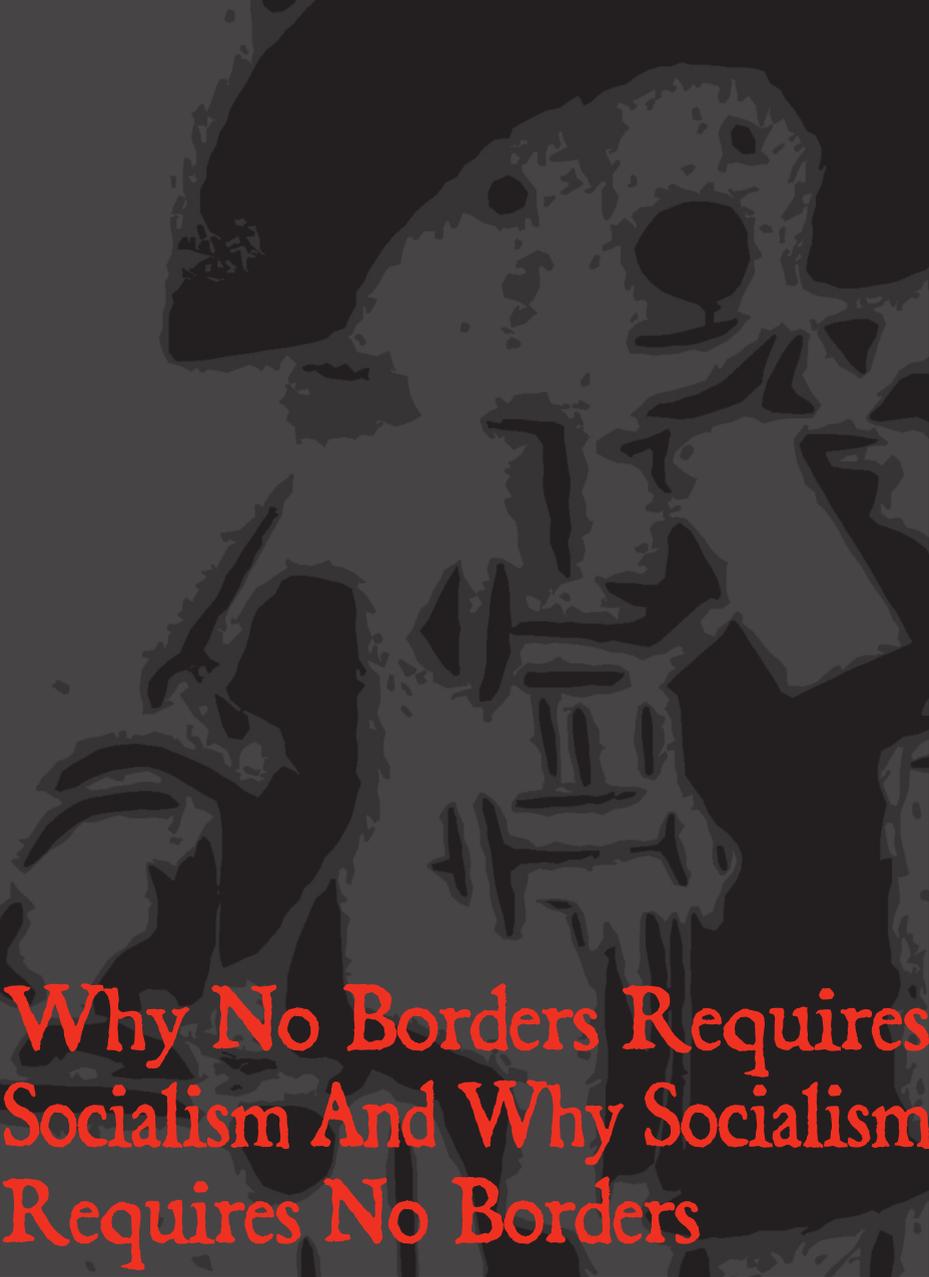


NO ONE IS ILLEGAL



**Why No Borders Requires
Socialism And Why Socialism
Requires No Borders**

WHY NO BORDERS REQUIRES SOCIALISM AND WHY SOCIALISM REQUIRES NO BORDERS

NO ONE IS ILLEGAL

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Internationalism

No One Is Illegal is opposed to all immigration controls. We are socialists therefore we are internationalists. We consider that states and state borders (you can't have one without the other) act as a division between workers. The struggle for workers unity is both core to our fight for no controls and is central to our socialism.

There are no such matters as 'national interests' only the interests of different classes. Borders are never natural, never a product of nature. They are political. They are created by human beings not even as free agents but under their ruling class. The Hebrides and the Orkneys were once part of the Viking empire. Calais was once part of England – this is what the battle of Agincourt under Henry 5th in 1415 was all about. The genocide of the American Indian and the constant redrawing of Indian territory was justified on the spurious grounds that the USA's natural boundaries were from the Atlantic to the Pacific. W.H. Auden's poem *Partition* shows the utterly artificial division of India into India and Pakistan in 1948. The division was constructed by a politically instructed mapmaker. As Auden writes:

*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.*

The stratification of citizens rights, partial rights and no rights at all is used as an instrument to discipline the working class; one strata being used to undermine the wages and conditions of another. It all works hand-in-hand with divide and rule.

Capital sees workers both as units of production and, along with all other classes, as a market. Modern slaves – those without status hidden in the heart of our metropolitan cities and farmlands – exist simultaneously as producers of commodities and as commodities themselves. Socialism, the beginning of human history, sees us all as human beings. So, at best, migrants are permitted into the country because of their 'usefulness' to the economy. *No One Is Illegal* is socialist and rejects such criteria.

The gross inequalities of wealth in the world is a major pull and push of immigration. Migration is one way that workers undermine those inequalities.

A world without borders, without states, would clearly require a global revolution. Abolition of immigration controls and the opening of present borders even within one country such as the UK may well also require a revolution – given the extent to which the modern state is so constructed on and identified with immigration controls.

None of this is an argument for passivity. Just the reverse. It is an argument to weaken, undermine and create breaches in immigration controls at each and every possibility. By breaches we mean both on the ideological level, on the level that controls are somehow natural and inevitable, and also on the practical level of preventing the operation of controls themselves. For us this coming together of theory and practice is essential in order to build a serious movement against controls.

Why socialism means no borders

The long-standing socialist slogan *Workers of the world unite* means what it says. It does not mean *Only workers with the correct immigration status unite*.

No One Is Illegal is opposed to all immigration controls. On the Left we are not totally alone in this. However it is nonetheless a very fringe position. For instance in 1996 Arthur Scargill, the leader of the National Union of Miners, formed the Socialist Labour Party. This explicitly restricted membership based on a residency test of at least twelve months in the UK – much in the manner as entitlement to NHS hospital treatment has residency tests. In addition the new Party committed itself to establishing ‘*a humane and non-racist immigration system*’. This false assumption that controls can be rewritten as fair or just or humane or non-racist is both widespread and reactionary. Controls are inherently racist as they are premised on the grossest of all nationalisms – the claim that one group of people has a franchise on a particular piece of the world. Controls can never be fair or just to those excluded by them. And at the point of enforcement they can never be humane.

There used to be another socialist slogan which unfortunately now seems to have gone out of existence – *not a penny on the arms budget*. This was the demand that socialists in imperialist parliaments should on principle never vote for an arms budget – even if the budget was actually reducing arms expenditure. The point here was that weapons and wars, whatever their cost, result in the death of workers of all countries. The analogy with immigration controls is clear. All immigration controls however they are defined and to whoever they ‘allow’ free movement, inevitably result in the restriction of movement for others. This is why they must be opposed in principle

Opposition to controls in principle is not simply an essential socialist position in the abstract. It is also a slogan which should determine all aspects of the struggle against controls. Unfortunately this is not the case. Time and time again the determinant is the assumption there can be fair controls. This is seen most clearly in those anti-deportation campaigns which argue exceptionalism, argue someone is more worthy of stay than others, argue ‘compassionate grounds’. Of course in legal argument with the Home Office then all tactics, all arguments, should be used. However to argue in public for compassionate grounds is simply re-enacting on the level of the individual case the falsehood that there can exist fairness within controls. Moreover the idea that somehow people have first to oppose controls on compassionate grounds before they can be won to a position of no controls has simply been shown to be wrong. For thirty years there have been campaigns arguing compassionate grounds – these have probably involved on some level tens of thousands of people, with some petitions reaching one hundred thousand . However none of this has resulted in a mass movement against controls. This is because the gap between *fair* controls and *no* controls is an unbridgeable political gap. This is why *No One Is Illegal* opposes the idea that some cases are more *worthy* than others – which is anyhow just updating the Victorian notion of the *worthy poor* with that of the *worthy migrant*. And this is why in campaigns we raise our slogan *Solidarity not Pity!*

The assumption there can be fair controls also arises in support of legislation which superficially might seem benign or even helpful to the undocumented – but which actually is malign and acts to strengthen controls. A classic example are the laws penalising bosses for hiring labour without the ‘correct’ immigration status and documentation. This

is often presented as a way of preventing the over-exploitation of the undocumented by unscrupulous employers. In practice these so-called *employer sanctions* are simply a way of forcing bosses to become agents of immigration control. The way to stop unscrupulous employment practices is not to stop the entry of workers but to ensure all workers have the same legal rights. This is why we consider the appropriate socialist approach to be raise the slogan *No to all immigration control legislation! No to immigration controls! Equal and full employment rights for all!*

Why no borders means socialism

No One Is Illegal does not present no borders as a panacea for all life's ills – though we do think that both no borders and the struggle to attain it could be a vast liberation for humankind.

But there is one factor that shows that the abolition of controls will not necessarily in and of itself lead to a socialist world. This factor is the advocacy by some right-wing libertarian groups of total freedom of movement. This is seen clearest in the USA with organisations like the *Cato Institute* and the *Future of Freedom Foundation*. The latter has published the book *The Case For Free Trade and Open Immigration*. However it has also published other publications such as *The Dangers of Socialised Medicine*; *The Tyranny of Gun Control* and *Time to Repeal the Welfare State*.

It is clear that this right-wing libertarian position is predicated not simply on freedom of movement (and freedom of movement of workers in particular) but also on the unregulated freedom of both local and global capital to exploit migrating labour. It is the freedom of the globalisation of capital – which means the slavery of labour. No borders could in and of itself conceivably result in super-exploitation. Trafficking and the power of the trafficker could in some instances be facilitated. The existence of freedom of movement would require the fight for a whole series of socialist demands by and for migrating labour. These any event should be being made now as part of the struggle for such freedom. They would include the utmost protection at the workplace – such as the right to the minimum wage, the right to health and safety and all other employment protection, the right to trade union organisation and the right not to suffer

discrimination. These demands would also include the welfare and social rights of migrating labour – such as the right to full and immediate welfare and, whilst immigration controls exist, the end of internal controls and the breaking of the link between immigration status and welfare entitlement. In addition there has to be recognised the special needs of the international migrant rendering it easy and a matter of right to transmit remittances and transfer pension and other savings

Building the movement against controls

And there already exists the basis for such a movement. A huge amount of the world's population is on the move and are voting with their feet for no controls. Throughout the world those designated as 'illegal' – the unwanted, the undocumented – are literally breaking down the walls of immigration detention centres in assertion of their right of freedom of movement. Every struggle against deportation is at its very basics a denial of the state to determine who can cross borders.

However there is also a battle for ideas that needs to be brought out into the open – otherwise the defiance shown in practice by the undocumented can be watered down into a dead-end liberalism. It can be reduced to a plea for individual compassion rather than building into a mass movement demanding the right of free passage. And such a movement needs to be led by undocumented with the solidarity of those committed to a world of liberation.

No One Is Illegal is committed to supporting and helping to build all struggles which in any way oppose controls and support the undocumented. For us political unity and not sectarian division is fundamental to the fight against controls. However political ideas are also for us crucial in determining political action. And this is why we argue for and fight for a world without immigration controls.

STEPHEN WILLIAM COHEN

16 July 1945 - 8 March 2009

Steve Cohen was committed to struggle against all forms of oppression, for justice and for socialism. This commitment was expressed both in activities and in the application of his formidable intellect to progressing struggles, often in the form of publications. This was the last completed pamphlet that Steve wrote.

One of Steve's major lasting contributions was his work in opposition to Immigration Controls, both theoretically and practically. His work at South Manchester Law Centre brought him face to face with the reality of controls. People were coming in facing deportations, or fighting to bring in other members of their families, falling foul of internal controls through refusal of welfare, educational, health rights and so forth. What before was a theoretical opposition to immigration controls for Steve became a living issue for him as a community lawyer. He soon realised that a key to success was open campaigning and developed a partnership between community campaigns.

Steve saw the necessity of bringing the lessons of these campaigns and of the history immigration controls to wider public and wrote a number of pamphlets whilst at the law centre. Steve also saw the necessity of a specialist centre of resistance and legal support and campaigned for the establishment of the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, of which he was the first co-ordinator for many years.

Steve saw the weaknesses in the movements resisting different aspects of immigration controls: the idea that there can be some kind of fair and non-racist controls; not seeing the need to marry forthright campaigning with legal tactics; and a lack of knowledge in different professions about how immigration controls impact and what to do about it. Steve set about addressing these issues by writing a series of books.

Steve became increasingly aware of the need for a voice which openly called for the abolition of immigration controls and with the assistance of a few of us comrades wrote the *No One Is Illegal Manifesto*. This led to the establishment of *No One Is Illegal* group which has organised conferences, published a number of pamphlets, pushed for defiance of controls amongst the caring professions and so forth.

No One Is Illegal is proud to publish this work, both in Steve's memory and to further the struggle against repression and for socialism.