

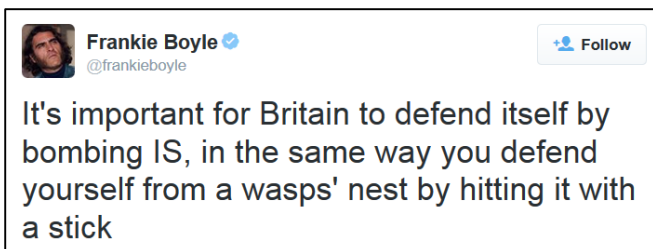
# After Paris: oppose war, racism and repression

Following the horrific and indefensible attacks in Paris, a debate is raging about how to respond.

The right don't intend to let this crisis go to waste. Before the blood was dry they were calling for more bombing; attacking Muslims, refugees and migrants; and demanding further draconian powers for the state and restrictions to our civil rights.

The problem isn't just the *Front Nationale* in France, gangs of racist thugs, the Daily Mail or Donald Trump. Mainstream politicians and media across Europe are contributing to the process.

Many people, having seen the catastrophe of this approach after 9/11, share some of Frankie Boyle's feelings:



It appears that the killers in Paris, as in London in 2005, were not migrants, but discontented young people. Several had connections with Molenbeek in Belgium, a run-down ghetto.

The motivations of violent jihadists in Europe have been primarily political rather than religious. They have generally not come from religious backgrounds.

If the west wants to boost IS recruitment they could do little better than further imperialist intervention in the Middle East; more Islamophobia and discrimination; and the continuing hypocrisy of talking about democracy while curtailing civil liberties, doing deals from Saudi Arabia to China and courting Sisi, who overthrew the elected Egyptian government and is murdering all opposition.



The right's answers make us less safe, treating life in the Middle East as cheap and disposable by the hundreds of thousands.

Drone strikes and bombing mainly kills innocents and help ISIS recruit. The French government is already using the emergency to ban the demonstration against climate change. The UK government is using Paris to rush through its draconian "snoopers' charter" Investigatory Power Bill.

Our government presses on while thousands die from cold in winter, from benefit sanctions and welfare cuts. Their interventions abroad are never for humanitarian reasons, but always in pursuit of power and profit – the gods they are fanatical about.

**Faced with an atrocity, it is understandable that people feel "something must be done".**

The best things we can do to undermine ISIS and reduce the risk of recurrence are to fight the things that are driving their recruitment. That means:

1. Opposing war and bombings
2. Stopping Muslims being marginalised by opposing Islamophobia and showing solidarity with migrants
3. Demanding our government stops courting and arming governments like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel
4. Defending civil rights
5. Demanding that Labour MPs back Corbyn's stance on these issues

# Civil Rights and the Trade Union Bill

The Tories are worried about their ability to force through five more years of cuts. Their agenda – transferring wealth and power from the majority to elites – relies on curbing our ability to resist. **We can best stop this with a joined-up fight for civil rights rather than just opposing the Trade Union Bill.**

Unite's rules conference removed the phrase "so far as may be lawful" from the union rulebook after a speech from Len McCluskey about why it is right to break unjust laws. Unison's Dave Prentis said "*If this right-wing government moves the goalposts ... we will not say now that we will only act within the law*".

When union leaders argue for defiance, the impact goes far beyond union members. But it would be foolish to pin our hopes on union leaders. If they failed to organise effective action when it was legal, will they if it's not?

Some will use the new restrictions as an excuse for inaction. Already some say it will be impossible to meet the new turnout thresholds with postal ballots. It will be difficult, but not impossible. In 2009 BA cabin crew – scattered across the world – achieved a 79% turnout. In 2012 the Chicago teachers beat an even higher threshold with a 92% turnout. The BMA's junior doctors voted 98% to strike on a 76% turnout.



Photo: Steve Eason. Junior doctors voted 98% to strike.

**Whether workers aim to win by meeting the new requirements or by defying them, they will require strong workplace organisation and effective solidarity.**

By imposing supervision requirements and financial liabilities, the government hopes unions will police their own members.

Where action defying the law isn't backed by union leaders, we will all be reliant on solidarity at grass roots level.

Workers originally won our rights by taking action without any legal protection. They relied on their strength and solidarity to resist repression. The Tories are taking industrial relations back to an era where explosive, militant, action – usually outside the law – was the only way to win for most workers.

We must prepare to defy and break this legislation if it is passed.

The attacks on workers' right to organise and strike are part of a much wider assault on civil rights. Civil rights aren't best defended with a fragmented, sectional approach.

The Tories want to scrap the **Human Rights Act** and weaken or leave the **European Convention of Human Rights**. The extension of **Prevent** is increasing the snooping, harassment and censorship facing Muslims and stifling debate in colleges. We've had an international wave of anger against **police violence, racism and deaths in custody**. WikiLeaks exposed the level of state **surveillance**, while the role of **undercover cops** spying on peaceful protesters is gradually being exposed. **CCTV** is everywhere, and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) which allows widespread snooping may be upgraded with the new **Investigatory Powers Bill**. Migrants (and anyone suspected of being a migrant) face increased harassment, abuse, **incarceration and deportation**. **Corporate secrecy** blocks our rights to information about government actions and spending. **Kettling, arrests and bail conditions** are used to restrict the right to protest. "**Joint enterprise**" laws allow the conviction of people in crowds, even if they did nothing wrong. The **Anti-Terrorism Act**, which would have criminalised support for everyone from Gandhi and Mandela to the International

Brigades, remains on the statute books. The state works with employers to **blacklist** workers thought to be organising or raising safety concerns. **Fees for Employment Tribunals and cuts to legal aid** restrict access to justice.

There are excellent campaigns over many of these issues, but we constantly find ourselves on the back foot. The Tories and the media have a generalised ideological attack on civil rights, which they implement by attacking and isolating specific groups. Wouldn't we all be stronger if as well as campaigning over "our own" issues, everyone fighting for civil rights came together, educated each other, built solidarity, and make a positive case instead?

**Unite could approach all groups campaigning to defend civil rights and organise conferences round the country where they could educate each other about the issues and build solidarity, strengthening each campaign.**

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## ...Trident article continued from back page

But the statement then ends with this concluding paragraph:

*"We need a policy that would see the jobs and skills of Unite members preserved, and until we receive firm commitments to this end we will continue to support our members and their employment. Money saved by ending our nuclear weapons system could be used to sustain the process of defence diversification, vital to our manufacturing future, as well as freeing resources for investment in other socially-useful forms of public spending."*

The statement was sold to conference as opposing Trident renewal while protecting Trident-related jobs. It was a fudge that has been used by Trident supporters to blackmail the union to put their current jobs above all else. Conference policy says that the question of nuclear weapons is first of all a moral issue, but the statement from Len says that the most important thing is for us to protect jobs. This looks like principles are sacrificed as soon as the policy matters. If unions had taken this stance in the past we'd have failed to oppose

slavery and sided with Thatcher against sanctions on apartheid South Africa.

The GMB claimed that 40,000 defence jobs in Scotland would be threatened if Trident was cancelled. This figure includes all conventional and nuclear defence jobs. The STUC estimates that around 520 civilian jobs in Scotland would be threatened if Trident was cancelled.

The GMB and Unite leaderships are using arguments based on myths and distortions. The acceptance of 'partnership' leads to seeing workers' and employers' interests as closely linked, so defending jobs means defending your bosses' business. When applied to working with WMDs, reps who want the best for members can end up defending WMDs at any cost.

Jeremy Corbyn is setting up a Defence Diversification Agency (DDA) to ensure that the cancellation of Trident to ensure that rather than jobs being lost, those involved in maintaining nuclear weapons into highly skilled and well paid jobs in conventional defence or the civil sector.

£167bn could fund huge numbers of good jobs, including in the communities currently working on Trident.

Len dismisses diversification. The problem is that diversification has never been taken seriously. Unite should be engaging with the DDA to create the alternative jobs our policy calls for, not looking trying to defend the indefensible.

Unite supports the campaign for one million climate jobs because we want good jobs that help us build a better world. Supporting the DDA initiative fits the same strategy.

The myths and fears that stop defence workers supporting diversification can be challenged. London and Eastern's Aerospace and Shipbuilding RISC unanimously sent a motion welcoming Jeremy Corbyn's DDA for debate at this week's national sector conference.

To do this successfully will mean breaking with the idea that what's good for the boss is good for our members. It's time the leadership of the union supported those arguing for a future beyond nuclear weapons.

# We can defend jobs without supporting nuclear weapons

Opposition to Trident is growing across Britain, not just Scotland. The doubling of Labour's membership since Corbyn's victory is a sign of the leftward shift. Polls show most Scots are opposed to Trident replacement being based at Faslane. This is reflected in the overwhelming support for the SNP and recent overwhelming decision by Scottish Labour to oppose Trident renewal.

Tory Minister of State for Defence Procurement Philip Dunne told parliament that Trident replacement would cost £167 billion. Another Tory, Crispin Blunt, said *"The successor Trident programme is going to consume more than double the proportion of the defence budget of its predecessor. The price required, both from the UK taxpayer and our conventional forces, is now too high to be rational or sensible."*

Events in Paris and Mali are driving demands for more spending on surveillance and conventional weapons to take on ISIS and Al Qaeda. Where is the money going to come from? It's not possible to maintain the huge expenditure on Trident alongside spending commitments on conventional forces, education, health and welfare. Something will go and it is always workers who are asked to pay. Is it really tenable for the Unite leadership to defend jobs by defending Trident?

Len McCluskey's statement on Trident before the Labour Party conference surprised and disappointed many who want to see an end to Britain's ongoing commitment to nuclear weapons.



Len said:

*"Everyone would love the whole world to get rid of nuclear weapons – we understand the moral arguments and cost arguments in these days of austerity. However, the most important thing for us is to protect jobs. In the absence of any credible alternative to protect jobs and high skills we will vote against any anti-Trident resolution."*

**UNITE policy appears to oppose Trident renewal, but actually faces both ways.** At the 2010 policy conference, an Executive Statement was passed that outlines the need for nuclear disarmament:

*"The question of Britain's nuclear weapons system is not about employment alone, however. It is first of all a moral issue, and then a strategic one concerning Britain's place in the world and the international environment we wish to see. Such weapons would, if used, constitute a mortal threat to humanity's survival; they are massively expensive; senior military figures have described them as 'militarily useless' and said that they should be scrapped; and our possession of them encourages other countries to seek a similar arsenal"*

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## rs21 magazine

Issue #5 of rs21 magazine: the implications of *Jeremy Corbyn's leadership*, Gill George on *Dismantling the NHS*, Ian Allinson on *Civil Rights and the Trade Union Bill*, Shanice McBean on *the fight against zero hours*, Nilüfer Erdem on the *fair tips campaign*, an interview with Kim Moody about *Labor Notes*, interview with Melissa Gira Grant about *sex work*, plus migration, Syriza, revolution, China, post capitalism and sexism in science.

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