



For social ownership of the banks and industry

FIGHT JOB CUTS!



» **Boost NHS pay, expand public-service jobs**

» **Take over big firms and convert to green and social output**

» **Shorter work week for all with no loss of pay**

8 August: on the streets!

NHS workers will march to demand a 15% pay rise

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Sweeping reform needed not just in care homes

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The battle to unionise the US South, plus changing school history courses

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HK prepares to resist direct Beijing rule

Democracy activists and trade unionists are regrouping.

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The virus: heed the warnings for winter!

By Martin Thomas

Without precautions, the average infected person passes on the virus to maybe three others. That is an average of very uneven numbers. According to [Adam Kucharski and others](#), if 100 sufferers generate 300 further infections, 240 of those infections will come from just ten of the sufferers.

The ten may not be that medically different from the other 90. They may frequent closed and crowded spaces more favourable to transmission, or meet more susceptible people.

The new outbreak of the virus in Victoria, Australia, highlights the chanciness of the process, and the foolishness of saying the answer to the virus is just "strong lockdowns", never mind what sort of "strong".

Until late June it seemed that a rapid and efficient lockdown had enabled Australia to get off lightly. There were zero deaths from the virus between 23 May and 24 June. Daily new cases were below ten a day over the whole huge country for much of that time.

Rates of testing were high. Only citizens and residents have been allowed to enter the country, and only with 14 days' quarantine in government-provided hotel rooms.

Now Victoria has an outbreak bigger than the whole country's initial toll. The best guess is that it was directly generated by "strong" measures – carried out by casual employees of private contractors. The security guards at the quarantine hotels became the channels of infection.

Australia is an instructive part of the world picture, but only a small one. Confirmed infection numbers have been rising again world-wide, since early May, doubling about every 40-odd days. Deaths have been rising again since 27 May, at a slower pace.

The world figures are dominated by huge surges in the USA, Brazil, India, and Mexico.

There are new virus-upturns in countries which previously seemed to have infections well-controlled with general lockdowns (Czech Republic, Denmark...) or without (Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong...). The figures in those countries are still very low compared to USA or Brazil, or to two other countries which locked down then eased ineptly, Iran and Israel.

The lockdown-easings in Europe are probably at a limit beyond which slacker covid-distancing will generate new

surges even before winter. Some countries are keeping their curves fairly flat, but very few still pushing the figures down.

The coming months are likely to bring renewed lockdown-type measures, maybe more limited and targeted than the emergency March policies, resorted to by governments in "throw in everything and see what sticks" mode.

Britain is probably saved from worse because people have mostly ignored the floundering government's appeals to return to pubs and stop working from home. Infections are still running fairly low for now (the slight apparent rise [probably](#) due to increased testing, now the highest rate of testing in proportion to population of any big country in the world).

Even on the best projections, infections are likely to increase somewhat from October in the Northern Hemisphere, as people spend more time indoors in winter, and tracing the virus becomes more difficult amidst flu infections.

The way to minimise that is to use the current virus-lull to mobilise the labour movement to force the government into necessary social measures:

- Full isolation pay for all. Publicly-provided alternative accommodation for those in overcrowded housing who need to self-isolate.
- Bring NHS logistics and supply, and supply of PPE, into the public sector; take over the private hospitals and integrate them into the NHS; nationalise the care homes, and put the staff on secure public-sector pay and conditions
- Run the test-and-trace operation as a public-service operation, with a focus on rapid results and rapid communication, rather than the current mess of private profiteering subcontractors
- Workers' control over all workplace reopenings, and workers' control over precautions in hospitals and social care
- Open scientific debate, and honest information, including about the many things we just don't know. □

Pandemic leave for all

Pushed by its second surge of the virus, the Australian government has introduced paid pandemic leave for all in the hard-hit state of Victoria, and for all workers in elderly care.

Workers will be guaranteed \$1500 a fortnight if self-isolating because of a positive test or because they have had contact with infected people.

The Australian [trade unions](#) are calling for the payment to be raised to full ordinary wages and to be made easier to claim.

The state of Victoria is also introducing policies for care-home workers all to work only in one home, rather than possibly carrying infections from site to site, and to have any consequent loss of pay made good. □

((•)) Upcoming livestreams

Workers' Liberty have a schedule of videos going "live". Please tune in and share! The videos (often subtitled) will "go live" at the times below on our [facebook](#), and (if not before) [instagram](#), [youtube](#), and often [twitter](#). From Wednesday 5 to Tuesday 11 August:

Thursday 6 August, 1.30pm: *Solidarity editorials*

Monday 10 August, 1.30pm: "Minnie Lansbury – a different sort of Labour councillor" – with Janine Booth, author of "[Minnie Lansbury: suffragette, socialist and rebel councillor](#)"

Expand jobs, boost pay!

“” Editorial

On 8 August NHS workers and supporters across the country will demonstrate to demand a 15% pay rise, something like but better than what France has already paid its health workers.

The Labour Party would help on jobs more by backing these protests than it is doing by its “[jobs, jobs, jobs](#)” campaign launched on 31 July.

In the coming months, millions of furloughed workers are set to lose their jobs. And even more if it proves necessary to shut pubs and cafés again, as it may do. Over half a million young people leaving school and university are searching for jobs which aren’t there.

What we need:

- Extend the furlough and self-employed support schemes, drop the reintroduction of “conditionality” on Universal Credit, introduce a fallback emergency basic or minimum income as a safety-net.
- Shorten the working week with no loss of pay, to create more jobs with a standard working week of four days or 32 hours.
- Expand directly-employed public-sector jobs in health, social care and other public services. Expand

council house-building.

- Take the manufacturing and aviation giants declaring job cuts into public ownership, and reorganise their equipment and workforce skills towards green and socially useful production; take the banking and financial sector into public ownership and democratic control to restart investment.

Despite escalating unemployment, the NHS is short 100,000 workers. Social care needs more workers to decasualise and stabilise its staffing. Local government needs to reverse the job cuts of recent years.

Jobless bar workers cannot necessarily fill nursing vacancies, for example. But [50,000 registered nurses](#) are currently not working in nursing. A proper pay rise and better conditions would draw many of them back into nursing, and draw many into training.

The official Labour campaign, by contrast, exists only in the media and on the web, not on the streets, and is vague. “Reform (?) the furlough scheme”. “Back our (?) businesses” with a £1.7 bn business aid fund. “Additional support to areas forced into local lockdowns”. “Boost sick pay” (how much?) “Invest in infrastructure, accelerate progress towards a zero-carbon economy”.

Boost public-service jobs and pay! Fight the pandemic, fight for good jobs for all, and combat climate change at the same time! □

Nationalise social care!

“” Editorial

The *Guardian* reports a Department for Health and Social Care spokesperson saying there is “no foundation” to rumours that the government plans to bring social care under the umbrella of the NHS. But rumours remain widespread.

We believe that social care must be made a public service, publicly-owned, and with its staff on secure public-sector pay and conditions.

Whatever the exact relation in future between a publicly-owned social care service and the NHS – obviously it would have to be fairly close – just pushing the existing privatised social care network under the NHS umbrella would mean more privatisation within the NHS, not more public care provision or improved standards for service-users and workers.

All the policy passed at last year’s Labour conference was very clear that social care must be a comprehensively

public system. (See bit.ly/lpsocialcare) Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour leadership was pretty hesitant about arguing for that; Keir Starmer’s flatly refuses.

We need more debate in the labour movement about the relationship between social care and the NHS, going beyond undefined buzzwords like “integration”. But no relationship will work well unless on the basis of the kind of policy Labour Party conference has called for – comprehensive public ownership of care. □

- Sign this statement bit.ly/socialcarestatement
- More: bit.ly/socialcarearticle
- Abridged: full text at bit.ly/sc-public

“” Anti-racist resources

We have compiled various anti-racist resources to learn about anti-racist movements, and arm yourself with ideas to beat back racism: readings and pamphlets, video and audio. **New content this week!**

See workersliberty.org/anti-racist-resources □

Labour's antisemitism tangle

By Keith Road

More than £300,000 has been donated to a fundraising page to help support Jeremy Corbyn if a legal case goes ahead over the [leaked Labour antisemitism report](#) or the [Panorama program](#) produced by John Ware.

Keir Starmer has already settled the Panorama legal cases with the whistle-blowers featured in the documentary, several of whom are heavily criticised in the pro-Corbyn leaked report. Corbyn has criticised the decision. He claims the move to settle was political rather than legal and that Labour had a strong defence case.

Regardless of the merits of the legal case against the former party workers, Starmer's decision to settle has some logic. With the report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on Labour and antisemitism about to be published, he does not want to drag the party through the court fighting over the politics and actions of the previous regime.

There is no good reason to endorse all the claims or potential claims by ex-staffers, by Ware, or by people identified as complainants in the leaked report (there could be upwards of 40 pending actions). Private rumblings that some will accept the expulsion of Corbyn from Labour for dropping their cases are also a distraction. That seems extremely unlikely.

The leadership will make a calculation as to how many cases can be settled without bankrupting the party. It is not in the interests of the left for Labour to be made peniless. Whatever happens, lots of lawyers will have made a lot of money from this debacle; let's minimise that.

Even so, it seems more "Corbyn cult" than effective leftism that the settlements have generated an outrage that continues to minimise the issue of antisemitism and instead raises over a third of a million pounds for someone who is after all in the top 3% of earners. On 2 August, in an interview with the *Observer*, Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey said that Unite would reconsider its donations to Labour in light of the settlements. He was supported by the Chair of the Socialist Campaign Group, Ian Lavery MP.

But for any trade union to fund the sort of legal cases now looming would be a scandal in the midst of job cuts and economic instability. That McCluskey sends out a warning over *this*, rather than actual social policies of Unite which the Labour frontbench is shelving, demonstrates a problem.

Momentum has promoted the crowdfunder and rubbished the EHRC on social media. There may be some merits to their criticism (to do with departures from the EHRC in 2012), but, after making no criticism of the EHRC from 2012 until just days before the report is produced, this smacks of "whataboutery".

Workers' Liberty argues for the left to take antisemitism in its own ranks seriously. We plan further meetings on the topic after the report is released. The current leadership has yet to lay out its strategy for tackling antisemitism. It is likely to include a shake-up of disciplinary procedures. We argue that, to tackle the problem the priority must be political education, discussion, and debate, with expulsions only as a supplement and for the most egregious cases of antisemitism. Battles over court cases will leave the real issues unresolved. □

• The 21 July Labour NEC was told a report will come to the September NEC about launching a new Labour Students organisation. The old Labour Students, controlled by the right through gross manipulation, was disbanded by the NEC in September 2019.

Left NEC slate: weak start

The "Centre Left Grassroots Alliance" campaign for Labour's National Executive Committee, supported by Momentum and other organisations, has launched under the banner "Grassroots Voice" (futureweneed.com)

The front page of the campaign website includes a 180 word political programme. If you're not paying much attention it reads as left-wing, namechecking various good causes, but what it actually advocates is vague. It says nothing about procedural questions which are crucial particularly for NEC members, e.g. sovereignty of conference, proper reporting of NEC meetings, due process over suspensions and expulsions (the latest report from left members of the NEC says administrative suspensions are at a record level). Nor about wider political demands and struggles.

Local Labour Parties are making nominations between now and 27 September. While supporting nominations for the left slate candidates and for other left candidates like Jermain Jackman, socialists will also argue for left slates to be based first on a clear platform, and query the candidates' vagueness on many issues. □

Tower Hamlets strikes again

Tower Hamlets council workers' fight against attacks on their terms and conditions is continuing, with new strike dates on 13, 14 and 17 August. The workers want to reballot when their current ballot mandate expires on 22 August; so far the Unison bureaucracy is stalling them on that. □

- Sign up for solidarity and donate bit.ly/thunison
- Updates: towerhamlets.unison.site/news
- Interview with Tower Hamlet's Unison's social care convener Amina Patel bit.ly/aminapinterview

Anti-Netanyahu protests grow

By Ira Berkovic

Mass demonstrations against Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's hard-right prime minister, have continued, as the country lurches towards its fourth election in two years.

The latest mobilisations have focused on his mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic, where a precipitous easing of lockdown measures and inadequate social provision has seen both infections and unemployment spike massively.

An article in the left-wing *972 magazine* notes that, although Palestinian citizens of Israel are still not attending the protests in significant numbers, left-wing activists are finding it easier to raise issues of racism, equality between Jews and Arabs, and the occupation than in previous upheavals around social and economic questions inside Israel, such as the 2011 Occupy movement around housing.

The writer Oren Ziv observes: "The anti-occupation bloc, comprising several hundred protesters, are not on the margins of the demonstrations. Last Saturday night, for example, it was possible to hear them chanting 'Justice for Iyad' [a Palestinian man murdered by Israeli police] at the Prime Minister's residence, even as Israeli riot police were forcefully dispersing the crowd."

Recent polling shows that Netanyahu's right-wing bloc would win a majority were elections called, but that could

begin to shift as protests continue, and with any prospective election due to take place in November, much could change.

Whether elections will be held could be decided by 25 August, if the coalition government helmed by Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, the "centrist" who leads the Blue and White party, fails to pass a budget. The terms of the coalition mandate that it must pass a two-year budget, but Netanyahu has signalled that he is only prepared to pass a one-year budget. Unless either he or Gantz back down, the coalition could break up, making elections inevitable.

Tensions within the ruling coalition, agreed between Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right Likud party and Benny Gantz's centre-right Blue and White party in May, and also involving Avigdor Lieberman's secular far-right Yisrael Beiteinu party and various religious fundamentalist groups, have also stalled Netanyahu's plans to annex Palestinian territories to Israel, his flagship policy. Netanyahu sees fresh elections as a way to regroup and consolidate power.

A majority government would allow him to retake control of the justice ministry, potentially vital ahead of court proceedings that could rule him unfit for office, and before witnesses begin testifying in his trial, currently due to commence in January. □

• Abridged. Full version at bit.ly/isr-p

Remobilising the left

By Cathy Nugent

At the end of July local AWL organisers met to discuss remobilising members to respond to the economic and political upheavals that face labour movement activists as the lockdown eases. Our window for that remobilisation may be short if lockdowns are partially or fully reintroduced.

As socialist activists whose political bread-and-butter is face-to-face communication and outward-facing activity such as meetings, street protests, and picket lines, we need to learn the lessons of lockdown.

Some trade-union activity has been possible in some unions, at the local level and among leftists, but mostly the central controls of unions have been shut down. Likewise the Labour Party has been shut down. Only now are local parties beginning to have decision-making meetings. As working-class people face job cuts and other economic deprivations, it is vital that we and others on the left are pushing open these organisations and making them fight the Tories.

There have been gains for the AWL. Our regular online meetings and study groups have enabled us to reach out to, and meet (albeit virtually) many new people. Our local

online meetings have also been well attended.

But socialists also need to be active and visible in the offline world, and we have missed that. Activity helps all of us to develop an individual sense of what socialist ideas mean and how they can change the world. We need to stretch our demonstrating muscles, get out and sell the printed version of our paper *Solidarity*, talk with people on the streets, and make our solidarity work with Hong Kong and Uyghur human rights activists visible. We are asking all comrades, and others who are sympathetic, to help do that.

Local organisers also discussed preparing for the start of the Uni term at the end of September. All UK Uni students will be studying largely online at least in the first term, but most will be required to go onto campus once a week. In the first two weeks of term we will be organising many stalls in London and the big cities, to talk with as many students as we can about our political work. AWL students will host an informal online political discussion every Thursday, advertised across the UK.

We'll begin this push to remobilise ourselves and others by attending, mobilising for and selling *Solidarity* at the NHS protests on Saturday 8 August. □

Sea could rise 2 or 3 metres soon



Environment

By Zack Muddle

New [research](#) has narrowed the predicted likely range of global warming for a given increase of CO2. Previously, a doubling of CO2 above pre-industrial levels would have been predicted to increase global surface temperatures by 1.5-4.5°C, a measure of "climate sensitivity". The new research, assessing available evidence, places climatic sensitivity within the middle or upper part of this range: 2.6-4.1°C.

With lower climate sensitivity increasingly unlikely, attempts to build hopes upon are even more untenable. The need to radically reduce net carbon emissions, as well as to mitigate the climate crises impacts, are more important than ever.

Indeed, 2020 is set to be the [warmest or second warmest](#) year on record. And this is despite El Niño, a multi-year climatic cycle, *not* currently boosting global temperatures. As well as heatwaves, and dangers from Siberia, as

[covered last issue](#), this drove record-low levels of Arctic sea ice in July.

Earlier this year, [scientists](#) first observed warm water below the Thwaites glacier in Antarctica: simultaneously explaining its rapid decrease to date, and raising further warnings of Thwaites' potential collapse. Thwaites is roughly the size of the UK and its ice melt already accounts for 4% of global sea-level rise. If it were to collapse into the sea, that would raise sea levels by almost two-thirds of a meter. Worse, Thwaites acts as a plug for other glaciers and icecaps. If these, too, were released, they could together raise sea levels by two to three meters.

Current sea-level rise of around 20cm already seriously increases coastal flooding. Rises on the scale of meters would hit many of the world's most populous areas, and food-producing regions.

The political impact of the Covid-19 crisis presents opportunities for a remaking of society on a more socially just and environmentally sustainable basis, for a "[green recovery](#)". Yet globally, and in the UK, we are currently seeing instead a "[fossil-fuel reboot](#)". It is down to the workers' movement, and to environmentalists working within the labour movement, to fight for and win the recovery we need. □

Campaign launch draws 1,500

In Australia, the [Living Incomes For Everyone coalition](#) is working towards a week of action 17-24 September. The coalition was formally launched on 26 July, at a 1,500-strong online meeting.

Wrapping up the launch, Janet Burstall explained the aims:

Firstly, we stand for meeting people's needs, and against capitalism. We're grassroots, we're a coalition, our demands link the needs of workers, and especially of everyone on low incomes, in or out of work... We are filling a gap in the Australian working class movement, and we will be part of shaking off decades of failure to fight back as a whole movement! Which brings me to my second point, the work ahead of us to win our demands.

We know we're up against capitalism, and the government with its priority on the value of capital, over the well being of people and planet. The announced cuts to JobKeeper [like furlough] and JobSeeker [like Universal Credit] are designed to increase the supply of cheap labour to employers, to the disadvantage of all workers, in or out of work.

So we also have to take on the employers. We have to take on the job networks and other outsourced providers of harassment services to the government. We'll take on landlords, developers and banks in order to save homes...

Thirdly, to win against those powers, we need to build our own power and agency... to educate, agitate and organise... We need more people discussing and deciding collectively, especially in workplaces and unions... [to]

give our supporters the confidence to refuse to accept injustice by co-ordinating amongst our groups and all their supporters for the most visible and disruptive public actions that we can organise...

The LIFE campaign wants to have democratic and inclusive decision making processes, that will continue the grassroots spirit and commitment that we have started out with.

What we are setting out to do will make history.

(Janet spoke from the lands of the Gadigal Wöngal people of the Eora nation, and acknowledged that sovereignty was never ceded.) □

Anti-racist series

The Historical Roots of Racism: An Anti-Racist Educational Series. Alternate Mondays, from 10 August, 7:30-9pm, on zoom.

Monday 10 August, 7:30-9pm: [The Transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and imperialism](#)

Monday 24 August: [Scientific Racism](#)

Monday 7 September: [After Slavery & Mass Migrations](#)

Monday 21 September: [Racism Today and How to Fight it](#)

For full and updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, see [workersliberty.org/c19-online](#)

See also: [workersliberty.org/anti-racist-resources](#) □

Syria: Assad, Iran, Russia, no democracy

By Keith Road

Elections were held on 19 July in regime-controlled areas of Syria, now over 70% of the country. Assad has been in power for over 20 years.

This, the third election since the start of the protests in 2011, was postponed because of Covid-19. As in all the others, there was no real opposition to Assad's Ba'ath party. Even the opposition that is tolerated by Assad boycotts the elections.

Karam Shaar, an expert on Syria at the Middle East Institute, was quoted by Al-Jazeera just before the election results. "The al-Assad regime uses parliamentary elections to reward loyalty. This time around, warlords and militiamen are expected to gain yet more seats for their contributions to the state over the past four years."

Former rebel areas, Eastern Ghouta and southern parts of Idlib, returned pro-Assad candidates. The rest of Idlib remains outside Assad's control: the Turkey-Syria border area has millions of internally displaced Syrians, refugees from the fighting.

Syrians living abroad, including millions of refugees forced to leave their homes because of the fighting, could not take part in the election.

Despite the new "Caesar Act" sanctions put on Assad, the economic crisis in Syria cannot just be blamed on outside intervention. Millions of Syrians now live in dire conditions with only the hope of aid from Iran or Russia, or from a newly rekindled relationship with Saudi Arabia.

Russia is now paying some Syrian forces directly. The Fifth Corps, run by a former Free Syrian Army and at one time Nusra Front commander, is now part of a tolerated opposition in Deraa. Paid by Russia, they have assisted regime forces in fighting in Northern Syria, been allowed to govern the territory with Russian protection, and also allowed to conduct some limited protests against the Assad government.

Iran has also continued to grow its influence in Syria, with a new agreement to help strengthen the Syrian air force alongside its expanded military base south of Damascus. Thousands of Shia militiamen under Iranian command remain in Syria. □

More online

Trotsky's untranslated articles on antisemitism

Stan Crooke has translated Trotsky's writings on the 1905 pogroms, the Jews in Romania, antisemitism in the Moscow Trials, and more.

bit.ly/ldt-as

Military, bureaucracy, business elite

Sofiane Zouaï on the Algerian state since independence.

bit.ly/sofiane-z

How the Bolsheviks governed

Paul Vernadsky on workers' democracy after the 1917 revolution.

bit.ly/bol-gov

Once Upon a Time in Iraq

Dan Katz reviews the TV series.

bit.ly/once-iraq

Victor Serge's notebooks, 1936-47

Reviewed by John Cunningham.

bit.ly/jc-vs

Trans rights: keep up the argument

Mohan Sen analyses opinion-survey results.

bit.ly/tr-stats

Anti-racism: different approaches

Social engineering and organising from below.

bit.ly/swp-kendi

Featured book

Steve Cohen's "That's Funny, You Don't Look Antisemitic: an anti-racist analysis of Left antisemitism", first published in 1984, was a seminal work. Workers' Liberty is selling copies of the third edition, published in 2019: 212 pages for £5 plus post. This "must-read" classic looks at the history of Left antisemitism from a Marxist perspective.

workersliberty.org/books



New videos!

Watch Workers' Liberty's videos and playlists, and subscribe to [our youtube channel](#)! Many have subtitles. **New these last three weeks:**

- [Brazil and the pandemic](#), intro on the pandemic, its political impact, and the anti-racist protests in Brazil
- [Marxism and religion](#), intro speech by Kate
- [Marxists and the Labour Party](#), intro speech by Cathy Nugent, part of the ABCs of Marxism series
- [Remobilise the left!](#) Solidarity editorial
- [Towards a new revolutionary left?](#) Panel debate with speakers from Workers' Liberty, Mutiny, Red Flag
- [Isolation pay for all!](#) Solidarity editorial □

Please watch and subscribe; like, comment and share! All at: youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK

Unionising black workers in

By Dan Katz

The Memphis, Tennessee, bin workers' strike of 1968 is now mainly remembered as an event that provided the backdrop for the assassination of Martin Luther King. King had made a turn, with his Poor People's Campaign, towards fighting against poverty.

1300 black workers in Memphis struck against poverty pay rates that were so low many of the men wore dirty old clothes and needed social security payments to feed their children. But, watching the footage of the workers' marches today, the most striking fact is that almost no white workers marched with them.

US academic Michael Goldfield's new book *The Southern Key: Class, Race and Radicalism* argues that the unionisation drives in America, in the 1930s and 1940s, failed to unionise the South. This failure had a number of consequences, one of which was that the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s was weaker and less effective than it could have been, as white workers were pulled behind populist racist demagogues instead of fighting in solidarity with black workers.

Goldfield places the blame for the failure on the right-wing business unionism of the US labour movement's leaders, the Stalinist policy of the Communist Party and "racially deficient liberalism, unwilling to mobilise workers for democratic struggle."

Goldfield argues the defeat of the unions' organising efforts in the South undermined unions in the rest of the country, allowing some anti-union employers a low-wage and unorganised area they could easily relocate to.

The key problems with his book are:

- He does not place any emphasis on the failure of the US trade unions to form a labour party, following the explosion of industrial union organisation after the mid-1930s. The lack of a mass labour party, even more than the lack of a unionised South, has debilitated the US left, unions and struggle for black equality.

- Goldfield's analysis of the Communist Party is muddled. He quotes James P Cannon, a US Trotskyist leader, extensively, and approvingly, including: "The Roosevelt social program was the decisive factor in heading off the

mass movement and diverting it into reformist channels, but the Stalinists, who supported Roosevelt for reasons of Kremlin foreign policy, miseducated, betrayed, corrupted, and demoralized the vanguard of this movement." But Goldfield also writes, "[The CP's] elimination as a political force in the labour movement and in the political life of this country meant a crippling of the Left."

Prior to the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO) in 1935, the US trade union movement was dominated by the American Federation of Labour (AFL). The AFL rested on craft unions and some of its affiliates split union locals on racial lines, or refused to organise black workers, or aimed to keep workplaces white only.

Against the backdrop of the post-crash Depression, and then Roosevelt's New Deal and its vaguely pro-worker rhetoric, the US working class began to move. Three left-led strikes in 1934 – the west coast dockers' strike, the Toledo Auto-Lite dispute and the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis teamsters' (truck drivers) strike – were bitterly and violently fought-out and opened the way to create a union centre, the CIO, which would organise the basic sections of the US working class in industrial unions. Steel, car workers, miners, electrical, textiles, rubber and transportation workers were unionised. And for the first time very large numbers of black workers joined the US labour movement.

After 1935

But from 1935 and the start of the Popular Front period, until the Stalin-Hitler pact in 1939, the CP toned down aggressive campaigning for black rights as it sought an alliance with Roosevelt and the Democrats, and right-wing union leaders. In that it followed the new tactics of Russian foreign policy. After the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941 the CP subordinated all its work to supporting the US war effort. Communist leader Earl Browder went as far as to say the policy of the CP was to remain silent about Jim Crow segregation in the Army during the war as it would endanger national unity (*Sunday Worker*, 4 March 1945).

In contrast the Trotskyists maintained militant opposition to all manifestation of Jim Crow.

In steel, between 1910 and the 1930s, 30 to 40% of Southern steel workers were black. Black steel workers often held the lowest paid positions. It was left to local left-led unions to fight for better opportunities for black workers. The major union, USWA, remained under tight bureaucratic right-wing control.

The French Revolution and black liberation

Sacha Ismail looks at the story of Alex Dumas, France's black general during the Revolutionary Wars
bit.ly/alex-d

What we demand in the crisis

1. Requisition key sectors
2. Fight for workers' control
3. Make the labour movement an essential service, fighting on the issues listed here
4. Defend workers' rights. Work or full pay! Cancel rent, mortgage, and utility payments.
5. Take care of the worst-off
6. Defend civil liberties
7. International solidarity ☐

- See full text at bit.ly/what-d
- Animated video of full demands: bit.ly/demand-video

the USA in the 30s and 40s

Under pressure from black steelworkers the union set up a Civil Rights Committee in 1948. However, all the committee's membership was white. The USWA continued to have racially segregated facilities at its southern offices into the 1950s. The USWA leadership under Philip Murray was unwilling to take on racist white workers.

A top-down, massively-funded, CIO drive to organise textiles in 1937-8 ended in disaster in the South. Despite mobilising 600 organisers, including 100 in two Southern regions, the drive against relentless and uncompromising mill owners failed because the union advocated "agreement not conflict" with bosses who had no intention of agreeing to any union proposals. The bosses sacked workers and hired thugs to attack organisers; and the union leaderships had no idea how to respond.

At the end of the 1930s the CIO created the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) as a narrow business union which largely abandoned organising in the South.

By the end of World War Two 14 million US workers were unionised. CIO affiliates had about a quarter of a million members in the South. In addition the miners' union had 100,000 members. Most of the union organisation in the South was in the big cities.

Operation Dixie

The CIO had a drive, beginning in February 1946, called Operation Dixie, to unionise the South, still poorly organised and an area of cheap labour. The AFL, a separate US union federation at the time, began a similar initiative in May 1946, before giving up less than a year later following strong resistance from Southern bosses.

The CIO's campaign was better-resourced than the AFL's, and initially met with some significant successes, extending their organisation in New Orleans, Memphis, Atlanta and several towns in Mississippi. The CIO had 6000 members, in Laurel, Mississippi, a town of 30,000, and in 1948 unionised the last big textile plant in town. White workers voted for the union despite ultra-reactionary racist Senator Theodore Bilbo campaigning against the union.

However, the drive organised by right-wing CIO bureaucrats quickly ground to a halt when the unions attempted to organise the textile sector, whose mills were often in isolated, smaller towns. And the unions began to lose the gains made during World War 2 as the Cold War began in earnest and all those associated with the unions and the left were targeted as "Reds".

The CIO leaders in charge of the campaign witch-hunted the left and denounced black organisations which wanted to help the union. They came up against resistance from a great many workers who had joined one or more union in the past, but had been let down. And the organisers were chosen for being Southerners, rather than for being competent. Almost all the organisers were men, despite the large number of women textile workers.

Across the South there were patches of good practice. Where industries had been organised in the North and

West, the unions had often won bases in the South too. In Louisville, Kentucky, the Harvester plant that opened in 1946 employed 6000 workers, of which 14% were black. The left-led union branch had black leaders as well as white, and aggressively opposed segregation in the workplace as well as leading the local fight for integration of Louisville parks and hotels.

In the late 1940s and 1950s packinghouse (meat processing) workers in the UPWA fought to integrate schools, parks and public venues in Kansas City. Unions found that aggressive action on black equality helped to change the views of racist white workers: racist whites who came to work alongside black workers often then elected black reps.

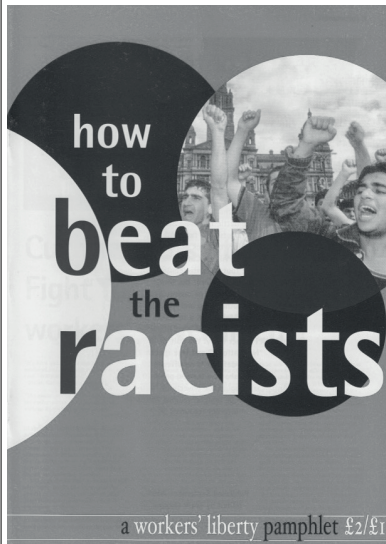
Leadership

The key, Goldfield argues, was leadership. When the UPWA negotiated a deal with the Armour firm in 1952 to desegregate all facilities in its plants, there was a serious backlash from racists in a Texas factory. 200 white union members, armed with knives and guns, stormed the union offices demanding the policy be reversed. The union sent organisers to the plant, leafleted it, and threatened the company, which was wobbling, with strikes at its other plants if it reintroduced segregation.

However, at national leadership level the conservative union leaderships, backward on questions of race, capitulated often to white racism, especially in the South.

Goldfield's point is that organising the South required militant tactics, on-the-ground organising by left-led union organisations which had uncompromising anti-racist politics and mobilised local communities to back the unions and, in turn, went out beyond the workplaces to fight for social justice. If that had happened, then the black Memphis refuse workers in 1968 would have been backed by substantial numbers of white Southern workers. □

• Abridged. Full version at bit.ly/s-key



how to beat the racists

a workers' liberty pamphlet £2/£1

Audio version now available! The 2001 edition of this pamphlet, published after the far-right BNP more than tripled its votes in the election that year, aims to convince labour movement activists of the importance of fighting racism, anti-racists of the importance of the labour movement – and fighting to transform it.

workersliberty.org/pamphlets

School history and Black Lives Matter

By Liam Conway

A good historian and history teacher is a blend of detective, lawyer, and story-teller. At its simplest history is story-telling with evidence, though for many years history in schools was simply the story of rulers, of so-called great men. The stories of the little people, often far more interesting, were neglected. And the more oppressed the people, the more likely that their story remained untold in history books.

Imagine for a minute you are a trans man or woman, or a black trans man or woman. You have all the experience of isolation in a cruel world full of prejudice and, to add salt to the wounds, the story of people like you is completely absent from any history curriculum in schools here or, in all probability, anywhere in the world.

I taught history in two Nottinghamshire secondary schools for 37 years. I told a lot of stories, enthusiastically led trips to historical sites, put evidence and story-telling centre stage, and looked for the stories of the little people at the expense of "great men". When I retired in 2017, I felt I had done the best job I could. Now, I'm not so sure.

There is increasing concern amongst parents and teachers about the history curriculum's limitations. In a survey conducted by the Runnymede Trust last year, 78 percent of teachers wanted training on teaching histories of migration and 71 per cent on teaching histories of empire.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder and the Black Lives Matter protests, demands for change in the history curriculum will only increase. And there is plenty of material with which to make a start.

The exceptional TV programmes by David Olusoga, "Black and British – A Forgotten History": "Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners" and "The Unwanted: The Secret Windrush Files", should be essential viewing for teachers, teaching assistants and students. Olusoga understands, as every history teacher should, that you must dig deep to reveal the stories of all the forgotten people in society.

In the series on Windrush, Olusoga uncovers the shocking record on migrants of the 1945 Labour Government. Interrogating the documents with his usual attention to detail, Olusoga reveals that, on June 22 1948, 11 Labour MPs wrote to the Prime Minister Clement Atlee to express

concern at what they called an "incursion".

The "incursion" of which they complained was the arrival that same day of 500 Caribbean migrants on board the Empire Windrush. These "socialist" MPs believed that an "influx of coloured people would impair the harmony, strength and cohesion of our public and social life". Labour's colonial minister, Arthur Creech Jones, played to the racist gallery by remarking that they wouldn't survive their first English winter.

The Tories, re-elected in 1951, amplified the racist themes of the Labour Government. To get around the migration rights bestowed on all Commonwealth citizens in the 1948 Nationality Act, they began to "investigate" the living and working habits of the Windrush Generation in an attempt to prove them lazy, feckless, welfare-scrounging drug dealers. At one and the same time, the Tories continued to recruit Caribbean workers for a "booming" British economy.

Most of this is absent from any history curriculum, as is Churchill's view that the Tories should fight the 1955 General Election on the slogan "Keep England White".

The history curriculum is little better when we consider the teaching of the Slave Trade. In an eight-minute video entitled "Black British History We're Not Taught in Schools", Olusoga says "what a lot of people are taught in schools is the biographies of individual black people. Lots of good stuff comes out of that, kids now learn about Mary Seacole and Walter Tull, that's great and I haven't got a problem with it.

"But if you only do that, what you find is you just create these isolated black characters... you don't learn about is the forces that led Britain to interact with Africa and Africans. We don't learn just how important the sugar slavery economy was in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries."

Where the school history curriculum where it does specifically cover the Slave Trade, a trade spanning more than three centuries, the emphasis is on either the "great work of British abolitionists" like Wilberforce or slavery in the Americas. You would not know from the British history curriculum that Britain was the mainstay of the Atlantic slave trade for most of the three centuries during which this brutal system operated.

Racism is covered in the history curriculum, but most notably when dealing with antisemitism in Nazi Germany, not the experiences of black people in Britain or the British Empire. Racism was also covered in the now long-gone Integrated Humanities GCSE which, in the unit "Persecution and Prejudice", looked at the experiences of the Asian and Afro Caribbean communities in Britain post World War 2.

Continued on p11

“What we stand for

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights for socialist revolution, for the labour movement to militantly assert working-class interests.

See workersliberty.org/about – if you agree, join us! ☐

Hong Kong faces direct rule

By Pete Radcliff

On 2 August it was announced that after the term of the last LegCo councillors expires, the power to decide who will rule Hong Kong over the next year will be handed over to 5 to 7 members of the Chinese Communist Party's National People's Congress Standing Committee meeting in Beijing.

Current LegCo members opposed to the National Security Law (NSL) will likely be removed. They had already been barred from standing again for LegCo. Hong Kong faces thinly-veiled direct rule from the CCP in Beijing.

On Tuesday 28 July, Benny Tai, initiator of the 2014 Occupy movement, was fired from Hong Kong University.

The next day, four young democracy activists between 16 and 21 years old were arrested under the NSL – the first by the new security agency set up by the CCP in Hong Kong. They were later released on bail but the charge – advocating Hong Kong independence – remains against them and carries a possible life sentence.

On the same day election officers began barring pro-democracy candidates for the Legislative Council (LegCo). On 31 July, Carrie Lam, "Chief Executive" of Hong Kong, called off the September LegCo elections entirely for 12 months, using the limited new Covid-19 surge as her excuse.

The whole focus of a united democracy movement had been on the LegCo elections after the democrats had swept the board last November in the District Council elections.

Continued from p10

And racism is covered in PSHE topics. But what Olusoga has done is expose a glaring omission in the history curriculum, the centrality of racism in Britain for centuries.

When it comes to racism, the history curriculum has passed the buck to other countries, like Germany and the USA. It needs a major overhaul, the sooner the better.

A good place to start the first lesson of a revised history curriculum would be the toppling of a statue, the history-making moment when slave-trader Edward Colston was first felled to a Bristol street and then dumped in the harbour. The lessons to follow could include a trip to the museum in Bristol where the Colston statue is to be housed.

The statue could form part of an exhibition on the brutality of the racist slave trade, and the slave plantations. The placards used by those who toppled it, should be spread around the statue, along with pictures and a video of its toppling. The Tories say children should be taught "British Values".

A good history curriculum will show that central to British Values for centuries was white supremacism, and that Churchill, frequently voted "greatest Briton", was in fact a white supremacist. □

On 11-12 July, the pro-democracy movement ran primaries for the LegCo contest, and 600,000 Hong Kongers took part in spite of legal threats. In the main radical young protestors won those primaries. It looked like democrats opposed to the NSL and demanding universal suffrage would take most of the democratically-elected seats in LegCo (half of the total) in September.

With even one or two of the "functional" seats – elected by a far smaller electorate and generally stacked with opponents of universal suffrage – the radicals might even have got a majority.

Hong Kong urgently needs democracy in order to resist the tightening grip of the CCP. Councillors from 17 of the 18 pro-democracy district councils have met to demand the withdrawal of the NSL. The pro-democracy candidates from the LegCo primaries have a strong mandate.

They need to move quickly before a wedge is driven within the democracy movement by those who want to accommodate to direct rule. Organised working-class resistance will be central to sustaining democratic counter-power. □

• More: Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong (UK), bit.ly/s-hk



New audio!

Listen, download or subscribe to [Workers' Liberty Audio](#) recordings of our paper, other publications, and many meetings. **New these last three weeks:**

- [How to beat the racists](#), a Workers' Liberty pamphlet in ten audio parts, going out daily. Five released so far.
- [Brazil and the pandemic](#), intro on the pandemic, its political impact, and the anti-racist protests in Brazil
- [Marxism and religion](#), intro speech by Kate
- [Drugs: legalisation, history, future](#) – intro speech, part of "The state, crime, prisons, and the police" series
- [Marxists and the Labour Party](#), intro speech by Cathy Nugent, part of the ABCs of Marxism series
- [Why not a united Ireland?](#) Ireland, Brexit, and Partition – Workers' Liberty 3/66 mag., in five audio parts
- [Towards a new revolutionary left?](#) Panel debate with speakers from Workers' Liberty, Mutiny, Red Flag
- [PJ – AKA The Repeat Beat Poet](#) – on George Floyd protests, police, and fighting racism (see pages 8-9)
- [Solidarity 557 part 1](#) and [part 2](#), [556 part 1](#) and [part 2](#)
- [Marxists on the US Civil War and the fight against slavery](#) – with Mark Osborn and Sacha Ismail
- [The politics of identity](#), intro with Cathy Nugent

See workersliberty.org/audio for links to the audio version. All recent episodes can be found through most podcast providers: search "Workers' Liberty" or "Solidarity & More". More information on subscribing and using podcasts at [the URL above](#). □

Organising home care workers

By Alison Brown

In April deaths of those receiving domiciliary care services were 2.7 times higher than the three-year average, an excess only slightly lower than in care homes. Yet there has been little focus on this sector during the pandemic.

The infection control issues reported by workers, lack of PPE and inadequate sick pay, are common across social care. The neglect from government has been even starker for home care workers than for care homes.

Over half of domiciliary care providers report having no allocation from the national infection control fund, which specified 75% of the money for care homes. Many people receiving home care have cancelled their service for fear of contracting the virus from carers.

Up to 73% of domiciliary care workers are on zero hours contracts. Time in the sector is highly fragmented, with "spot" rather than "block" commissioning, and travel time between clients and gaps between scheduled visits often unpaid.

A regular client admitted to hospital may equate to no pay, despite the employer receiving a retaining fee. The 15 minute visit has largely been removed from the sector in recent years, but as cuts raise the eligibility criteria, in-

creased duties per call intensify labour.

Those conditions hurt the service as well as the workers. Care in the home is held up as allowing frail people to keep their independence, but service users report conflicts over intrusive scheduling and generic care. Developing trusting relationships with workers is vital for clients, and consistency is key, but there are high levels of turnover and vacancies. 36% of workers have reported to Unison that they are not scheduled with regular clients.

Union organisation, notoriously low across social care, is largely concentrated in care homes. Pockets of organisation exist in publicly run services, for example in intensive discharge teams, where workers in Birmingham had a successful dispute in 2019.

But there has been a 37% decrease of publicly provided care over the last 10 years. Workers are isolated. 44% of workers surveyed by Unison said they only ever saw their immediate fellow worker. Bullying is common.

The whole of social care is now in crisis, financial as well as medical. Political campaigning for public ownership must include domiciliary care, and unions need organisation drives like those used in Deliveroo to reach care workers. □

Social care: control, markets, and public provision

By Will Sefton

Jamie Hale (*Solidarity* 546) makes a number of points that strengthen the central argument in *Solidarity* 544 on social care. A strengthening of workers' rights for those in the sector, including higher pay, proper contracts, sick pay and holiday pay, would mean less rushed workers providing care and support for people without having to whizz round multiple people, with very differing needs, over a short space of time, and with minimal training.

Jamie points to the importance of direct payments and the management of care institutions by those who live in them.

A charter drawn up by service users and workers is part of what we need. Will it be possible to include all residents, in all institutions and homes, in management, directly or via election? In a home for people with dementia, that seems neither right nor desirable. Do their rights of control transfer to those who have power of attorney over their affairs? In some cases, families are probably worse placed than the professionals to make the decisions. And, since they are not using the service themselves, can they have the kind of say Jamie thinks is important?

Direct payments for social care to those who can manage them effectively, whether on their own or with the support of other services, are desirable for the autonomy of those receiving support, but come with pitfalls. They can leave people more vulnerable as they have to manage and account for the money, become an employer, deal with the problems of having to stop employing in-

dividuals. Some people will find such responsibilities an additional burden even if they are in a position to take them on.

And then some service users getting direct payments will find that their needs cannot be met by the suppliers they have a choice from, many of which will be agencies with workers on poor terms and conditions.

A direct-payment system can only be as good as the services available on the market. Services via guaranteed public sector provision, with adequate training and job security exists, would be a big step forward.

Much is already done by the public sector (rather than via market allocation) to match children or young people with suitable placement or foster care. In social care that sort of attention seems some way off, but we can surely learn something from it.

As long as the sector is warped by a drive for profits, then those with the most complex needs and without their own wealth are going to lose out. □

40 years since Gdańsk strike

Fourteenth of August will mark 40 years since the start of the strike at the Lenin shipyard, Gdańsk, opening the way to the creation of *Solidarność*, a mass workers' movement reaching 10 million members in September 1981, and challenging the Stalinist state. Our book/audiobook tells the story: workersliberty.org/solidarnosc

Unison: opening out the choice

By Ollie Moore

The election for the general secretary position in public sector union Unison begins on 10 August. Branch nominations run from then until 25 September, and the vote from 28 October to 27 November, with results announced on 11 January 2021.

Incumbent general secretary Dave Prentis, in office since 2001 and with a record of profound bureaucratic conservatism, will retire when his current term ends in December.

Candidates require 25 branch nominations to make the ballot paper. So far, five candidates have formally declared their intention to stand, three of whom are currently unelected officials of the union. These are Roger McKenzie, currently an assistant general secretary; Christina McAnea, also an assistant general secretary; and Margaret Greer, the union's national race equality officer. Jon Rogers' well-informed [blog](#) describes McAnea as the continuity candidate. McKenzie is positioned somewhat on the left of the union's officialdom.

Greer has badged herself "the members' champion", but has no particular left-wing record either in her officer role, or as a Labour councillor in Enfield.

The two rank-and-file candidates declared so far are Hugo Pierre, a local government worker and member of the Socialist Party, who sits on the union's National Executive Committee, and Paul Holmes, also a local government worker and left-wing Labour activist, who stood for the position previously. Holmes is backed by "Unison Action Broad Left", a fairly loose and not especially active grouping of left-wingers within Unison.

Pierre's programme, which includes calls for the election of all union officials and a commitment not to take the full £138,000 general secretary's salary, has some merit. But his campaign will be conditioned by the broader politics and approach of his organisation, the Socialist Party. The SP's commitment to basic rank-and-file demands such as the election of all officials and for officials to be paid a workers' wage varies greatly depending on their

own proximity to power in any given union.

The SP also opposes union affiliations to the Labour Party, demanding defunding and disaffiliation rather than the democratisation of the union's link to Labour so it could be used as a channel for direct pressure and opposition. As their own electoral front, the "Trade Union and Socialist Coalition", is hardly a viable alternative avenue for the political representation of Unison members, their argument serves to bolster anti-political arguments that oppose union involvement in electoral politics altogether.

On that question, Holmes's campaign will have a better position than Pierre's. Holmes is a long-standing Labour left activist and Unison rep, who has built up his local branch, Kirklees, into a relatively well organised and combative force. However, Holmes has been suspended, both by his employer and from the union itself, since December 2019, with little clarity as to the background to the suspension, nor any public campaign against it. Whether Holmes will even be able to enter the race, given his suspension, is not clear.

Workers' Liberty supporters in Unison support nominating Hugo Pierre or Paul Holmes, to ensure an open contest and representation for rank-and-file voices arguing for greater democracy and a more militant industrial strategy. An election fought entirely between three unelected bureaucrats would be poor.

We understand why some left-wing activists are backing Roger McKenzie. The election is First-Past-The-Post, so voting for the candidate most likely to beat McAnea, as Prentis's political successor, has some merit.

Our people in Unison will decide which candidate to vote for once the campaigns take shape, and more material is issued.

We will use the election to argue for a real rank-and-file network in the union. Not simply a collection of individuals that backs candidates in elections, but a body that develops a programme for the radical transformation of the union, based fundamentally on mobilising members in workplaces. □



Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom. **In August:**

Sunday 9 August, 6.30-8pm: [Revolutionary Jews](#)

Monday 10 August, 7:30-9pm: [The Transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and imperialism](#)

Sunday 16 August, 6.30-8pm: [The 2003 Iraq war and after](#)

Monday 24 August, 7:30-9pm: [Scientific Racism](#)

Thursday 20 August, 4pm-6pm: [Tubeworker bulletin meeting](#) – resisting cuts, fighting for funding

For full and updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, see workersliberty.org/c19-online □

Tabloid 9 Sep, no IFF in Nov

We now plan to return *Solidarity* to our regular full-scale tabloid format earlier, from 9 September (no.562) rather than 16 September, using the weeks until then to remobilise our routines of distribution and street sales. We may face new lockdowns over the winter, so we want to use this lockdown-lull to the maximum. Because of the probability of new lockdowns, we are however dropping our previous plan to run our annual weekend school Ideas for Freedom (which we couldn't do on the scheduled 20-21 June) on 21-22 November instead. *Solidarity* 559 will be out on 12 August; 560, 26 August; 561, 2 September. We're skipping one more week this summer to allow staff breaks: no paper 19 August. □



workersliberty.org/audio



Online meetings & resources: workersliberty.org/c19-online

Slightly triumphant after the break-in



Diary of an engineer

By Emma Rickman

During this year's annual shutdown an unknown male worker managed to steal keys to the women's toilet and shower cabin and lock us out. "Us" being me and the one other female worker out of the hundreds of contracted workers on site.

The women's is a small room with a separate, lockable, shower cubicle, and a toilet which is close to where we work and eat. Before any women have arrived on site, I notice scattered toilet roll, chemical residue in the sink and shit in the toilet basin. S, when she arrives, is an administrative worker in clean office clothes who approaches me to ask about shower access; I am certain she has not been treating the cubicle like this.

Later on I go to the ladies' and find it locked, both from the outside door and the internal door. The spare keys are locked inside, and not even my managers can open it. Someone thinks they now have access to their own private bathroom at our expense.

I complain quietly about it to a handful of people, and to my surprise the apprentices step up with form.

"That's fucking outrageous, what a scumbag!"

"Let's get in there, the bell-end."

L, an apprentice fitter, googles how to pick a mortice lock and levers one of the doors open with a huge screw-driver. J and I dismantle the other door and remove the internal locking mechanism. We take the spare keys and have a look in the shower cubicle.

"He's got a towel and razor in there."

"Little piece of private heaven."

I think about it for about ten seconds, then throw everything in the shower into a skip and bury it in wet waste.

"Covid contamination hazard averted."

"If he asks where his stuff is, send him upstairs to [the boss] to collect it, then he'll have to admit to using the ladies'."

We haven't locked him out, but we've got ourselves back in! I hope whoever he is, his day is ruined by a missing towel. Other contractors notice what we're doing and smile, shaking their heads.

"Know who he is yet?"

"Some people, honestly what's his problem? How hard is it to use your own toilet?"

"He had a go at tearing down the women's toilet sign, didn't he? – not very respectful."

Me, J and L are a good team for the rest of the weekend – we are slightly triumphant, and we have each other's backs. □

• Emma Rickman is an engineering apprentice at a Combined Heat and Power plant.

Who does the cleaning?

By Keith Road

As some sites return to work the kinds of jobs people are doing have shifted. Shops, bars, restaurants and attractions are now doing more regular and more thorough cleaning.

Tesco has brought the cleaning in-house in its 1,920 Express and Metro smaller shops. The cleaning was previously done by an outsourced contractor. Tesco ended the contract rather than bring the workers in house, so cleaning will now be done by the same staff who manage the shop, stock the shelves, and serve on the till.

Many workers are unhappy about being required now to undertake work that was not part of their original contracts and that they consider demeaning, as well as physically more demanding.

There is [recent evidence](#) that surface (rather than airborne) transmission of the virus is rare. Maybe Tesco bosses and others are making more of a performative than practical approach on harm reduction. And workers should be able to resist the imposition of new tasks on them by bosses looking for good PR.

But we shouldn't consider the role of cleaning to be inherently below anyone not called a cleaner. Someone has to do this work.

We are not yet in a society where the burden of cleaning in any workplace can be equitably shared among all staff. But the work should be paid a real living wage and have the full holiday, sick pay, and pension entitlements rarely available to outsourced cleaners. □

£6,338 towards £10,000

Thanks to Stan, David, Steve, Andrew, and others, who have sent in £836 in the last two weeks, taking us to £6,338 towards our target of £10,000.

Workers' Liberty's committee has discussed proposals to help remobilise our outward-centred activity in the window of lockdown easing now available. The Tower Hamlets strikes, the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, the NHS pay protests on 8 August, the strikes by HMRC cleaners in Liverpool and Bootle, show that it is possible for the labour movement and anti-racist movements to operate as "essential services" under pandemic conditions. Workers' Liberty supporters will be out on 8 August across the country. Join us there, help distribute our literature, take our placards, commit to discuss politics with us! www.workersliberty.org/donate □



John Moloney

Outsourced cleaners in HMRC offices in Merseyside begin their next strike on Monday 3 August. They'll strike until 28 August, demanding living wages and full occupational sick pay.

This latter demand is clearly vital in terms of safety and infection control during the pandemic, and is the central demand of the Safe and Equal campaign which Workers' Liberty members have been central, so hopefully Safe and Equal can play a role in supporting the strike.

The unions will be holding a consultative ballot of our members working in Job Centres and Universal Credit Service Centres, running from 17 August to 7 September. We want to get the employer to drop its plan for extended opening hours, which underpins its drive to bring people who've been working at home back into offices.

The next step after the consultative ballot, depending on the result, will be a formal statutory ballot for industrial action. We're also looking at legal challenges to the employer's plans, on the basis that they breach health and safety law. But it seems increasingly that only workers' direct action will be able to enforce those laws. The Health and Safety Executive seems toothless and unprepared to stand up to the government.

Our members, along with members of other unions including the Bectu section of Prospect, have held protests against job cuts in the last week at the Tate Modern, where their ballot turned out 88.6% of members in favour of strike action on a 79% turn out, and the Southbank Centre. We're demanding an extended furlough scheme to keep workers in their jobs and on full pay until at least April, when many of these institutions are projected to be back to wider public opening and increased revenue. There has been some additional government funding for the culture sector, but shockingly many employers have refused to spend the additional funds on retaining staff, preferring to make job cuts.

In the Ministry of Justice, the United Voices of the World (UVW) union has won a ballot for recognition with the outsourced contractor OCS, which employs cleaners in the department. This is the first formal recognition agreement won by a non-TUC union, and is a testament to the hard work of UVW members in the MoJ who've built their organisation on the job.

It would ultimately be preferable for all workers in the building, directly employed and outsourced, to be in the same union but PCS is looking forward to deepening our joint working with UVW, planning joint campaigns and disputes. They've done excellent work on the ground and are clearly up for a fight. We want to support them in that, and mobilise our members alongside theirs. □

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of the civil service union PCS, writing here in a personal capacity.

Tube: resist the cuts!

From Tubeworker

The [terms of reference](#) announced by the government for the review of the governance and finance of TfL [Transport for London] make the direction of travel clear: cuts and privatisation.

References to "alternative operating models" and alternative "structures and governance" are coded language for taking TfL out of local government control and selling it off to the private sector. The terms refer to "workforce modernisation" (aka, cuts), and promote the Tory fantasy of driverless trains.

Part-privatisation of the Tube has been tried before, and was a disastrous failed experiment, even on its own terms, as Janine Booth's book [Plundering London Underground](#), which tells the story of the privatisation and workers' resistance to it, makes clear.

Step one for us in resisting any attacks now is staking out a clear position: fight every single cut, resist any sell-off. We shouldn't look to merely blunt the sharpest edges of any attacks, settling for deals which reduces jobs via voluntary redundancies and natural wastage rather than direct cuts.

We also need to put forward a clear alternative, our own positive vision of a publicly-funded, democratically-run, green public transport system, with all workers directly employed, funded by taxing the rich and business.

Sadly, we're unlikely to get that kind of vision from the [independent review](#) [London Mayor] Sadiq Khan has commissioned, made up of bankers and bosses! That review is likely to recommend cuts too.

Throwing the brakes on any cuts the Tories impose will require determined industrial and political campaigning. We should demand Khan backs it. □

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Solidarity



For a workers' government

“AMERICAN CARNAGE”

By Barrie Hardy

When Donald Trump gave his inaugural speech to a poorly attended crowd in January 2017, he spoke of ending “the American carnage”.

Carnage isn't a strong enough word for the three-pronged crisis the country now faces.

The Covid pandemic rages – 150,000 deaths and rising. Expect half a million virus fatalities come election time in November.

Trump's behaviour continues to make a dreadful situation far worse as he undermines the advice of his own public health experts and continues to promote quack remedies, disinformation, and conspiracy theories.

Trump no longer recommends swallowing disinfectant, but continues to hype hydroxychloroquine. He has also retweeted dangerous nonsense from one Stella Immanuel trashing face masks.

Trump failed to mention that this “very respected doctor” also believes gynaecological disorders are caused by “demon sperm” from mythological creatures! Satirists were quick to quip about demon sperm when Donald Trump Jr was banned from Twitter for also posting the quack nonsense.

At the same time, the economy is tanking and social security relief is woefully inadequate. 30 million Americans are on the dole. Homelessness threatens many.

Racial injustice, police brutality

If Trump couldn't be expected to do anything positive about the pandemic and the economic meltdown, then what about the mass protests over racial injustice and police brutality? He saw an opportunity not to address the problem, but to turn it into a “law and order” issue. The “little green men” began appearing on the streets of Portland, Oregon, to grab protesters off the streets and whisk them away in unmarked vehicles.

The term “little green men” derives from Putin's deployment of unknown paramilitary forces in the Ukraine. Trump's variant has been to use the highly militarised Border Patrol, whose members falsely believe they are allowed to operate beyond normal constitutional constraints.

The deployment in Portland of what's been dubbed Trump's praetorian guard was totally out of proportion to dealing with a bit of graffiti-spraying and the throwing of a few firecrackers.

Trump hoped that their deployment would produced good footage for Fox News, but the resulting images of these robocops tear-gassing moms and war veterans were not what he wanted. The protesters were not black or young enough to exploit in dog-whistle terms, so the “little green men” have been stood down for now.

Voter suppression

If opinion polls are anything to go by, the American public want to cancel a second season of the dystopian reality TV show that is the Trump presidency. Yet Trump, semi-literate racist and con-man that he is, has lied and cheated throughout his entire life and has no intention of stopping now. Short of engineering a foreign military confrontation within the next three months, his main strategy seems to be to rely upon voter suppression.

Trump has floated the unprecedented suggestion that the Presidential election be postponed on the grounds that mail-in ballots (boosted by the pandemic) will be “fraudulent” – a claim for which there is not a shred of evidence.

The Republican Party has got voter suppression down to a fine art and will no doubt continue depriving people of the vote through purging electoral registers, or physically making it difficult to vote in person. This new attack on mail-in votes is not unconnected with the administration's attack on the US postal service.

Trump put one of his millionaire backers, Louis DeJoy, in charge of the USPS, with a mandate for running it down and privatising it, and introducing “cost cutting” measures such as banning overtime and shutting down sorting machines. Messing with the US mail in this way is bound to cause delays in the delivery of postal votes.

Trump hopes that if these delays occur, legislatures in some Republican-controlled states will declare him the victor before a substantial number of mail-in ballots are in.

A major campaign against voter suppression needs to be conducted.

If socialists campaign against voter suppression, they would look ridiculous if they advocated abstaining. Some socialists will vote for Biden, others for the socialist Howie Hawkins, who presents a far more left-wing political programme but has no chance of winning.

A debate around this issue is in progress on the US left. Let's hope we don't get a Trump victory which forces another one like it in 2024. □