

Free movement for all!

During May's reign at the Home Office, it destroyed boarding cards of the Windrush Generation who arrived before the 1971 Immigration Act. She then legislated, requiring them to produce those cards as evidence to prove their right to citizenship.

May's hostile environment meant detention, deportation, and inability to access jobs, housing, benefits and public services including healthcare.



A glimpse of the reality of immigration controls

Many people were shocked by the treatment of the Windrush generation. It was their first glimpse of the reality of state treatment of immigrants – and anyone who looks or sounds like one.

The furious public response has forced the government into retreat on immigration – an issue the Tories felt was one of their strongest suits.

Corbyn makes a difference

What a change to have a genuine anti-racist leading Labour, instead of New Labour trying to outdo the Tories and UKIP and producing racist mugs. One of Corbyn's first acts as Labour leader was to join tens of thousands at a Solidarity with Refugees rally.

What a tragedy that while some Labour MPs have spoken out powerfully exposing the callous treatment of the Windrush generation, many are falling into the trap of dividing "good migrants"

and "bad migrants. Barry Gardiner and Diane Abbott stress the difference between "legal" and "illegal" immigrants, or object to the Windrush generation being described as migrants at all.

It's not enough to defend free movement within the EU. This can play into racism where white migration from Europe is treated differently to that from Asia, Africa or Latin America. EU governments and big business pillage the rest of the world militarily, economically and environmentally, yet leave thousands of those fleeing this devastation to languish in camps or drown in the Mediterranean.

Capital and the rich can travel freely in pursuit of profit or a better life, why shouldn't working class people? Nobody should be illegal or discriminated against based on where they were born.

Migration and the labour market

Our labour power (our capacity to work) is a unique commodity. Other commodities are produced by wage-labour. Healthy, educated, rested and compliant workers are produced through a combination of wage-labour and unpaid labour, disproportionately done by women. This process, known as "social reproduction", includes everything from childcare, education and healthcare to food, housing and recreation.

Immigrants and migrant workers often come from countries where the cost of bringing up the next generation of workers is lower. Many migrant workers and immigrants send remittances home to help fund the social reproduction of family members left behind.

Of course employers want to take advantage of low-cost social reproduction in their endless attempts to lower wages. But the idea that open borders is a capitalist dream is mistaken.

Bosses want workers compliant, not just cheap

Their ideal worker is “deportable”. Bosses can’t employ workers who are kept out or have been deported. But they don’t want workers to have security and rights.

Politicians, bosses and the media try to make us more compliant by persuading us that immigrants and ethnic minorities threaten jobs and housing, not the governments, companies, councils and landlords whose crimes like Grenfell remain unpunished.

A great example is how attacks on migrants are linked to attacks on our NHS. The Immigration Act 2014 changed the NHS from providing free healthcare to UK residents, to requiring health workers to act as immigration police. As campaign group Docs Not Cops explains:

“Charging migrants for healthcare is the first step to normalising charging for everyone. Once the government has a charging system in place, it becomes much easier to gradually expand this to everyone else, regardless of nationality. Racism is being used to undermine our society’s commitment to universal healthcare, and the values of social solidarity which bind our society together.”

Keeping migrants vulnerable requires an apparatus that also targets black people who have always lived here. It requires institutional suspicion and racism. It gives the state more power over all our lives.

Free movement and workers’ rights

Many in the labour movement won’t argue for everyone’s right to move freely. Unite’s Len McCluskey argues that employers should only be able to hire workers “from abroad” if there is union recognition and collective bargaining. This position was echoed in the last Labour manifesto. It is a mistake.

Making it illegal for migrants to work just makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and generates more tragedies like the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers.

If we had the power to stop employers hiring migrants without union recognition because of the risk of exploitation, why would we allow them to hire anyone without the same rights? Most of the people being exploited in rotten jobs by

rotten employers were born here. Workers at McDonalds, TGI Fridays, IHG hotels and the University of London are fighting for decent treatment for everyone – not based on where people were born.



We should fight for our right to travel and work where we please, and to have strong rights and union organisation wherever we go. We should fight to make this the policy of every union – and the Labour Party.

Oppose state racism and racist movements

While state racism remains the biggest threat in Britain, we should all be concerned about last week’s thousands-strong demonstration in central London by the “Democratic Football Lads Alliance” (DFLA) which cheered racist speakers and among which every far right and fascist group was active. If state racism fanned by politicians and the media creates the climate for the DFLA, the DFLA creates the environment for the growth of fascist groups. This development must be opposed at every level. The DFLA, and the FLA who they split from, plan to rally in Manchester in coming weeks.

We need to fight racism and fight for the right of everyone to move freely where we wish. This is the basis of the unity we need to fight for a world without wars, climate change or poverty. A socialist world to end capitalist barbarism.

What you can do:

- Join the demo’s in Manchester against the FLA on 19 May and DFLA on 2 June.
- Join protests against deportations and immigration detention centres.
- Campaign for free movement and equal rights irrespective of nationality to be the policy of every union and the Labour Party.