

NO-ONE IS ILLEGAL!

The No One Is Illegal Group, UK web: www.noii.org.uk email: info@noii.org.uk post: Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street, Bolton, BL1 1DY. **January 2007**
No One Is Illegal is a group of trade unionists long active in anti-deportation campaigns and opposed to immigration controls in their totality. **Price by donation.**

COME TO THE MARCH 31ST TRADE UNION CONFERENCE!

1pm-5.30pm, register 12 noon

THE SLOGAN "WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE" MEANS WHAT IT SAYS. IT DOES NOT MEAN "ONLY WORKERS WITH THE CORRECT IMMIGRATION STATUS UNITE."

Once upon a time only criminal activities were defined as "illegal". But now after a century of immigration controls it is workers who are categorised as "illegal", as being undocumented, as having no status, as being what George Orwell in his novel of a future nightmare world - *Nineteen Eighty Four*- described as "unpersons".

Fighting immigration controls is not an act of charity. It is vital unless the labour movement is going to be irreversibly split between the "legal" and the "illegal". This is the road to ruination and the destruction of class solidarity. And this ruination and destruction is being legislated for. Immigration control is being brought on to the shop floor. Bosses already act as agents of the Home Office – since the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act they have been under threat of criminal prosecution for hiring workers without the correct immigration documents. And now the government has published its "A Points Based System – Making Migration Work For Britain". The title emphasises that immigration control is never in the interests of those wanting to come here – but is always in the interests of British capital. The new system is proposing a "points system" for workers wanting to come here – the less points (ie the less skills) a worker has then the less rights s/he will have after entry.

And it gets worse. A *Points Based System* demands that bosses (and colleges) act as sponsors for workers (and students) who do gain entry and as sponsors spy on all aspects of their work:

"Sponsors will be required to inform us if a sponsored migrant fails to turn up for their first day of work, or does not enrol on their course. Similarly they will be expected to report any prolonged absence from work or discontinuation of studies, or if their contract is being terminated, the migrant is leaving their employment, or is changing educational institution. Sponsors will also need to notify us if their circumstances alter, for example if they are subject to a merger or takeover".

Fighting immigration controls is just as much part of the struggle against racism as is fighting the British National Party. The idea that any one group of people has a franchise on who can live or work here, or anywhere, is a product of the crudest nationalism.

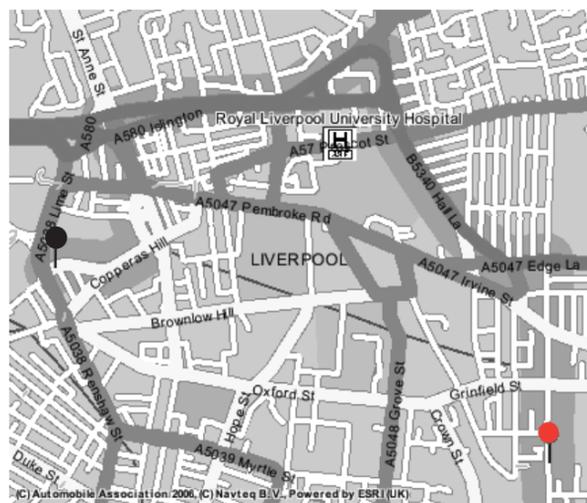
This is why we say proudly No One Is Illegal! It is why we call upon trades unions to embark on an active campaign of recruitment of migrant workers – as part of the struggle for equal rights and conditions at work and as part of the resistance against immigration controls, all immigration controls.

It is also why we invite you to the:

TRADE UNION CONFERENCE AGAINST IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

Saturday March 31st 1-5.30pm
Register 12 noon

Asylum Link, St Annes Church,
Overbury St, Liverpool L7



Some of the issues the conference will discuss:

- Trade union recruitment of all workers irrespective of status
- The right to work and the right to equality of pay/conditions irrespective of status
- How 200 years after the abolition of the slave trade, migrants are reduced to slavery conditions
- Bosses as agents of the Home Office
- Link between immigration status and welfare entitlements – and how workers within the welfare and health sectors are responsible for policing immigration status

Workers Control Not Immigration Controls

A programme for Trades Unions proposed by No One Is Illegal



"NATFHE welcomes the publication of this pamphlet to stimulate debate in the trade union movement on this vital issue"

Paul Mackney, General Secretary, NATFHE (now part of UCU)
–The University & College Lecturers Union, April 2006

- The proposed "amnesty" for migrant workers and whether this is a positive or negative development
- How trade unions can help fight deportations and detentions
- How some immigration officers are themselves unionised and whether we should support this

Workers Control Not Immigration Controls

The conference follows the publication of the pamphlet *Workers Control Not immigration Controls* produced by No One Is illegal and sponsored by several trade union bodies. Email and hard copies of the pamphlet are available by donation at our address above.

Speakers from:

- Justice For Cleaners campaign (a Transport and General Workers Union campaign fighting for improved and equal rights and conditions of both documented and undocumented cleaners)
- Bolton UNISON explaining why the branch agreed to support social workers in defying Section 9 of the 2004 Immigration and Asylum Act in refusing to take children of the undocumented into care as part of the deportation process.
- The GMB Wessex Branch MH1 (a self-organised migrant workers branch)

Ask your trade union body to sponsor (support) the conference. Initial sponsors:

Trades Councils - Tameside, Oxford, Bury, Oldham, Chorley Waltham Forest, Greater Manchester Association of Trades Councils, Merseyside TUC

Union branches - Bolton NUT, Unison Manchester Community and Mental Health, TGWU 6/389, Bolton Unison, Central London GMB

The conference is open to trade unionists, those threatened by controls and their supporters - because an injury to one is an injury to all.

WORKERS – THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF CONTROLS

A feature of controls is how history has been concealed - especially the role of trade unionists

Trade union agitation for controls

1905 was the year zero of immigration controls. The Aliens Act of that year – designed to exclude Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe – was the UK’s first systematic control legislation. Central to the agitation for controls were the trade union and to a lesser extent the early socialist movements. Jewish refugees began arriving after anti-Semitic Tsarist legislation in 1882. By 1892 control had become official Trades Union Congress policy – a policy confirmed at its 1894 and 1895 conferences. In 1895 the TUC had a special conference at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester where it was agreed that the question of control be put in a list of questions to be asked of all Parliamentary candidates (*Manchester Evening News 11.7.1895*). Indeed, the TUC sent a delegation to the Home Secretary demanding control (*Times, 6.2.1896*). This was the tip of the iceberg. The fanatical anti-Semite, W H Wilkins, in his book *The Aliens Invasion* published in 1892, named another 43 labour organisations advocating restrictions. These ranged from the Durham miners to the Liverpool Trades Council. Other trades councils came out in favour. These included London, where control was supported by the renowned rank and file dockers’ leaders Ben Tillet and Tom Mann (*London Evening News 27.5 1891 and 19.6.1891*). J H Wilson MP, secretary of the Seamen’s Union, proposed legislation in Parliament (11.2.1893). The emergent socialist organisations had an extremely ambivalent attitude. Bruce Glasier, prominent in the Independent Labour Party, wrote (*Labour Leader 3.4.1904*) that:

“Neither the principle of the brotherhood of man nor the principle of social equality implies that brother nations or brother men may crowd upon us in such numbers as to abuse our hospitality, overturn our institutions or violate our customs”

These attitudes were not universal but were dominant. They were replicated at what was the acid test in respect to immigration controls – Jews attempting to flee Nazism. George Orwell in the March 1942 edition of the American magazine *Partisan Review* wrote that “In the years before the war it was largely trade union opposition that prevented a big influx of German Jewish refugees”.

The story was repeated in respect to post-war controls against black commonwealth citizens – as legislated for in the 1962

Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The 1955 and 1957 conferences of the Transport and General Workers Union voted for controls. The Manchester Guardian reported the 1957 resolution under the heading “Unions fear of influx of coloured people” (11.7.1959). As early as 1955 the TUC’s General Council Report to Congress reported that a delegation had told Ministers that “The government must have a policy which could ensure that the rate of immigration could be controlled”

It is this protracted history of agitation for controls which is the root cause of the today’s political difficulty – namely the difficulty of convincing the labour movement to go beyond supporting individual cases or issues and take a principled position of opposition to all controls.

Jewish trade unionists oppose controls

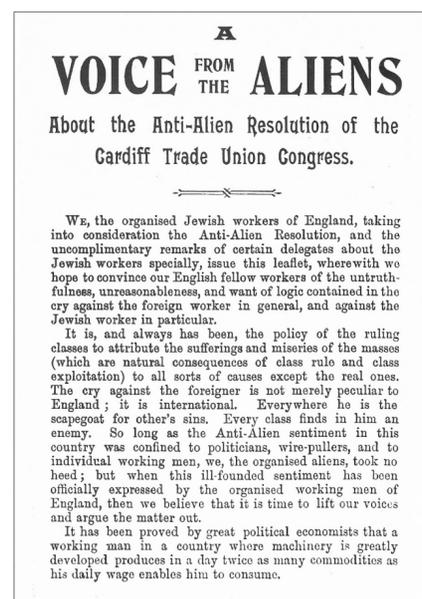
“This mass meeting of Jewish trade unionists is of the opinion that the vast amount of poverty and misery which exists is in no way due to the influx of foreign workmen but is the result of the private ownership of the means of production; and this meeting calls upon the government to pass a universal compulsory eight hours day with a minimum wage as an instalment of future reform”.

This resolution – opposing controls in principle and demanding better wages and conditions for all – goes well beyond trade union orthodoxy in the twenty first century. It was passed as long ago as 1894 after a demonstration called in London by Jewish workers (*Jewish Chronicle 21.8.1894*). This self-organisation against controls of Jewish workers organised through their unions was a significant feature of the attempt to enact the Aliens Act. In 1895 eleven Jewish trade unions produced the first ever pamphlet against immigration controls. This was called *A Voice From The Aliens* and condemned the TUC’s support for controls. It was written by Joseph Finn from Leeds and Secretary of the Mantle Makers Union (*Jewish Chronicle 14.2.1902*). It is reproduced on the *No One Is Illegal* website. The pamphlet was launched at a meeting in London addressed by Eleanor Marx (the daughter of Karl Marx) and the Russian Anarchist Prince Kropotkin (*Jewish Chronicle 13.12.1895*). In June 1901 there was convened “a conference of delegates

of trade unions and other Jewish bodies” aimed at fighting controls (*Jewish Chronicle 7.6.1901*). In September 1902 there was held in Whitechapel a rally against controls of which a local paper said: “It was called under the auspices of the Federated Tailor’s Union of London ... the hall, capable of accommodating three thousand people, was filled to its utmost” (*London Eastern Post and Chronicle 20.9.1902*). These protests extended outside London. *A Voice From The Aliens* was also launched at a meeting in Leeds. In Manchester there was established a Manchester Protest Committee (*Jewish Chronicle 17.6.1904*) otherwise known as the Immigration Bill Committee (*Labour Leader 1.7.1904*)

A lesson can be learned from all this—self-organisation of the oppressed can have a political effect. Though the Aliens Act was passed (not least due to the activities of the proto-fascist British Brothers League) yet the agitation of Jewish trade unionists had a positive effect on their English counterparts. It neutralised some elements—the TUC passed no further pro-control resolutions after 1895. More significantly it won over other trade union organisations to oppose controls. Joseph Finn speaking to the 1903 Royal Commission on Immigration said of the Voice Of The Aliens Leaflet:

“This leaflet and mass meeting opened the eyes of the English trade unionists so much so that members of the executive of the London trades Council held a meeting on behalf of the English trade unionists to protest against the (TUC) resolution”.



WORKERS CONTROL NOT IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

Trade unions and immigration controls

Self-organisation of the modern undocumented

The self-organisation of Jewish workers against the 1905 Aliens Act was reproduced by black workers six decades later in the struggle against the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The December 1961 edition of the *West Indian Gazette* was devoted entirely to condemning and organising against the proposed legislation. It reported that the Pakistani Workers Association, the Indian Workers Association and the West Indian Workers Association had come together to form a Co-ordinating Committee Against Racist Discrimination. These organisations held a lobby of Parliament and a picket outside the Home Office protesting against controls. As the black community grew in confidence there were greater protests and demonstrations against the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and the 1971 Immigration Act. *The Guardian* of 22.3.1971 reported

“About 5000 demonstrators against the Immigration Bill marched yesterday from Hyde Park Corner to Whitehall. Most of the marchers were black and represented groups ranging from the Black Panthers through the West Indian Standing Conference to community associations from Smethwick and Bradford. Police precautions assumed the proportions of the most vigorous period of protest against the Vietnam war”.

Black workers developed their struggle beyond that of their Jewish predecessors. They not only opposed the enactment of immigration control legislation, they also resisted its enforcement after it became law. In the late 1970s—starting with the struggles of Nasira Begum and Anwar Ditta—the focus of resistance switched to campaigns for the reunion of black families and against deportations.

Individual campaigns are only pockets of resistance. But they are important pockets. They are the flying pickets against immigration controls. They will not go away. They have been adopted by the asylum-seekers and the other undocumented (both black and white) of the last decade. They are the flame which one day will ignite the struggle against controls in their totality. And now the vast rise in the number of *sans papiers* behind bars has seen the fire spread to a new location of resistance—detention centres themselves.

Trade unions enter the struggle against controls

Once again self-organisation of the undocumented has a positive effect. Not only does it help in winning campaigns. It also has shifted the labour movement politically. This shift can perhaps be traced to the 1973 TUC conference where there was passed a resolution, proposed by the Civil and Public Services Association, calling on ‘the next labour Government to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act’. This was particularly progressive in that it also opposed the start of the post-war link between immigration status and welfare entitlement and

“the proposed use of officers of Health and Social Security in the invidious role of examining immigrant passports to determine their validity or otherwise, and thus becoming part of the law enforcement process.”

This link between entitlements and immigration status has been more recently attacked by Bill Morris when General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. He was prominent in the successful campaign against asylum seekers out of the cash economy through the introduction of vouchers – in effect monopoly money. He was supported in this by what the *Guardian* called “a powerful alliance of trade unions and (Labour Party) activists” (28/29. 9.2000) It is now the norm for unions at local and sometimes at national level to oppose individual deportations. At present the National Union of Journalists is campaigning against the removal of one of its members—Mansoor Hassan.

The next steps

In spite of a significant re-orientation of trade union policies yet there is much more unions should be doing:

- A battle of ideas, a fight for principles, needs to be waged. The majority of unions do not have policies of opposition to controls in principle. Instead they argue for something called “fair” controls.

But controls can never be fair for those excluded by them. To those excluded controls will always be based on the most abject racism and nationalism. This has been recognised by the National Union of Journalists which, in adopting a position of no controls, explicitly rejected a resolution from its Manchester branch calling for “benign” controls. Likewise NAFTHE (which is now part of the University and College Union) should have gone the whole hog and should have resolved to oppose controls in principle. The abolition of all restrictions may well require a massive political struggle. The development of controls into a fair or benign phenomenon would require a miracle.

- A recognition that controls have to be contested in the workplace itself. *Employer sanctions*—the criminalisation of bosses for hiring undocumented labour—have been strengthened by the 2006 Immigration, Asylum, Nationality Act. This obliges employers to continually check the immigration status of workers throughout their entire period of employment—not just the hiring stage—and allows the Home office to impose on the spot civil fines as an alternative to court prosecution. And this transformation of bosses into Home Office agents has other aspects. Under the laws regulating gangmasters—introduced in 2004 after the drowning of Chinese cocklepickers—gangmasters will only preserve their registration if they show they are policing and refusing to employ undocumented workers. Again under the new points system for migrant workers employers will be given further responsibilities to spy on migrant workers. This control of the workforce is unprecedented in peacetime. Except today there is a new war—a war on the undocumented. A war against workers.

- The fight against controls needs to be taken into the workplace in another way. Trade union members in the welfare sectors are now obliged to check the immigration status of those applying for welfare provision. Union members should refuse to undertake such checks and the union leadership needs to support them under the slogan of “**defiance not compliance!**”



Two poems by WH Auden

In the 1930s and 1940s Auden identified with the resistance against fascism and was a fellow traveller of the Communist Party. Refugee Blues shows his support for refugees. Partition is about the bureaucratic division of India into India and Pakistan and shows the artificial nature of borders.

Partition

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission,
Having never set eyes on the land he was called to partition
Between two peoples fanatically at odds,
With their different diets and incompatible gods.
'Time,' they had briefed him in London, 'is short.
It's too late
For mutual reconciliation or rational debate:
The only solution now lies in separation.
The Viceroy thinks, as you will see from his letter,
That the less you are seen in his company the better,
So we've arranged to provide you with other accommodation.
We can give you four judges, two Moslem and two Hindu,
To consult with, but the final decision must rest with you.'

Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day
Patrolling the gardens to keep the assassins away,
He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate
Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date
And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,
And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,
But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
A continent for better or worse divided.

The next day he sailed for England, where he could quickly forget
The case, as a good lawyer must. Return he would not,
Afraid, as he told his Club, that he might get shot.

Refugee Blues

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew;
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports can't do that.

The consul banged the table and said:
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead';
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go today, my dear, but where shall we go today?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:
'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread';
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;
It was Hitler over Europe, saying: "They must die";
We were in his mind, my dear, we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they weren't German Jews.

Went down to the harbour and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors;
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

BUILD THE NO BORDERS NETWORK!

No Border groups exist in Europe and North America. They struggle against deportations, detentions and the way controls intrude into all aspects of life. This includes the way state benefits are linked to immigration status, the way bosses are agents of control through employer sanctions and the way migrants are reduced to slavery conditions. *No Border* groups reject the idea of "fair" controls. Controls are by definition racist being based on the crudest of nationalisms - the right of one people to claim an exclusive franchise on an area of the globe. Controls can never be fair to those threatened by them. Information on this global movement is at www.noborder.org

No Border groups exist in the UK - for instance:

Birmingham: noborders-brum-contact@aktivix.org
Brighton: brightonnoborders@riseup.net
Glasgow: noborders-glasgow@riseup.net
Leeds: leedsnoborders@lists.riseup.net
London: noborderslondon@lists.riseup.net
Manchester: nobordersmanchester@lists.riseup.net
Sheffield: sheffield-noborders@lists.aktivix.org
Wales: noborderswales@lists.riseup.net

- Come to the national *No Borders* demo at Harmondsworth Detention Centre, 11.30am, February 10th (coach University College, Mallett St, London 10am).
- Come to the planned national gathering of *No Border* groups and of those interested in forming new groups. For details contact your nearest group.

The No One Is Illegal group UK was started in 2003. Our literature can be found www.noii.org.uk. Our Manifesto is available there and the group is open to all who agree with the broad outlines of the Manifesto. Our distinguishing features are 1) our opposition in principle to all controls 2) our internationalism and global links with similar groups 3) our support for the self-organisation of those affected by controls 4) our work within the labour movement. We can be contacted at info@noii.org.uk.