



Socialist Bulletin

A Monthly Publication from Socialist Labour

EMAIL: SOCIALISTLABOUR.NG@GMAIL.COM

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Workers Participation in Politics - OUR JOURNEY SO FAR. By Jaye Gaskia

The fundamental challenge inherent in the crisis of workers political participation in the Labour Party is encapsulated in the statement credited to the NLC leadership welcoming Peter Obi into the Labour Party, and affirming that this is the kind of person that the country needs to lead us!

To be sure the character of the politics of the trades union movement, at least that of its leadership, is made crystal clear in this embrace of Peter Obi along with the National Consultative Front and their baggage of allied parties of the "third force".

TPAP-M's engagement with the Labour Party as a movement was never absolute, nor was it unconditional. But we recognise that millions of people are now looking to the Labour Party in their desperation to try and better their lives.

We in TPAP-M were clear about our commitment to the emergence of a mass workers party and the socialist transformation of Nigeria. Within this context we set ourselves the task of registering our own party – TPAP. But in the interim, we agreed to engage with both the Labour Party and the PRP to resolve their internal crises. We also resolved to enter into an alliance including the NLC and the TUC, for the purposes of our engagement with the 2023 general elections. But this was to be on a socialist program, and with the promotion of a workers alternative!

It has now become clear that the faction of the PRP that TPAP-M is working with and that we are in an alliance with is the one that remains committed to Socialism, unlike the other faction that has expunged socialism from its constitution and program. But alas, our ally is not the faction legally recognized by INEC, and as such cannot be on the ballot for 2023.

With respect to the Labour Party, together with the NLC and TUC we worked to intervene, and had agreed on and launched a program of worker's recovery of the Labour Party.

Nevertheless, since the decision was made to Recover the Labour Party, and the meetings of the respective political commissions at the end of April, no other meetings of the NLC and TUC political commissions, involving the movement's representatives have been called; and we have not been invited to or been privy to any meetings and or conversations of the NLC and TUC and their respective political commissions with the Labour Party; nor have we been involved in and invited to any meetings and conversations with other third parties including the National Consultative Front and the Peter Obi crowd.

So, what does the project of workers recovery of the Labour Party mean in concrete terms? How might it be realised? Is the recovery of the Labour Party by workers contingent on Labour Party's participation in the 2023 general elections, even if it is under a neoliberal banner and headlined by neoliberal candidates? Is the recovery project solely and exclusively for the purposes of contesting the 2023 general elections?

Can the Labour Party be recovered regardless of this? Can the Labour Party be recovered with mass mobilisation of workers without



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the active involvement of the NLC and TUC? And under what program should this be undertaken? Socialist or neoliberal? How can we now join the Labour Party and yet not support its presidential candidate?

If we do not now join the Labour Party (or the PRP) how can we campaign over the coming year? Can't we still call for the formation of a real workers party? One that has a worker membership, leadership and manifesto. Can't we also maintain the essential solidarity and support that is needed for the strikes that will continue whoever now becomes the next President?

Some History of the Labour Party by Biodun Olamosu

In the 1970s and 1980s, there were discussions amongst the ranks of the labour movement for the formation of a workers' party. This was to represent the best interest of the working people at the electoral level. The last time they experienced this was in the mid-1960s shortly before the collapse of the first republic. Attempts towards this in the second republic failed as those small groups working in this direction were not registered.

Different left groups agitated for a mass working class political party as another front against the anti-poor policies of the government. This agitation coincided with the transition programme of the military regime. That was due to pressure for it to leave power for the civilians.

Pascal Bafyau, the third president of the Nigeria Labour Congress (1988 - 1994) came to power out of a compromise. The Ibrahim Babangida led government had dissolved the NLC and was interested in imposing its stooge, but this was resisted. Bafyau was later found to be no better. Whatever he agreed, like the issue of the formation of political parties, was achieved with pressure within the unions. Other times he managed to thwart such demands or whittle them down.

In comparing the situation now with what happened in the course of the formation of the 1989 Labour Party, Paschal Bafyau was worse. Despite him, the party had a good outing in some areas where the left presence was obvious. These included Oyo, Lagos, Kano, Ondo and Plateau States. These socialist groups worked successfully with the rank and file workers in these important states to establish formidable structures of the new Labour Party. The states involved happened to be the most working class based in the country.

The military government then dissolved all the political parties out of fear of the progress by labour. The transition did not work in accordance with the regime's plan. Before dissolving the parties, the Political Bureau set up by the regime to aggregate the opinions of the people reported that the people were calling for socialism and a welfare state that would be able to take care of their various needs.

Instead of the existing parties, the government created two political parties – the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Party. These were fully funded by the government and operated like other government departments. They were guided by Government imposed manifestoes and ideologies of “a little to the left” and “a little to the right”.

Despite the bad eggs in the movement there are still plenty of good comrades. Our responsibility is to identify and draw together the best comrades to try and build the new workers political party and the labour movement in general. For example, it was in the course of the party's formation that we came in contact with Comrade Ayodele Akele, who later contributed bountifully to the evolution of labour movement especially in Lagos.

The official position occupied by Ayodele Akele as a labour leader in Lagos State and member of Labour Militant allowed the organisation to intervene in the movement. This in no little way strengthened the organisation and the struggle. Both students and workers were mobilised as active participants in the movement by the group. The organization also played an important role in fighting against Buba Marwa and Bola Tinubu led Lagos State Governments that did not want to pay workers the minimum wage offered in other richer states of the Federation.

The labour bureaucrats should be seen for what they are. These people always want to seek a compromise with the government or the bosses. We want to use the strength of the collective strength of the working class to force concessions. We also need a workers' party to facilitate this process and to lead a government that is clearly on the side of the majority of poor people.

Also read the following by the same author:

Exploits of Segun Sango in Advancing the Socialist Cause

<https://nationalrecord.com.ng/exploits-of-segun-sango-in-advancing-the-socialist-cause-by-biodun-olamosu/>



Food Prices Surge But Trade Union Leaders do not Fight!

by Alex Batubo

In the first three months of this year FAAC distributed the same amount as last year. That was 96% of 2020, which was the highest level for six years. The allocations for the last two months are 6.5% higher than last year. The Federal budget for this year is more than four times its size in 2015.

So, Federal and state governments have plenty of oil money to pay a proper minimum wage and pensions as they fall due. And yet in many states the NLC/TUC are choosing not to lead a fight for their members wages and retired members pensions.

Rivers State NLC Chair, Mrs Beatrice Itubo said, "Pensioners in Rivers State have not been paid gratuities since this administration came on board in 2015. Workers have also not being promoted since 2015. We wanted to embark on a protest, the governor intervened and promised to address these demands, but till today he has remained silent."

Kano State owes retirees N25bn. This includes gratuity, death benefits and pension arrears.

Workers in Benue State local government are owed nine months, primary school teachers are owed 10 months, while at the state level, it is five months. These are arrears for 2017. This year, the system is that some workers are paid in a particular month and others are left. Some workers have not been paid since March of this year.

In Ekiti State government workers are owed between two and five months' salary. Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi, promised to pay these arrears before handing over to a new government in October. Promotions have not been implemented since 2016. Financial backing for the 2017 and 2018 promotions has just been approved. At the local government level, five months of salaries are outstanding.

Borno State is supposed to be one of the few states with no pension arrears. But 1,157 Borno pensioners were yet to be paid by early May. In addition, the N30,000 minimum wage has yet to be implemented for local government workers and teachers.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) promised, in April, to organise a three day strike if the government did not implement the demands of the universities' strikers within 21 days. It also called on its affiliates to issue public statements supporting the strikes in the universities. But nothing happened!

In the last 12 months, basic food like beans and yam, rose by over 42 per cent, while the average price of palm oil increased by 46 per cent, from N580 in April 2021 to N840 in April 2022.

When Buhari assumed office seven years ago, the National Minimum Wage of N18,000 could buy two and a half bags of stone-free rice. But today, the Minimum Wage of N30,000 cannot buy one bag (thanks to Owei Lakemfa).

Most trade unionists can now buy less with their salaries than they could at the end of the military era. And yet there is so much more wealth in the country, as shown by the showering of money at the party primaries of the PDP and APC. We need another increase in the minimum wage as soon as possible and proper funding of health care and education (to pay the demands of ASUU and others).

We need letters of support for the university and research institutes strike and demands to the trade union leaders to lead a fight – no more poor people in a rich country!



What do Socialists say about Religion?

The monthly public meeting of Socialist Labour for May was on religion. A recording of this meeting is available from:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/dzvNX0_lpcgun00CIyYjv8u9LHYMnE7jyK7dWwyqfsVc6a2uFRl-04rRDElyZ3GPA.G0jy2uE4HqeC-jyD

Passcode: **mbT98!BS**

The Socialist Labour position on religion has been added to "ABOUT US" on the Socialist Labour website:

<https://socialistlabour.com.ng/socialists-and-religion/>

How Do We Organise?

Extract from “Revolutionary for our time – the Walter Rodney Story” Leo Zeilig, 2022

The politics of the Working People’s Alliance was radically and dramatically different from that of mainstream “socialist” parties, both in Guyana and elsewhere. As one of its leading militants, Clive Thomas, recalled: “We were really, if you look at the mechanics of the party, a party that was 90 percent financed by the contributions of the activist group.

You’re talking about tens of dollars and twenties. You’re not talking about any million-dollar effort.” Other funding came from donations made by Guyana’s diaspora and fellow militants around the world. The day-to-day politics of the organization—following the inspiration of Rodney specifically, but many others as well—was a focus on the rights of women, popular education, the battle against racial division, and working class struggle and unity.

The WPA advocated revolution, not reform, and its leaders saw the revolutionary road paved by the self-activity of the poor and working class themselves; no enlightened leader or soapbox speaker could substitute for the activism of the poor themselves.

Though Rodney was a prominent member of the WPA, he was also influenced by many others in the organization, in particular Eusi Kwayana. In his final interview, Rodney described Kwayana in glowing terms: “He is a tremendous example to those of us who are younger than he is because if he could have moved through the various epochs of struggle, against first colonialism and then against one or other form of racist distortion in our history, and is still as young, as fresh as ever.”

These affectionate terms closely resembled those he had used before to describe C. L. R. James.

The party was led by a fifteen-member committee. Each had their responsibilities and their specific areas of competence; yet, the WPA refused the typical “approach of the Messiah specific to the political parties of Guyana.”

The party sought mass mobilization, politicization, and self-activity. As he writes, “The multiracial Alliance showed that the need among the people to seek out a prominent political leader who would solve problems for them was a weakness threatening democratic freedoms.”

Few radical organizations of the Left have placed such emphasis on political education and the founding of a new political culture. The WPA was not based on the specific allegiance to a particular Marxist state. The organization—like the early Bolshevik Party—had as its objective a different vision of politics: one that would not focus exclusively on elections but on developing a critical habit of thinking. Boukari-Yabara summarizes this spirit in the WPA as “like a laboratory of progressive ideas, aiming to transform society.”

Extract from “Revolutionary for our time – the Walter Rodney Story” Leo Zeilig, 2022 -

Socialist Labour held a public meeting recently on the Legacy of Walter Rodney. The recording of the meeting is available from Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/aZclJL2xNBmD6o0A58ILK5BEJbQkGVnKSjehsw6u9YRhwoP4RV_R9I-5kuXXqKH2Y.kLTAI2HhhoNxCacD

Passcode: d6F!L1!X



A free booklet on Walter Rodney, the author of “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa” – <https://ivavalleybooks.com/2022/04/25/a-rebels-guide-to-walter-rodney/>

Health For the Few - Paid by the Many?

Alex Batubo

In May Buhari signed into law the new National Health Insurance Act. This scheme has been a failure as it still covers less than 10% of the population after over 20 years. The new Act will establish a new authority and yet another special fund. One of the major sources of income is to be another tax on phone calls. So most of us will suffer higher phone charges to pay for the health care of a small minority.

The most efficient way to fund health care for all is through taxation like Cuba and Britain. The Neoliberal approach is to privatise this and set up health insurance. In countries like the US, this approach means that millions of people cannot afford health insurance and face catastrophic costs when they, or their families, fall ill. In 2020, nearly 30 people in the US did not have any health insurance.

In Nigeria up to 80% of health costs are paid 'out of pocket'. This means that when our families fall ill we face huge costs that destroy our family finances – or we do without essential healthcare. This is one of the highest levels in Africa and means, for example, that we suffer one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world and more children of five or less die than in any other country.

The National Health Insurance Scheme was launched in 1999. After 15 years, less than 7.5 million people or about 3.5% of the population were covered. A 2021 survey by NOI Polls found that perhaps 20% of the population were then covered. It makes sense, if people cannot afford to pay health fees when their families are ill they will not be able to find the money for insurance premiums when none of them are sick!

In addition, the new body and fund provides further opportunities for corruption. More board members will receive their 'sitting allowances' and inevitably some funds will be looted. The new law sets up a "vulnerable group fund" to pay for the 83 million Nigerians who cannot afford to pay premiums. Who will identify them? Who will keep the records? Who will administer the scheme and make payments to health providers? Who will pay for all this un-necessary bureaucracy?

In 2001 African governments pledged to spend at least 15% of their budgets on health, in the Abuja Declaration. Between 2011 and 2015, the previous regime dedicated nearly 6% of its budgets to health. The Federal budget for this year includes only 4.2% for health.

How can people claim the Government cannot pay for healthcare after the Accountant General of the Federation managed to loot N80 billion without being noticed? We need to elect politicians that will stop looting our wealth and properly fund our healthcare services.

ANGELA DAVIS on the Power of Protest:

“We can't do anything without optimism”

In 1972, the former Black Panther and US socialist and feminist was facing the death penalty. Five decades after the campaign for her release went global, she still believes people are the 'movers of history'

To read her interview earlier in 2022, download from:
<https://ivavalleybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Angela-Davis-on-the-power-of-protest.pdf>



Climate Change and Africa – an Interview with Andreas Malm:

In a wide-ranging discussion with ROAPE's Peter Dwyer, Andreas Malm engages with African political economy, the climate emergency, anti-capitalist alternatives to development and the radical thought and politics of Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney. Colin Stoneman introduces ROAPE readers to Malm's work and politics.

<https://roape.net/2022/05/19/let-the-capitalists-know-that-their-properties-will-be-trashed-an-interview-with-andreas-malm/>

Alex Batubo comments - An excellent interview with Andreas Malm, an exciting writer that that we can all learn from.

The left in Nigeria has to come to terms with climate change and its possible impacts. Boko Haram and the 'bandits' in Zamfara are both due, in a large measure, to climate change. So this could be what the future looks like and we have to address these issues independently of the dominant global narrative of calling them "terrorists" and demanding that the armed forces just "bomb them to hell".

What should the left's attitude be to Nigeria as a major oil and gas producer? Nnimmo Bassey, previously of Friends of the Earth Nigeria, has argued that we need to "keep the oil in the soil". But what are the implications of this?

The Nigerian Government still gets nearly half of its income from oil (declining) and 80% of the economies foreign exchange comes from oil. So what happens when these income sources dry up, as they inevitably will do?

Do we have a 'moral' duty to ensure that this happens quicker rather than later? How can we encourage the organised working class to campaign to "keep the oil in the soil"? What will be the economic implications of this? Can, for example, solar power in the North of Nigeria replace oil? Would this change the regional politics of Nigeria?

Lots of interesting and difficult questions that we need more comrades to seriously think through and help us by writing about it!

Climate change impacts on Bayelsa communities with their homes falling into the sea, whilst gas flaring across the state makes matters worse - illegal since 1985!

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/6/1/in-oil-rich-niger-delta-coastal-erosion-is-outliving-residents>

ONE NATION, TWO LAWS

1. N8 Billion Currency Fraud

Court denies 10 accused persons bail

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/185377-n8billion-currency-fraud-court-denies-10-accused-persons-bail.html>

2. N80 Billion Fraud:

EFCC releases suspended accountant general

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/534327-alleged-n80-billion-fraud-efcc-releases-suspended-accountant-general.html>

Three quarters of prisoners in Nigerian prisons have not been found guilty and have not been given bail!

#jointheresistance

What Strategy for a Socialist Electoral Victory? Interview with Danièle Obono

In the French presidential election, Jean-Luc Mélenchon is the socialist who was most likely to reach the second round of the elections. Danièle Obono is an MP for La France Insoumise (Rebellious France) and an Afro-feminist, anti-globalist and eco-socialist activist. She is the deputy to Mélenchon. We provide the translated interview she gave for the French socialist website Contretemps. She discusses the program of the Rebellious France and what is taking shape around the Parliament of the People's Union, as well as appropriate "day after" strategies to implement their program. Because there is no doubt that such a program of rupture with neoliberal and neofascist logics requires the means for its application, in the first place the vital articulation between social mobilizations and a government of the left.



Danièle Obono is a Gabonese-French politician serving as one of the members of the National Assembly for Paris since 2017. She has also been the spokesperson for Rebellious France.

The full interview is available from:

<https://socialistlabour.com.ng/2022/04/11/what-strategy-for-a-socialist-electoral-victory-interview-with-daniele-obono-april-8-2022%ef%bf%bc/>

Teachers Strike in Cameroun



The Union of People of Cameroon (UPC) supports the teachers' strike, saying there is enough money in Cameroon, but it is the government's will that is lacking the desire to solve the problems. Cameroon teachers maintain their strike over the entire national territory after the strike was suspended in April. The UPC also signed a statement in reaction to the threat of the Minister of Territorial Administration requiring regional governors punish striking teachers.

The strike is being organised by a rank and file teachers group, "Enough is enough!" and not by the official teachers' trade union.

For the UPC, teachers' strike is legitimate: "We need no more negotiations, but the implementation of the already signed agreements: to support new recruits as soon as possible, pay overtime after work as agreed, applied texts already signed for a well-trodden career path, adjusted at regular intervals with promotions."

The Attack on Okada Drivers is an Attack on us All!

The recent ban on Okada drivers in six local governments in Lagos State is an attack on us all! The poor people in these areas will be forced trek. Graduates drive Keke, secondary school leavers drive Okada. That is the Nigerian unemployment scheme!

This is how we can afford to travel – we cannot afford Uber or Bolt!

On the first day of the enforcement of the Okada ban in Lagos 140 motor bicycles were collected by the police and others – they were to be crushed a couple of days later – what a waste of resources!

Most ex-drivers will still have to pay the debt on their motor bikes. How will they live now?

We need to learn from the way that many Okada drivers are able to organise collectively in their defence. We need to support any actions against these bans on Okada drivers.

The Accountant General of the Federation is in custody for looting N80 billion. His replacement is under investigation for corruption. His predecessor returned N6.3 billion of looted funds last year.

The former Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, is Hausa/Fulani from Kano. The current acting Accountant General of the Federation, Anamekwe Nwabuoku is an Ibogo from Imo State. The previous Accountant General of the Federation, Jonah Ogunniyi Otunla is Yoruba from Oyo State.

Some people in this country still think the problem is ethnic group/religion!!



This is what a billion naira looks like! The Accountant General of the Federation stole 80 of these and the Accountant General of Rivers State looted 117!

If you earn N2 million a month it will take you 42 years to make one billion and 3,360 years to make N80 billion. The Accountant General of the Federation was in post for less than seven years.

Summary of Workers Strikes - May 2022

We need your assistance to ensure that this monthly report is comprehensive. Please submit details of any strikes or other protests in your state or community to All these strikes and protests need our support and solidarity. We call on all trade union branches to send messages of support and to organise solidarity visits to any strikes in their localities.

The **Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)** has been on indefinite strike since 14th February. They have not been paid since the end of February. ASUU last extended the strike by twelve weeks from 8th May. The strike is over the refusal of the Federal Government to implement the Memorandum of Agreement reached with ASUU to end its nine month strike in December 2020. This included:

- Funding for revitalisation of tertiary institutions
- Payment of outstanding earned academic allowances
- Renegotiation of 2009 agreement
- Review of NUC 2004 Act to tackle proliferation of universities
- 26 per cent budgetary allocation to education sector
- Release and implementation of visitation panel reports
- Payment of withheld salaries and check off dues.

Student unions and trade union branches should send messages of support to:

Emmanuel Osodeke, ASUU President - president@asuu.org.ng

Chris Piwuna, ASUU Vice President - piwuna01@gmail.com

The **Joint Action Committee of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSA-NU) and Non-Academic Staff Union of Allied and Educational Institutions (NASU)** declared a two-week warning strike from 28th March. This was last extended by another month from 28th May. The main demands, similar to ASUU, are to re-negotiate the 2009 agreement; payment of earned allowances and the funding of state universities. Trade union branches should send solidarity messages via WhatsApp to the NASU Secretary (08037056585).

The strike by the **Joint Research and Allied Institutions Sector Unions (JORAISU)** continues. This involves members of the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), Senior Staff Association of Universities Teaching Hospitals Research Institutes and Associated Institutions (SSAUTHRIAI) and the Academic Staff Union of Research Institutions (ASURI). Their indefinite strike has now lasted nearly eight months. Workers in the 67 research institutes nationwide are on strike over the failure by the Federal Government to fully implement an agreement reached with the unions in 2010. Trade union branches should send solidarity messages via WhatsApp to the President (08030933357) or Secretary (08037056585) of JORAISU.

The **Nigerian polytechnic lecturers under the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP)** declared a two-week warning strike with effect from Monday, May 16. ASUP listed 11 issues including the failure to release the approved revitalisation fund of N15 billion for the sector 11 months after it was approved by President. The ASUP members returned to work on 30 May after their minimum wage arrears had been paid.

Members of the **National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE)** held a two-day warning strike 9th/10th May) over negotiated conditions of service and other sundry issues that have been neglected for nine (9) years.

Uber and Bolt e-cab drivers in Abuja under the auspices of **National Coalition of Ridesharing Professionals (NACORP)** embarked on a three-day warning strike on 30 May, over alleged exploitation and extortion by the e-hailing companies. The drivers are calling for immediate upward review of e-cab fares to reflect the current economic realities in the country.

Socialist Labour Depends on its Supporters for Finances

Socialist Labour depends on its members and supporters for funds. We need more financial support so that we can be more active, expand and grow. If you are able to make a modest financial contribution that would be really helpful. We would also like all readers of this Bulletin to consider fully joining Socialist Labour by paying monthly subscriptions.

The standard rate is N1,000 a month, with a lower rate of N500 for students or unem-ployed and N5,000 for higher paid comrades. We can all afford something - every little helps.

Please make your contributions to the following bank account:

First Bank Nig. Ltd. Account No. 3158880328

Account Name: Aborisade Albert Femi

The account is only used for Socialist Labour purposes.

Socialist Labour-JOIN US

The economic, environmental and Covid-19 crises have made clear that society is a conflict between two classes: the vast majority who create the wealth, and a tiny minority who profit from it. Attempts to reform this have failed: the only solution is to replace it with a truly democratic socialist society. The corrupt elite will only give up their power if forced to do so. We need a mass democratic movement to bring about socialism. Events, such as Russia in 1917, the January 2012 protests in Nigeria and the mass uprisings in Sudan and Algeria in 2019, show what we need.

For more details of the basic ideas and policies of Socialist Labour see: www.socialistlabour.com.ng/about-us/

To join the Socialist Labour supporters WhatsApp group use the following link: tinyurl.com/SocialistLabour

We would love to receive letters, comments or suggestions from our readers. We want to hear from you with suggestions for articles for our future editions or questions on any articles in this issue.

We especially welcome news about protests and strikes in your community or town.

Please join Socialist Labour, by submitting the following details:

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