

## Does that mean you're against immigration controls?

Yes, Left Unity is opposed to immigration controls. Immigration controls are bad for all workers. They do not solve any of the problems facing the working class in Britain and other countries today.

Every piece of immigration legislation from 1905 onwards has followed racist, and sometimes fascist, agitation against this or that group of people coming to the country, often fleeing persecution, torture, destitution

and the destruction of their environment.

Immigration controls kill. Those crossing borders 'illegally' take huge risks to their personal safety and at huge personal cost. If they arrive illegally they are often forced to work in dangerous conditions out of fear.

In 2013, off the Italian island of Lampedusa, 366 migrants died when their boat capsized. Denied access to official routes into Europe, they had each paid nearly £1,000 to people smugglers to get across the Mediterranean. Now the UK is pulling funding for search-and-rescue operations in the area. Is that the kind of society we want?



Survivors of the Lampedusa tragedy

Three years ago David Cameron said *"The real issue is this: migrants are filling the gaps in the labour market left wide open by a welfare system that for years has paid British people not to work... So immigration and welfare reform are two sides of the same coin. Put simply, we will never control immigration properly unless we tackle welfare dependency."*

You heard it. Low wages, benefit cuts and immigration controls are all part of the same attack on working class people. We must fight back together – workers, welfare claimants, disabled people and migrants. Don't let them divide us.

Always remember: an injury to one is an injury to all. Together we can win.



leftunity.org

@leftunityuk

# Migration

## A LEFT UNITY TRUTH KIT

### Don't let them play the blame game

Listening to our media and all the main political parties you'd be forgiven for thinking that migration threatens the living standards of working class people.

The fact is there's a blame game going on. Migrants and refugees aren't to blame for a single one of the problems we face in our daily lives. They are being scapegoated for the effects of public sector cuts and policies that benefit the

richest in our society, the bankers and billionaires, at the expense of the many.

Left Unity stands up for the rights of migrants and says that we must unite the whole working class, migrants and non-migrants, those in work and those out of work, to campaign for jobs, pensions, better pay, welfare and an end to outsourcing, zero-hours contracts and the privatisation of our public services.



2015 EDITION

## Romanians and Bulgarians aren't 'flooding Britain'

Nigel Farage and the scaremongers from UKIP claimed at the start of 2014 that we were in danger of being overwhelmed by people from Romania and Bulgaria. He said changes in their status in the European Union meant '29 million Romanians and Bulgarians will gain the right to live, work and draw benefits here' and warned of a 'tidal flood'.

But when the laws changed on the 1st January very few people actually came from Romania or Bulgaria. Talking about 'millions' was a deliberate attempt to mislead and whip up racist sentiment.

By the same token the entire citizenship of France could have come here for years. Of course, they don't, and millions of Romanians and Bulgarians haven't and won't either.

**FACT** The Office for National Statistics has said that total net migration from Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Malta has averaged 8,000 a year since 2007. It's certainly not the 'millions' Farage talked about and won't be in the future.

## Migration is still the exception, not the rule

Despite the world coming closer together in recent decades, it is still unusual for people to take the huge step, often involving great personal and financial risks, of moving and settling overseas.

In 2013, according to the United Nations, just 2.3 per cent of the world's people were living outside of their country of birth.

**FACT** The first systematic immigration controls in the UK were only set up with the Aliens Act in 1905 after similar scaremongering against Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe and Russia. Needless to say that the world's population did not turn up in Britain prior to that.



## Should we be for 'British jobs for British workers'?

Some people talk about the need for 'British jobs for British workers'. These ideas are divisive and do nothing to boost the opportunity and living standards of working class people.

Ask yourself why there is a shortage of jobs. Are there too many nurses? Are there not enough frail people needing care? Are there too many bus and train drivers driving along empty roads with no jams? The list goes on.

The truth is that there are plenty of essential jobs for people to do. But in this irrational capitalist economy, work is only deemed useful if someone, somewhere, somehow can squeeze a profit out of it to line their own pocket.

## Migration isn't the cause of unemployment

Many communities in Britain have been blighted by unemployment for decades – and it's got worse since the world plunged into recession. The misery of unemployment needs to be tackled urgently. But we won't be able to cure the patient if we misdiagnose the illness.

It is repeated endlessly that migration causes unemployment, but it's not true. The massive growth in unemployment we've seen since 2008 is a product of the most serious economic depression we've experienced since the 1930s. When the economy contracted really sharply and unemployment rocketed, there were actually fewer migrants coming to Britain – not more.

The bottom line is that we'll only be able to start tackling unemployment if we address the failure of the economy to meet the basic needs of our society; access to jobs, to social services, welfare, health and education.

## Don't migrants undermine terms and conditions?

Migrants are not a threat to workers' conditions. In fact by improving the skills of the workforce as a whole migration often creates upward pressure on wages. But there is a race to the bottom going in the terms and conditions of the lowest paid, most exploited workers. Bad contracts, poor and unsafe working conditions, and poverty pay can often be found in many sectors where migrant labour is relied upon. But the downward pressure on wages and conditions isn't the fault of the migrants. It's about the bosses trying to drive down working class living standards.

The fact this has happened reflects the retreat of workers' rights and conditions, the decline in collective bargaining and the weakening of trade unions that we've seen in this country over the last decades. Only proper trade union rights and collective bargaining can solve this. And this is where anti-migrant xenophobia undermines our fight back. By dividing 'native' workers from 'migrant' workers, encouraging one to blame the other for these attacks, the bosses can play a game of divide and rule.

There is a 'them and us' conflict, but it's not about migrants. It's bosses versus workers.

## 'Migrants and refugees aren't to blame for a single one of the problems we face in our daily lives'

### 'Illegal' immigrant: just think through what it means

What happens when a whole section of people are deemed 'illegal', to have no right to live and work in this country? The simple answer is that it becomes really difficult for these workers to organise for better wages and conditions, because employers can threaten them with deportation. Some bosses take advantage of this quite consciously to employ people illegally below the minimum wage, knowing that if they went to the authorities they would be deported.

This hits everyone else by pushing down wages in the lowest paid jobs. But the answer isn't to crack down on the migrants. It's to create a level playing field where everyone has equal rights regardless of their immigration status.

Left Unity argues that we need a living wage and for secure contracts so that the bosses cannot lay off one group of workers and employ others at lower rates of pay – whether they are migrant workers or not.

**FACT** Between 2005 and 2008 when the economy was growing and many people were moving to Britain from overseas to work, the employment of existing British workers increased by 116,000.