the ISL she increased her knowledge of the history of the class struggle.

Her work rate as an activist was an inspiration to everyone who knew her. Kathy was always with us and will stay with us, no doubt that one day when we are leading a demo with the OSAC banner, Kathy will be there.

Kathy was one off and will be missed by me and comrades around the world. She was truly a natural born socialist. R.I.P. our sister.

CAMILA POLGAR,

**I** first met Kathy Laird at an anti-cuts demonstration in Liverpool- November 2014, and I was amazed by her strength, simplicity, and determination. I was so proud that the ISL and the IWL had in their lines a working class woman with such will power. I really got to know her in a seminar about women’s oppression and capitalism, where we were able to freely talk and discuss about patriarchy and the atrocious system we live in. Her death is a great loss for us all, but she will always be remembered.

DEREK MORTIMER, AUSTRALIA, WHO VISITED LIVERPOOL RECENTLY

**K**athy’s death must have been a terrible shock for all her family and comrades, felt particularly about someone who was such an activist. I never met her but it seems that every time there was a photo of OSAC Kathy was there, grinning, enthusiastic and looking full of energy for the struggle. I am sure she will be missed in so many ways.

It is always encouraging when someone like Kathy steps out from the working class and not only joins the struggle but becomes an inspiration to others, embodying those virtues of loyalty, cheerfulness and optimism, qualities that are often overlooked but which are essential to any revolutionary organisation.

LUCAS MARTINS, PSTU, BRAZIL

**I** was very lucky to know her. She was such a beautiful person, with a beautiful smile and a lot of positive energy. She will be always with us, please send my feelings to OSAC people and tell them that I feel very sad. Our struggle will continue and we will become better in her memory. **Companheira Kathy PRESENTE!**

Kathy will stay with me in my thoughts in all the fights in my life.

And please, feel embraced. I want to be there with you to give you a tight hug.

(continued from page 12)

### The rise and fall of the Labour Party

History as told has been stood on its head. In reality, it is not Marxism that came into the labour movement out of line with the development of the major historical force in Britain — the working class. Those who uphold Britishism as against Marxism cover the truth — that Marx and Engels and the group around Engels in the 1880s and 1890s, played a central role in the breaking of the working class from the capitalist parties.

Those who fought consciously for an independent working class political movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century were Marx and Engels and the men and women influenced by them. The Marxists represented the essence of the movement of the British workers; it was the opportunists, the various brands of bourgeois radicals who grafted themselves on to it.

No historian who does not study the development of Marxism as a theory and as a movement in the 19th century can understand the development of the British working class or indeed that of the world working class. We are saying here not only that Marxism provides a method of analysing developments; but that Marxism, in this period developed its basic principles in close association with the working class movement and through practical intervention in it.

To look at the last half of the 19th century in particular, and fail to see it, so to speak through the eyes of Marx and Engels, is to see only an inexplicable collection of events. It is incontrovertible that only Marx and Engels foretold the major developments in the working class and only Marx and Engels prepared for them. Their strength was that they saw the decline of capitalism inside its greatest expansion. They saw the centralisation and concentration of capital in the middle of the greatest apparent strength of Free Trade, competition and laissez faire. And, above all, after the collapse of Chartism they envisaged and fought for the rise of working class political independence. They represented ‘the future in the present’. This came out of their understanding of the fundamentals of capitalism and of the laws of history. And any explanation of the development of the working class in this period has validity in proportion to what it owes to Marx and Engels.



# Bill Hunter's Archives

## The rise and fall of Labour

*We are re-publishing over a number of issues an article by Bill Hunter that was first published in Labour Review February 1982, on the history of the Labour Party. This material is very useful to understand the Labour Party is today.*

**H**istories of the Labour Party and tales of Labour heroes can perform a very specific function. They can 'legitimise' woolliness, lack of theory, class-collaboration and opportunism as a natural and beneficial product of British conditions and as being in line with the superiority of British institutions to those of other countries. The argument goes that the British Labour Party arose from advantages unique to Britain, advantages not in the possession of 'lesser breeds without the law'.

Typical is Francis Williams in his Fifty Years' March, published to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Labour Party, with a foreword by Clement Attlee, the party leader at that time. Williams describes Fred Rogers, the first chairman of the Labour Representative Committee which in 1908 adopted the name Labour Party. He tells us that Rogers was 'indeed a practical Christian, of a kind which has fortunately been frequent in the British Labour Movement. Perhaps no man among them all could better have represented the qualities which have given the British Labour Movement its special character.'

He also informs us that: 'Keir Hardie and the delegates to the conference showed their practical wisdom and their understanding of the British political character.' Here is his flowery description of that 'British political character'. It translates into - two words - political opportunism.

That character thrives best in a constitutional framework which does not impose upon it the rigidity of a doctrinaire philosophy or even of a narrowly defined practical programme, but leaves instead sufficient freedom for the interpretation of events and needs and the common sense application of fundamental philosophies according to the circumstances of the time.

The labour movement in general and the Labour Party in particular are thus peculiarly British. One final quote from Williams: 'The Fabian Society gave British Socialism much of its intellectual content more rooted in British reality

and natural attitude of mind of British people than Marxism.'

Here, of course, we are in the presence of one of the most widely spread of myths: that Marxism is something alien to the inimitable development of Britain. Today, it is true, there exist leaders of the Labour Party who will tell us that Marxism has made a 'contribution'. They are even prepared, like Tony Benn, to name Marxism as one of the factors going to make up the Party. Michael Foot himself, has recently been found (Observer January 10, 1982) to praise not only the contribution of Marx to socialism, but also of Trotsky — while, naturally, declaring himself against any of today's Trotskyists. But this type of acknowledgement of Marxism is grafted onto the doctrine of British exceptionalism. The importance of our movement is our Britishness and the labour movement has developed trying to resolve the problems of our nation.

**Histories of the Labour  
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### MARXISM AND METHODISM

Mr Morgan Phillips, when he was General Secretary of the Labour Party, once said that the Labour Party owed more to Methodism than Marxism. Mr G.D.H. Cole in A Short History of the British Working Class Movement told us that the Independent Labour Party was the 'soul' of the movement which brought about the Labour Party while the Fabian Society was its 'brain'. The ILP he described as 'humanitarian radicalism adopting a socialist policy as the means to a more equitable distribution of wealth and happiness'.

Francis Williams, Morgan Phillips, G.D.H. Cole and Tony Benn — who directs us to look at the Bible as being part of the coalition of forces on which the Labour Party is built — this brigade sounds off from right to left about the practical Christianity, Fabian evolutionism or woolly ILP radicalism combining to form the Labour Party. We have to admit that, in one sense, they are absolutely correct. It is these ideas plus much more of what, from the point of view of socialism, can only be called backwardness, which have formed the official ideology, the ideology of Labour Party leaders.

The outlook of the leaders of the British Labour Party is a sort of amalgam of Conservatism and Liberalism, partly adapted to the requirements of the trade unions, or rather their top layers. All of them are ridden with the religion of 'gradualness'. In addition they acknowledge the religion of the Old and New Testaments. They all consider themselves to be highly civilised people, yet they believe that the Heavenly Father created mankind only then, in his abundant love to curse it, and subsequently to try, through the crucifixion of his own son to straighten out this highly knotty affair a little. Out of the spirit of Christianity there have grown such national institutions as the trade union bureaucracy, MacDonald's first ministry and Mrs Snowden. (Where is Britain Going Leon Trotsky, pp.36-37)

When they tell us that this 'coalition of forces' is the strength of the Labour Party as an instrument for socialism they are talking absolute and anti-working class nonsense. In fact, they are saying that opportunism is the prime strength of the British movement and thus giving to themselves the right to continue as opportunists.

The real history of the Labour Party and the lessons from it are vital for workers today. For we with our fathers and grandfathers have paid a price for the Christian Socialism, woolly pacifism, wordy radicalism and Fabian reformism which came into the Labour Party from the capitalist class, and dominated it.