

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

- » **Tory bluster threatens lives and jobs**
- » **Boost NHS and social care with pay rises**
- » **Jobs or retraining on full pay for all**

FIGHT FOR JOBS!



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How to fight for jobs

6699 Editorial

The government's figures say unemployment could approach five million next year. Young, women and BME workers are being and will be hit hardest.

The government is driving ahead with the gutting of the furlough and self-employed support schemes, and with a rushed hard Brexit which will further batter the economy.

This unemployment crisis is also one of low pay and insecurity. Even before the pandemic, almost four million workers were in highly insecure employment. Since the virus hit, the number of workers on zero hours contracts has passed a million for the first time – with the increase concentrated in “key” sectors including social care and retail.

The labour movement needs a radical, clear and vocal response. We should demand the creation of large numbers of directly-employed jobs in the public sector (in health, social care, house-building, transport, education) with decent pay, conditions and job security. Corporations slashing jobs should be nationalised and their infrastructure, resources and workforce skills turned to green and socially useful production.

Retraining should be for these decent, socially beneficial public-sector jobs, not a way of justifying workers being thrown on the scrap heap or forced into worse pay and conditions.

The working week should be cut to 32 hours or four days, without loss of pay, to help create jobs.

Given the scale of the crisis – and after a decade-long assault on public services – we need to demand millions



of new public jobs.

This is really the only way to block the spiralling of unemployment and low-paid, insecure work. It is the only way to create the social infrastructure essential for society's needs, from curbing the virus to curbing carbon emissions.

The Tories' response to Covid-19 shows that vast funds can be found when it is judged necessary; but now they want to pay for it by attacking working-class living standards. The labour movement should argue to fund our alternative by taxing the rich and big business, and through urgent public ownership of key resources, including the banks and high finance.

Just when we need unprecedented boldness and ambition, we have mumbling and shuffling about. It is very hard to tell what the Labour Party leadership advocates (which is presumably how they want it). The same goes for many trade unions.

These “leaders” would not even defend the existing job support schemes; TUC General Secretary Frances

O'Grady actively supported Rishi Sunak's proposals. They will not even argue to delay Brexit, despite all their previous bluster against “No Deal”.

Support struggles

Groups of workers are fighting difficult battles over pay, against job cuts, against insecurity, against outsourcing, but with minimal support from the “leadership” of our movement.

Socialists and labour movement activists must do everything we can to help these struggles – like the health workers pay campaign – win, and to drag the unions and Labour into the fight. We should demand a solid pay rise for all workers, a sharply increased minimum wage, a ban on zero hours contracts and repeal of all anti-strike laws.

We should argue for the labour

movement to launch a campaign for jobs that:

- is a real campaign. Protests are not banned; and there are hundred ways an effective, high-impact campaign could be conducted safely.

- instead of tailing the Tories, with occasional muted criticism, advocates clear alternative proposals to defend and create jobs, based on working-class and socialist principles.

Many of the demands we need are already the formal policy of the labour movement or important sections of it – but remain on paper, democratically-agreed but not argued or campaigned for. Last year's Labour conference voted for public ownership of care, mass council house-building and repeal of all anti-union laws; last year's TUC Congress for public ownership of the banks.

The TUC has produced a “Plan for Public Service Jobs” (bit.ly/tucplan), inadequate but including many good proposals. It remains a briefing paper on a website; it has not spurred any campaigning or public advocacy, and it did not stop the TUC supporting Sunak.

The labour movement should argue vocally and fight actively to:

- restore and extend the furlough scheme, etc;
- create millions of decently paid, secure jobs by expanding public services;
- cut the working week;
- ban zero hours contracts, increase the minimum wage, repeal the anti-union laws;
- tax the rich and expropriate the banks. □

More Brexit means more US-type capitalism

By Colin Foster

New UK-EU talks on Brexit are due to run through the week starting 5 October, and prime minister Boris Johnson says he wants a deal outlined by 15 October.

That looks unlikely. The EU has already started suing Britain for legislating to break the Withdrawal Agreement previously signed with the EU. Big gaps remain between the UK and the EU on Northern Ireland, on state-aid rules, and

on fishing.

The Tories say that they are happy with a “no deal” Brexit as fall-back – meaning, in fact, a period of chaos following by a scramble for new trade deals, especially with the USA.

Their basic drive is to shift Britain more towards the modes of Trump's USA: focused on building “walls” of one sort or another against other countries, vicious against migrants and asylum-seekers, reducing social protections.

Solidarity has always opposed Brexit, and continues to oppose it. But right now the labour movement should protest against either a “no deal” Brexit, or a hurried-last-minute-deal Brexit, being rammed through for 31 December, at a time when virus worries are high, economic chaos is high, and proper democratic scrutiny is difficult. □

- Another Europe is Possible “Fight for the Future” Zoom meetings: bit.ly/ae-fff

Free Julian Assange!

By Rhodri Evans

The judge in the court case over the US government's attempt to extradite Julian Assange to the USA for trial on his WikiLeaks work has said she will deliver a verdict on 4 January after hearing evidence for the last month.

That is unlikely to be the end of it, because either Assange or the US government will probably appeal.

The labour movement should demand that Assange is released and not extradited. His health is suffering in jail, where he has been held since April 2019.

Assange has done much to discredit himself with the left: his evasion of rape charges brought by two Swedish women, his links with Putin, his links with the antisemite ideologist Israel Shamir. Right-wing or left-wing, though, he should not face the risk of long jail terms for publicly leaking US government communications.

In the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump said: “I love Wikileaks”, because it helped him in that contest. But under a Trump or even a Biden presidency, Assange would probably face an effective sentence of death in jail if extradited. □

Over 10,000 protesters jailed in Belarus

By Ann Field

On 4 October 100,000 people marched through Minsk in the latest mass protest against the rigging of the presidential election of 9 August. It was the 57th day of protests, and the ninth successive Sunday of mass demonstrations in the country's capital.

Despite some two months having passed since the election, the size of the demonstration in Minsk, and smaller demonstrations in other Belarusian cities and towns, shows that the anti-Lukashenko opposition remains as determined as ever to win its demands: a re-run of the presidential election; the release of all political prisoners; and prosecution of those responsible for the violence used against protestors over the past two months.

The strike wave which swept through Belarus in August has ebbed, at least for the time being. But, at the time of writing, miners in the Belaruskali potash mine are still on strike in protest at bad management and Lukashenko's refusal to resign, and workers at the Grodno Azot plant in Hrodna are campaigning in protest at the arrests and trials of fellow workers.

Although it is difficult to assess the extent of their growth, independent trade unions continue to grow as more and more workers become disillusioned with the official trade unions.

A recently released video produced by workers at the MTZ tractor plant near Minsk explains some reasons:

"In exchange for our money these



Translation: "Fair elections. Tribunal. Freedom to the political prisoners".

(official) trade unions put pressure on us. And their representatives took part in the falsification of the elections. We've had enough of feeding these 'office-desk do-nothings'.

"We, MTZ workers, call for people to sign out of the state trade unions and to join independent trade unions. It is the independent unions which defend the rights of waged workers... Unite on the basis of independent trade unions and remember: 'Solidarity is stronger than repression'."

Lukashenko, in power since 1994 and standing for a sixth term of office, claimed to have won the election of 9 August with 80% of the vote – despite widespread popular dissatisfaction with state corruption, low pay, economic stagnation and Lukashenko's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic (which he dismissed as a "psychosis").

His main challenger, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya (who replaced her husband as a candidate after he had been arrested and accused of planning "mass

riots"), was credited with just 10% of the votes – despite her election rallies having attracted crowds of up to 60,000.

Since then, mass protests and strikes have been a daily occurrence. Lukashenko has responded with brute force.

Truncheons, rubber bullets, water cannons, stun grenades and mass detentions have been used against protestors. Around 225 protestors were detained on 4 October alone. Leading opposition figures, including Tsikhanouskaya herself, are either in exile or in prison.

Estimates of the number of detainees since August vary from 10,000 to 13,000. Either way, this is more than the number of people detained during two years of martial law in Poland, despite the population of Poland being four times larger.

Prisoners

There were three political prisoners in the country's jails in May. There are now 77.

Media coverage of the protests has been made as difficult as possible. Selected journalists have had their press accreditation withdrawn by the authorities. Then, prior to last Sunday's protests, the accreditation of all journalists working for foreign news agencies was cancelled.

Reporters covering demonstrations have also been beaten up and detained – 17 on the 4 October protests alone.

While Lukashenko has failed to find a strategy to undermine the opposition, he has succeeded in winning support from Putin.

In line with his image as the protector of Belarussian sovereignty, Lukashenko had previously criticised Putin, but the protests have led to rapid conciliation.

On 2 October the European Union imposed sanctions on 40 members of Lukashenko's administration (but not Lukashenko himself). Belarus responded by imposing sanctions on an unspecified number of unnamed EU officials.

Tsikhanouskaya has stepped up appeals for support from EU governments and is meeting the German Chancellor Angela Merkel this week. In the past the opposition has been reticent about overt appeals for support from Western governments, in order to minimise its exposure to allegations that it is acting as a front for Western intervention. □

Asylum: Patel's "Australian model"

By Janet Burstall

Home Secretary Priti Patel has been asking officials to scope out the possibilities of detaining asylum seekers on remote Atlantic islands or in disused ferries, and building physical barriers in the Channel.

In Australia, where she borrows the "remote-islands" idea from, deterring asylum seekers and enforcing border controls have been election-winning positions for the conservatives.

In the first decade of the 21st century immigration detention in harsh remote locations within Australian territory through the first decade of this century produced points

at which refugee supporters could meet with asylum seekers, and hold solidarity protests. In 2008 the Rudd Labor government responded by limiting the use of immigration detention, and allowing asylum seekers access to legal assistance.

With hopes raised by the new Australian policy, desperate asylum seekers boarded boats, and an estimated 1,200 drowned en route up to 2013.

When Kevin Rudd regained the Prime Ministership from Julia Gillard in 2013, he made a doomed bid for Labor to win the looming election by combining offshore processing with a policy that those found to be refugees could never

come to Australia. That policy has been kept by successive conservative PMs.

Australia has since sent 3,127 people seeking asylum to detention on the islands of Manus and the Republic of Nauru.

Governments argue that allowing asylum seekers to arrive in Australia will cause more drownings, and open a floodgate of need that will put unfair costs on those Australians who are already struggling for livelihoods. But the cost argument is a distraction.

The Auditor General found in May 2020 that the Government had spent \$7.1 billion on detaining and processing asylum seekers in Nauru and

Papua New Guinea. Private contractors have profited. The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre found in 2019 that the Government spends in excess of \$573,000 per offshore person, per year. And New Zealand's offer to resettle refugees has been refused by the Australian Government.

The government claims that offshore processing is a humane alternative, but the detainees suffer from physical and psychological damage, with minimal productive or meaningful activity, indefinite detention, poor sanitation and diets, and severely inadequate health treatment, mainly involving the issuing of pain relief and sedatives.

Over 1,000 people have been medically evacuated to Australia because of the lack of medical treatment on Manus and Nauru. Children on Nauru have become catatonic with distress, and there have been suicides and suicide attempts on both islands.

The daily routines of degradation and domination on Manus are vividly depicted in a book by Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani, who was held on Manus until 2020. In *No Friend But the Mountains*, he calls the detention administration and culture the Kyriarchal System, stripping detainees of humanity and dignity. □

Brexit shows... no point defending the BBC



By Jim Denham

The Cummings-Johnson-Gove clique have made no secret of their contempt for the BBC and desire to bring it to heel. They believe the result of the EU referendum and the 2019 election give them an opportunity to mount a "culture war" on the supposedly "liberal" and "metropolitan" BBC.

Their approach so far, has been to follow Trump's "fake news" strategy – in which politicians aim to escape accountability by convincing enough supporters that all criticism is based on the lies of a biased "liberal" media.

But now there is clear evidence of a plan to fundamentally undermine the independence of the BBC by appointing two ultra-right wing Brexiters, one of whom is a personal crony of Johnson's, to key positions of influence over, and within, the BBC. Neither of these characters has any expertise in broadcasting but both have long histories of outspoken hostility towards the BBC and of extreme right wing pronouncements (in the case of Moore, racist and homophobic comments and climate change denial).

Pre-empting normal advertising and recruitment procedures, "No 10" (aka Cummings) let it be known (via the *Sunday Times*) that the former *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre is Johnson's "choice" to become chairman of Ofcom, the



broadcasting regulator, while Charles Moore, former editor of the *Daily Telegraph* – where he employed Johnson – has been personally requested by Johnson to take up the post of BBC chairman. (A post he has now publicly declined).

Moore's hostility to the BBC is such that he was once convicted and fined for refusing to pay the licence fee. Even the Tory chair of the parliamentary culture committee, Julian Knight, described Moore as "beyond the pale."

Under these circumstances, one

might expect the UK's self-proclaimed socialist daily paper to offer at least some defence of public-service broadcasting. But no: according to the *Morning Star* (editorial 28 Sep), the BBC is not worth defending. It's already packed full of Tories and it's been really nasty to Jeremy Corbyn.

Most of all, anyone minded to object to the Tories' plans needs to understand that: "Public confidence in the political system is so low that flouting its rules is unlikely to carry a heavy cost. And since the BBC is already dominated by Conservatives, objections based on the broadcaster's supposed objectivity are unlikely to wash. Johnson rode to power on the Brexit cause and he – or at least Dominic Cummings – will understand what made the case against it so unconvincing.

"Warning people trapped in poverty pay and insecure jobs of economic disaster doesn't work. Labour's predictions of privatising trade deals threatening our public services were accurate

enough, but lost their sting because they were also an accurate picture of the present. Brexit was an argument the status quo was bound to lose since it had so little going for it."

If I follow that line of argument correctly, it seems to come down to arguing that the Brexit vote makes defending the BBC from Tory attacks a waste of time. Once again the *Morning Star* lines up with Johnson.

It seems to come down to arguing that the Brexit vote makes defending the BBC from Tory attacks a waste of time."

PS: Anyone who doubts my claim that the MS and the CPB back Johnson all the way when it comes to Brexit, should take a look at the front page headline for Friday Oct 2 (pictured): "Bloc Must Drop The Posturing – Left's uproar as EU launches legal action over Brexit Bill". That's right, they're backing Johnson's Internal Market Bill against the EU's move against it because it breaks the Withdrawal Agreement which Johnson signed with the EU just a year ago. "Communist Party of Britain general secretary Rob Griffiths said that the EU Commission was taking legal action 'even before any breach of the Withdrawal Agreement has occurred.'" These Johnny Foreigners just don't play fair, do they? ☐

Different layers of QAnon



In response to Cath Fletcher ([letters](#), *Solidarity* 565): I agree, in [Solidarity](#) 564 I should've made the parallel between QAnon and the blood libel more explicit. The reason I didn't was that the [previous article](#) on QAnon already pointed it out, and I had many other things to cover, and I didn't want to repeat too much.

It is indeed a version of the "world Jewish conspiracy" theory, but QAnon has different groups of believers in it. The old guard, who were following the posts

back from the 4chan, or 8chan days, are without a doubt antisemitic. After all, QAnon started on a neo-Nazi forum, where they routinely fantasised about military tribunals against Jews. But with QAnon's success with the Save the Children branding, and its spread on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, it reached a new audience it never could have on its home turf.

These new recruits – as far as I can tell – are not consciously antisemitic. They are, in any case, different from those who would frequent far-right forums. Some of the old guard are resentful about the

influx of Save the Children "libs".

This new generation is trafficking in conspiracy theories that are rooted in anti-semitism, but they don't know it. Since the Pizzagate conspiracy theory – which was incorporated into QAnon – accused Democratic politicians such as Hillary Clinton, not Jews, it's not, on the first glance, antisemitic. So if someone is unaware of its origins, one can subscribe to it without subscribing to the idea of Jewish blood libel.

The danger is that once they are on-board, they could become radicalised by explicit and conscious antisemites.

Luca Brusco



Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom. **Until 2 November:**

Sunday 11 October, 12-2pm: Socialist feminist reading group: *Feminism, Interrupted* by Lola Olufemi (2020)

Sunday 18 October, 6.30-8pm: Analysing the new far right; a discussion jointly hosted by Mutiny and Workers' Liberty

Monday 19 October, 7.30-9pm: Inessa Armand and the Bolshevik feminists – Heroes from socialist history study series

Sunday 1 November, 6.30-8pm: Covid-19: what do we know so far? With George Davey Smith (Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at Bristol University) Zoom link here.

Monday 2 November, 7.30-9pm: Antonio Gramsci and the "Modern Prince"

Plus

Every Monday, 6-7pm: Workers' Liberty Students online political discussions

Thursdays, 8-9pm: "Revolution Betrayed" study group

Every Friday, 6.30pm: Young Labour Internationalists are holding public meetings

Our calendars of events: browse or subscribe! ☐

All online

For full and updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, **visit** workersliberty.org/meetings

School closures harm girls



**Women's
Fightback**

By Katy Dollar

Being forced to stay at home and not being able to study has a greater impact on girls, affecting their mental health, increasing their domestic responsibilities, and making them more likely than boys to drop out of school.

UNESCO estimates that about 10 million more secondary school-aged girls could be out of school following the crisis. At the height, there were over 1.5 billion affected learners and 194 country-wide school closures.

In many countries there is already a pronounced gendered difference in educational access and achievement. Disparities in re-enrolment are particularly true for poorer and marginalised families. Education may be unaffordable due to associated costs or loss of time that could be used for paid work. For girls it may be unattainable or cut short, due to early marriage, or restrictive policies for visibly pregnant adolescents.

Once adolescent girls drop out of school, it can be very difficult to return. The loss of even six months of education as a result of Covid-19 will have a huge impact on girls with limited ac-

cess to education. In some countries they could lose 50 per cent of their total years of education.

Schools also offer important social protection mechanisms including school meal programs, health programs, drinking water sanitation and hygiene facilities. For example, in Egypt, 5.2 million who rely on school meals are now missing out due to Covid-19. Schools also play a significant role in reporting concerns about at-risk children. Overall, school closures have left children at higher risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation and gender-based violence.

Of those girls and young women who could not physically attend their place of education, the majority of those surveyed by Plan International were able to continue their education at home in some way, via online resources or by self-learning using books and other non-digital materials. The world's poorest are less likely to have access to distance learning.

Many do not have the technology or safe and supportive learning environments with parents or guardians able to home-school. In Africa, more than two-thirds of countries have introduced distance education, but mostly that is only available in one or two main languages, which also excludes a large number of learners.

Even among those able to study from home, it was missing school or university that the girls and young women surveyed reported as having the biggest negative impact on their lives. The importance of schools in girls' lives extends beyond study or qualifications. □

A win for Osime Brown

On 7 October, Osime Brown, a young man jailed under "joint enterprise" law, will return to his family home on his release from prison, rather than being taken to an immigration detention centre. This win follows many street and online protests demanding his freedom. But Osime's fight is still on: the order to deport him to Jamaica (which he left at the age of 4, and where has no support network) still stands. No date has been announced, but Osime still has this threat looming. Campaigners are running a "Twitter storm" on 6 October, and ask supporters to keep signing and sharing the petition at bit.ly/osime-b, and to write to their MPs. □

Israel tries to ban protests

By Angela Driver

On Wednesday 30 September the Israeli government passed a law to suppress protests. For many months there have been weekly protests against Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

The new law states that gatherings of over 20 people are illegal and that it is illegal to travel more than 1 km to attend a protest. This is, supposedly, to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

It is true that infections in Israel have spread alarmingly. Many outbreaks have been linked to indoor religious gatherings – there is a much greater risk of Covid spreading indoors – but those have been allowed to continue. Outdoor protests have a much lower risk. Outbreaks have not been linked to outdoor protests.

Religious leaders are key supporters of Netanyahu and have applied pressure on the government to allow their religious gatherings to continue.

In defiance of the new restrictions over 1,000 demonstrators gathered on 1 October. They were attacked by a car that drove into demonstrators, running over one woman. A police horse



charged into demonstrators and 15 were arrested.

But that was only one of over 100 protests that day, and tens of thousands of protesters were on the streets on Saturday 3 October, calling for Netanyahu's resignation.

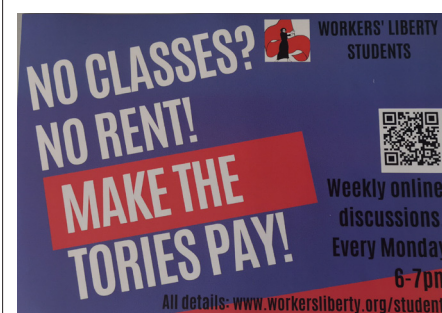
They faced violence from both civilians and the police. One protester was punched in the face, others had glass bottles thrown at them, another was tackled by the police and thrown into the path of a bus.

In trying to suppress demonstrations, Israel joins Hong Kong and other places where protests continue in defiance of repressive laws.

In some countries Covid restrictions have made specific exemptions for demonstrations. That includes the Netherlands and indeed the UK. The police have on occasion misinterpreted the law and stopped demonstrations, notably a trans rights protest on 5 September. But protests remain legal here if safety requirements are met.

Protest is a fundamental human right and a key way for socialists to spread ideas and show solidarity.

Solidarity with anti-Netanyahu protesters! Solidarity with protesters in Hong Kong! □



Activist Agenda

As the virus spreads, Safe and Equal is stepping up efforts to get its model motion on isolation pay passed through Labour Parties and union branches. It also asks activists to seek invitations for S&E to speak at meetings.

S&E has recently been approached with an invitation by a local Labour Party with which it had previously had no contact, and has had ongoing links with Redbridge Trades Council's drive to get Redbridge council to ensure full isolation pay in its care homes since an S&E speaker went to the Trades Council in April.

The Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK and Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong (UK) mobilised on Thursday 1 October, China's National Day, for protests and campaign stalls in London, Birmingham, Sheffield, Nottingham, and even Auckland, Aotearoa (New Zealand), in solidarity with workers, occupied peoples and persecuted groups under the Chinese state following a call put out by those campaigns and widely signed. USC has its next regular protest at the Chinese Embassy in London on 5 November.

The Shahrokh Zamani Action Committee, which is seeking to build solidarity with the Haft Tappeh sugar cane workers in Iran, has appealed for trade unionists in Britain to take selfies with a solidarity poster to show their solidarity. Group selfies are good too.

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement is backing a "weekend of action" on 10-12 October against the "Hostile Environment" policy. The main London action is 2pm 11 Oct at Becket House, 60-68 St Thomas St, SE1 3QU: for actions in other cities see the link below.

Workers' Liberty activists are doing street stalls, plus stickering and poster round the uni campuses now restarting. With street protests likely to be smaller now (though there were 300 at a Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol on Sunday 4 October), and still no in-person meetings, those stalls are more important than ever for getting socialist ideas out to new people.

• All links and info at workersliberty.org/agenda

Offshore energy and “just transition”



Environment

By Daniel Randall, RMT activist

The environmental campaign groups Platform, Friends of the Earth Scotland, and Greenpeace have jointly published a report surveying oil and gas workers' views about their working conditions, and the future of their industry in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and the climate crisis.

The report reveals an understanding amongst workers that their industry is unsustainable, but no confidence in either industry bosses or government to ensure a transition process that protects workers' livelihoods.

43% of workers surveyed had been furloughed or made redundant since March. 81% said they were considering leaving the industry. More than 50% said that, given the option to retrain, they would be interested in jobs in the renewable energy sector.

One worker said: “It seems the oil companies have got away with everything but the workforce gets ham-

pered... The way the industry is treating their workers, especially those in a situation similar to mine is an absolute disgrace and should not be allowed to happen.”

Another, when asked what provisions should be made to ensure workers' futures, said: “Offer training to allow skills to be transferred from oil and gas to renewables sectors. Invest heavily in renewables. Encourage children, students, graduates away from an unsustainable oil and gas sector and into renewables. As Scotland has huge wind/wave/hydro resources she must become a front runner in the global renewables sector.”

Only 9% of workers had ever heard the term “just transition”, despite the Scottish government having established a “Just Transition Commission” in 2019. Platform said the Commission “has prioritised private businesses, industry representatives and regional enterprises. Meanwhile the sector deal being drawn up by UK energy ministers has no vehicle for consulting oil and gas workers.”

The RMT union, whose Oil Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) branch or-

ganises offshore energy workers, participated in the survey. Over half the workers responding were RMT members, and the union hailed the survey's publication in a national press release and circular to members. The union said: “The skills and expertise of offshore oil and gas workers are key to a Just Transition. Yet the testimony of RMT members and their colleagues lays bare the fact that chronic job insecurity in offshore oil and gas is not being alleviated by clear pathways to employment in growth areas like decommissioning, renewables and decarbonisation, despite this being central to a Just Transition.”

A number of RMT activists, including supporters of Workers' Liberty, have raised the issue of climate policy inside the union over a number of years. The OILC branch itself has had a pro-transition policy for some time, but at the union's 2019 AGM, general secretary Mick Cash opposed a motion on climate change on the basis that proposing an end to fossil fuel extraction would mean RMT members in the sector would lose their jobs – despite the motion explicitly advocating a worker-led transition



that protected terms and conditions. This is the same sectional logic Unite and GMB officials use to lobby for airport expansion or fracking.

The new report, and RMT's participation in and response to it, move away from that short-termist, sectional perspective towards one that acknowledges the necessity of decarbonisation but centres workers' own agency in the transition process. □

• References at bit.ly/of-sh. Further reading: • [The report itself](#) • [Platform's press release](#) • [RMT's press release](#) • [RMT AGM 2019](#)

Social solidarity to slow the virus



Covid-19

By Martin Thomas

The “local lockdowns” aren't working. The Tories' helter-skelter mess of virus-control measures may do more harm, by disrupting social solidarity, than good.

Despite the Tories paying vast amounts to private contractors, and achieving high total test numbers, the virus test-and-trace system is nowhere near doing what it needs to do: identify infections and contacts promptly and get efficient quarantining.

NHS workers are weary and resentful, denied the 15% pay rise which they have demanded. Elderly-care workers are mostly still denied isolation pay.

Britain may be unique in the world in the high proportion (4 out of 5) of its two million university students who travel away from their home cities to new and crowded “households” for term-time. That was bound to spread infection, but the government told univer-

sities they would get no help if they failed to scoop in the rents and the fees.

Virus conditions are getting closer to Paris, where bars and cafés have now been shut to improve covid-distancing. And the coming months were always going to be difficult. From about now, with colder weather, people spend more time indoors. From about November, NHS facilities will be stretched and test-and-trace will be harder because of the usual seasonal flu, with similar symptoms to Covid.

It is still possible to push back the government and win sufficient elements of social solidarity to make the coming rise in deaths, now inevitable to some degree, much smaller than in spring, and to get sustainable rules which will see us through.

Comparing different countries' trajectories in the pandemic is difficult. In Britain's toll so far of 622 deaths per million, and (to take a country not often used for comparison) Japan's of 13/m, scientists have suggested [such factors](#) as different vaccinations (for other ailments) used in Japan,

or the mildness of the *last* flu season in Britain. We don't know.

Japan has dense cities and the most elderly population in the world. It was hit by the virus early. It has had no lockdown and a low level of testing. Its pattern of school closures (closed on 2 March, before other measures; reopened area-by-area between early April and early June; opened early, from 17 August, for the autumn) makes little sense when set against the graph of infections.

Yet it has a [relatively low](#) death rate. After its first surge peaking in April, it had a [second surge](#) (more cases, fewer deaths) in August (with a government drive to revive tourism within Japan in the summer holidays), but has since seen that subside, for now.

Some differences:

• Scientists in Japan worked on “backward” tracing, to find the *origins* of infections: mostly pubs, karaoke rooms, gyms, etc. To reduce those “clusters”, they have kept one simple message: avoid the “three Cs” – closed spaces,

crowds, close contact. During “state of emergency” peaks, bars and cafés were advised (though not compelled) to close. (Japan has found, however, no clusters coming from the packed public transport system, where people don't talk face-to-face for long).

• The government has mandated paid leave on two-thirds pay for most (not all) workers infected, and made an additional £715 back-up payment to every resident.

• Even mild sufferers have been quarantined in hospitals or hotels, not in crowded home accommodation.

• Japan has an exceptionally

[well-financed system](#) of elderly care, about twice as many critical-care beds in proportion to population as Britain with the Tories' regime of running the NHS always on the brink, and about five times as many total hospital beds.

• The government has distributed face masks free, and the people of Japan have long been used to wearing masks for other viruses.

Similar measures of social solidarity are found in other countries with low tolls. The labour movement should demand them here. □

• For references see bit.ly/ss-sv



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Making anti-racism a union issue

By Ruth Cashman

Two years ago, activists in the Lambeth branch of the public services union Unison launched a campaign to fight institutional racism at Lambeth Council.

We knew our employer had a huge race pay gap. We were hearing from our members that they were experiencing more racism at work, since the Brexit vote. We launched a survey and our black workers told us about their experiences of discrimination at work.

The stats showed the same story. There were a disproportionate number of white workers in higher grades. You were more likely to face a disciplinary investigation at Lambeth if you were black, more likely to be found against and to face harsher penalties.

The Council initially pushed back, claiming there was no problem of in-



stitutional racism at Lambeth, then agreed to embark on an equalities programme. Even now, managers are happy to talk about training and development to help black staff progress, but they are far less comfortable facing questions of racist managers and disproportionate disciplinary actions.

We worked with other council unions to discuss developing a network to

tackle institutional racism in local government. Unison does not single out Lambeth Council for criticism, but we don't make the implausible claim that it is a small "racism-free" island in a wider racist society either.

Following the Black Lives Matter protests we saw discussions across many unions and workplaces about racism at work. We think it is important to link these up and reinvigorate the anti-racist struggle in the labour movement. We know that those workers who felt inspired to speak up as a result of Black Lives Matter, could face victimisation and retributions if we don't build sustainable labour movement campaigns to keep anti-racism on the agenda and bosses on the back foot.

We sent our solidarity to Sherelle Cadogan, an Aslef member, who has been given a 12 month suspended dis-

missal for challenging racism. Her case is important to every trade unionist challenging racism.

A weakness of mainstream anti-racism and anti-fascism has been its reliance on building cross-class alliances, as if the Tory architects of austerity – creators of the poisonous conditions in which racism thrives – can be allies in the fight to change those conditions. Sadly, too often our unions have outsourced our anti-racism to fronts and NGOs, instead of seeing it as a key part of class politics, which political and industrial wings of the movement should prioritise. We want to change this.

We will be writing to trade union branches to organise a trade union anti-racist conference based on branches and regions of unions, to organise in the workplace and the streets. □

Some gains at NEU conference

By a London teacher

The National Education Union (NEU) held an online Special Conference on 3 October. Over 600 people attended, with around 550 delegates.

Conference voted on various rule changes. They were not taken as a job lot, as I wrongly reported in *Solidarity* 565.

The rule change to allow the General Secretaries to extend their tenure beyond five years, if they had announced they were retiring, was withdrawn due to rank and file pressure.

In a significant victory for the left of the union, the proposal to reduce the executive from 70 to 55 failed to get the two-thirds majority required, following strong speeches from Education Solidarity Network (ESN) supporters including Workers' Liberty people.

Conference committed to continued campaigning on safety in schools during the Covid-19 crisis. The motion was strengthened by uncontroversial amendments on Special Schools, campaigning for more buildings, staff, and resources, and testing for all

school staff.

Further strengthening amendments included ensuring tighter risk assessments, promoting an escalation strategy up to strike action, and enforcing a maximum class size. Discussion on those amendments was stopped, whilst there was still plenty of time, in an undemocratic move by Jess Edwards of the SWP.

Conference also committed to campaign to ensure national pay increases and pay scales in every school, reduce workload and, to facilitate these things, effective rep sup-

port and training.

The last motion committed to continue campaigning on assessment, fighting for the replacement of SATs in 2021 by a system of moderated teacher assessment and a mixed model for GCSE and A levels for 2021. Amendments "declar[ed] our ambition to ballot primary members, if necessary, on a SATS boycott if government seeks to impose them next year" and to "commission and produce a series of articles, pamphlets and other materials putting the case for an end to norm

referenced GCSEs and their replacement by criteria-based assessment, and an alternative to A Levels and BTECs".

Neither of these last two amendments was nearly strong enough, but they provide some basis for the rank-and-file to continue to push for an effective policy.

The conference showed the potential for unions to get some level of lay democracy during the pandemic by using online platforms, and reaffirmed that the left organised through the ESN still has significant purchase in the union. □

Another history of Corbynism

By Keith Road

If I were Owen Jones, I would be rather annoyed that Gabriel Pogrund and Patrick Maguire got *Left Out* published before *This Land: The Story of a Movement*. When I read both, in the order of release, with Jones's book I felt like I had read it all before.

Jones, unlike Pogrund and Maguire, is a participant in the movement. He was one of the few columnists in the mainstream media to support the Corbyn leadership. He started his career working for John McDonnell and alongside Andrew Fisher. He makes clear in the book that he rates both of them highly. He sees McDonnell as Labour's lost leader.

But Jones's tale of Corbynism from

Miliband through to Starmer is still focused on the same kind of inner-circle to-and-fro that *Left Out* describes. It sets out to be the story of the movement, but where the membership are mentioned it's for our canvassing and attending rallies.

Like *Left Out* his book tries to suggest Seumas Milne, another figure Jones clearly respects, is not a Stalinist – and then lists a number of his political positions which clearly mark him out as one.

But he does understand the inner dynamics of the party membership better than Pogrund and Maguire, and his chapter on the antisemitism crisis explains the political failings of Corbyn on the matter, rather than putting

it all down to disorganisation or incompetence.

Jones also accounts for his own waver over the Corbyn project, something which the ultra-loyal Corbynites still regularly haul him over the coals for. *This Land* does treat political debate and difference seriously, in a way that was largely missing from "Corbynism" from the start. □



Democracy in the labour movement

In a *Huffington Post* interview on 2 October, Keir Starmer said that the ten policy points of his Labour leadership campaign "were important pledges... and they remain my priorities". But he's not been heard to argue for them since being elected! Pressure to keep him to them can be raised by voting for left candidates in the National Executive ballot (19 Oct to 12 Nov) and pressing for a proper Labour Party conference (in-person, or online with voting) in early 2021. Unfortunately Richard Rieser, backed by *Solidarity* for the "disabled" NEC seat as having a stronger left record than the "official" left candidate, just failed to get onto the ballot. □

• Briefing on nomination results: bit.ly/nec-nom and bit.ly/nec-n

Hawkins-Walker: socialist candidates

Workers' Liberty supports Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker in the 2020 US presidential election: socialists, standing as the candidates of the Green Party. The following pages carry debate about that stance and on assessment of Trump. Below is how Hawkins and Walker sum up their pitch, from a statement on the hospitalisation on Donald Trump.

Our campaign and the work of the Green Party has never been to isolate or target one politician. Behind Donald Trump is an army of Republicans who are cheering him on at every turn. Behind the Republicans is an army of Democrats who agree with the same policies and systems that have led to the catastrophic impact our country is facing.

Environmental destruction, economic injustice and pervasive racism are often more than acceptable byproducts of the policies of both major parties.

Climate change increases the spread of many infectious diseases. Air pollution increases virus transmission. Many of the root causes of the climate crisis such as deforestation and massive livestock farming increase the risk of pandemics. NASA is studying how environmental degradation is helping to spread Covid-19.

But even our schoolchildren know



this, so how can things ever be different when our elected leadership have all of the knowledge and all of the resources to act, but still keep failing us?

It is only through systemic change that we will turn the tide on the pandemic, its economic fallout that is unsurprisingly hurting the poor, black, Latinx, Asian and indigenous disproportionately, and the healthcare systems rendered woefully inadequate to care for people who are sickened.

It's a vicious cycle: (1) the pandemic, if not caused by Democrat and Republican-led assaults to our ecosystem, was certainly exacerbated by a government

infrastructure built by two parties who are more beholden to corporate donors and Big Industry than to the welfare of the American people. (2) The economic fallout from the pandemic devastates huge layers of workers and their families who were already struggling to survive. (3) Unequal access to housing, medical care, good jobs and social safety nets because of racist systems pushes communities of color even further into despair and makes them more susceptible to Covid-19.

Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos, supporter of both parties but mostly a Democrat donor, made more than a million dol-

lars in the time it took you to read this message, while thousands and thousands of his vulnerable workers are getting sick with Covid.

“Our system is unquestionably broken and we cannot spend one more second scrambling to patch it back up so it limps on to hurt more of us.”

Our system is unquestionably broken and we cannot spend one more second scrambling to patch it back up so it limps on to hurt more of us. No more pretending that we don't need a government that is eco-socialist and truly democratic, or that it isn't possible to create something better, where neither presidents nor meatpackers are hurt by a preventable virus, where contact tracing and uniform distancing measures are in place and all Americans have accessibility to tests as they do in most other countries.

We deserve better. Our families deserve better. Our communities and the world need better. Vote Hawkins-Walker. □

Why socialists should not support Hawkins



Eric Lee

By Eric Lee

The golden age of the Socialist Party in the U.S. lasted about a decade. By 1912 the party's vote peaked when Eugene Debs won 6%. It was downhill from there. After more than four decades of decline, the Socialist candidate Darlington Hoopes won just 2,128 votes nationwide in 1956.

If 44 years of decline taught the Socialists anything, it was that maybe it was time to try working inside the Democratic Party, the party that most American workers – and their unions – supported.

In 2016 and 2020, that idea was tested in reality, with spectacular success. Senator Bernie Sanders proved that an avowedly democratic socialist can-

didate running on a left-wing platform could come very close to winning the Democratic nomination – twice.

The legacy of his campaigns is a resurgent organised socialist movement (DSA – the successor organisation to the Socialist Party) and a number of socialist political leaders in Congress and elsewhere, most notably Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The debate over whether socialists should work inside the Democratic Party or outside it has been settled by history.

In the current campaign, Donald Trump has repeatedly accused Joe Biden of being a “captive” of the “far Left.” Of course this is complete nonsense. But there can be little doubt that the Democrats have had to make concessions to Sanders and his supporters, particularly in the party platform. Biden is committed to a number of reforms that go

much further than any previous Democratic candidate. And that's part of the reason why union leaders have been backing his campaign unanimously.

The real world

Some socialists, both in the US and abroad, think that what America needs is a strong, independent socialist party. And of course I agree with them; that would be a wonderful thing. But that is not in the cards in 2020, and indeed may never happen. And people who dream of that, rather than working in the real world, seem to think that supporting the little-known Green candidate Howie Hawkins is a good idea. It is not.

Hawkins' campaign is invisible. No one is aware that he is running. The previous Green candidates (Ralph Nader and Dr. Jill Stein) had some name recognition. Not Hawkins. And this is particularly true in the la-

bour movement. Hawkins has pitched himself as a socialist and trade unionist. But not a single union supports him. Even Donald Trump has considerably more union support than Hawkins does.

If Hawkins gets any votes at all – and polls rarely show him above 1% – the only possible effect would be the same as what Nader and Stein achieved: undercutting the Democratic vote and helping Trump win re-election. This is particularly true in the battleground states where even Stein's marginal candidacy in 2016 won enough votes to deprive the Democrats of victory.

No one seriously believes that the Green Party is the embryonic form of a powerful working-class socialist party. It is a tiny group, completely lacking in influence, in which a small number of socialists have decided to waste their time, money and organising

skills on a symbolic campaign that were it even modestly successful could only help Trump.

Socialists who were discouraged by Sanders' withdrawal from the race earlier this year have very clear tasks in front of them, even if some – including DSA and the new “Movement for a People's Party” – don't fully realise this. Bernie Sanders says that our job now is to elect Biden, to elect progressive and even socialist candidates to Congress, and to deal a crushing blow to Trump and Trumpism.

And on the morning after Biden is inaugurated President, the real work begins: putting pressure on Biden and the Democrats to live up to their promises, while building a powerful Left based on a re-invigorated labour movement, inside the Democratic Party. □

• Eric Lee is the founding editor of LabourStart. He writes here in a personal opinion column.

Trump: not fascist, maybe pre-fascist

By Matt Cooper

Thomas Carolan's [article](#) in *Solidarity* 565 started "The President of the USA is a fascist". The body of the article backtracked from that assertive opening, suggesting that Trump's government is not fascist although it has strengthened those elements that may be quickly assembled by Trump into a fascist force, particularly the mobilisation of "a mass movement to beat down its enemies" in stealing the coming US election.

Trump, Carolan continues, is fascist because he leads a "death cult" based on his macho posturing in the face of Covid-19, systematic lying, and anti-scientific irrationalism.

To understand fascism's nature we need to start from the crucible in which it formed in the 1920s. Carolan is right when he states that if history repeats itself it does not do so exactly, but his account is too much *not exactly* and too little *repeat*.

Here fascism will be considered in terms of its use of violence that separates it from mere right-wing authoritarianism and of the totalitarian ideas on which it was based (however inchoate those ideas might have been). The class forces that led to fascism's rise to power in the 1920s and 1930s are not relevant here: a fascist is a fascist in or out of power, and the way that fascism came to power in pre-war Europe, to crush strong and recently revolutionary workers' movements, may not apply today.

The key differentiator for fascism from the rest of the right is that it builds a mass base not just of political support but physical force to, literally, beat its opponents both real and imagined. This force may pose as a revolutionary force, but in both the Italian and German cases the fascist route to power was largely by constitutional means. In Italy, Mussolini planned an insurrection, "the March on Rome", before the King appointed him Prime Minister without a shot being fired. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany as leader of the largest party in the Reichstag with the support of conservative nationalists.

Fascist leaders typically had both a paramilitary uniform and a tailored suit in their wardrobe to wear as the occasion demanded. In power fascist parties were fused with the state to create something more than a typical dictatorship – strongly politicised, brutal and repressive state machines that were not bourgeois states in the normal sense, although ultimately they protected capital against a working-class threat.

This picture of fascism has no relationship to Trump's first election victory in 2016, but Carolan sees parallels with Trump's increasingly desperate attempts to hold onto power. Respond-



The Nazi paramilitary (SA) unit in Nuremberg, 1929
CC BY-SA 3.0 DE:
bit.ly/sa-29

ing to the Black Lives Matter movement earlier this year, Trump at first supported police violence, then justified more general resistance to a supposed hard left of anarchists and anti-fascists before tipping over into defending the 17 year-old vigilante Kyle Rittenhouse, who is charged with shooting dead two BLM protestors.

There is speculation that such Trump supporters will disrupt polls and create an armed second-front for his continuation as President alongside legal challenges should he lose the election in November. Trump made incoherent comments in the first Presidential debate, at first condemning white supremacists and militias and then supporting the Proud Boys (a clearly fascist group with perhaps 300 members) suggesting they "stand back and stand by" and that anti-fascists are a problem that "somebody" has to sort out. But Trump shows no interest in forming such people into a fascist organisation.

“Trump shows no interest in forming such people into a fascist organisation.”

The second distinctive feature of fascism is its totalitarianism. The term was first coined to describe the Italian fascists in power, and then adopted by them as a self description. Fascists seek to regiment individuals into an overarching identity (nation, race, religion), believing society needs to be re-ordered and the individual re-made. Nothing links Trump with this side of fascism in power.

Carolan points to the anti-scientific irrationalism of the Trump administration as indicative of fascism but this has long been hard-wired in Republicanism and is not distinctive to Trump. It appeals to their evangelical Christian base (more closely associated with Trump's conservative VP, Mike Pence). The growth of the Alt-Right, with its conspiratorial wing exemplified by QAnon, and Trump's transparent lying (it has been

called post-denialism since it doesn't even have the pretence of truth) is the new element here.

For sure, as one analyst of the far right has put it, "conspiracy theories and apocalyptic beliefs are the lingua franca of the far-right. They articulate and justify the

Manichean divide of their hate-filled [view] of the world into a chosen 'us' and a dangerous, subversive 'them.'"

QAnon supporters are seeping into the Republican Party with Trump's enthusiastic support. Carolan is looking the right way but seeing too clearly beyond the political event horizon. QAnon is a bridge from supporting Trump to fascism that some may cross, but Trump himself has two degrees of separation from clear-cut fascism.

This is not emergent fascism. But Republicanism under Trump becoming more populist and authoritarian – a long-term trend. In the 1968 presidential election Nixon used law and order as a thinly veiled appeal to racists and the "silent majority". In some ways Trump's policies are those of Reagan's 1980s "blue-collar republicanism", writ large in an angry toddler's crayon.

Certainly, Trump has gone beyond that, adopting a hard-line nationalist stance both on stopping immigration and in turning against the pro-globalisation policies of both previous Democratic and Republican governments with his America First policy and its tendencies to be both economically protectionist and isolationist. This is a symptom more of the US's declining status as a world power than incipient fascism.

So why argue that Trump is a fascist? It is surely preparing the ground for a call to vote Biden on the grounds that this will protect democracy. Barrie Hardy in *Solidarity* 563 argues Trump's Republican Party represents "the most rapacious wing of the American capitalist class" echoing the analysis of 1930s Popular Front Stalinism which saw fascism as the "dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital," implying that the Democrats represent a less reactionary wing of capital that we might ally with, at least electorally.

Whether or not Trump is defeated the

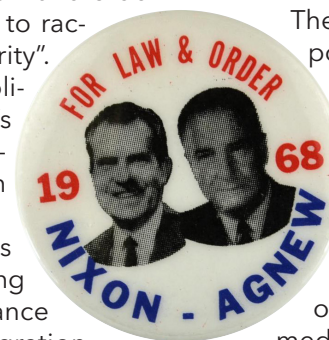
forces that created him will continue to grow, as will both armed gangs of "patriots" and the only somewhat tamer varieties of the Alt-Right. The continued decline of American economic power will only swell the ranks of the disillusioned, desperate, and demented. A Biden victory will not avert that.

Socialists can choose to emphasise support for the Democrats in the hope of building a kinder, more democratic capitalism, or the need to build the working class as an independent political force. The first is an illusion, the second an uphill struggle that must be faced. Building that movement is what will disrupt both Trump's base and anything worse that might follow.

“We should not use “fascist” as a left-liberal swearword.”

Trump has pushed the bounds of US politics to the right in a way that has parallels around the world with a now well established current of right-wing populist authoritarianism. While in some cases this has edged towards fascism (the mob violence against Muslims in India by Modi's BJP being the most notable example), Trump is not fascist, proto-fascist or semi-fascist. What he might be is pre-fascist.

The forces that Trump rode to power will, in the absence of a working class movement, continue to grow. The violent reaction of racist and backward gun toting semi-rural idiocy will thrive, along with the Alt-Right spreading its oil slick of polluting filth over social media. We should not use "fascist" as a left-liberal swearword. We may need it for those who follow and really are. □



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The threat from Trump



By Thomas Carolan

Immediately after the 9/11 attackers had levelled the World Trade Center, Donald Trump rang a radio station to inform New Yorkers that now he, Donald J Trump, owned the tallest building in the city.

In a saner political world, that public response to 9/11 would ever after have made the man who had thus exposed his inner self unelectable to any position in the USA.

Trump, who had inherited vast wealth, was host of a reality TV show in which he blustered and bullied contestants and visibly relished the power to say to them: "You're fired". He became politically active as a prominent "birther", one who, as a vehicle for racist dismay at the fact that a Black man was president, denied that Barack Obama was American-born.

In 2016 Hillary Clinton won the presidential election by nearly three million votes. The Electoral College then elected Donald Trump president.

The best way into what happened next is to tell it as a simple story. The madness became rampant with Trump's inauguration. Trump proclaimed that the inauguration crowd was the largest ever, and far bigger than for Barack Obama eight years earlier.

Newsreel showed a patchy Trump crowd, and a far bigger crowd for Obama. Trump continued to assert as truth what people who watched the footage could see was untrue.

Since then Trump has told more than 20,000 lies ([journalists have counted them](#)), a lot of them big lies, quickly exposed, but believed on Trump's say-so, backed by Fox News, by some 35 or 40% of the electorate.

Trump has gone on, in the four years since then, to assert and reassert a view of the world at stark odds with what to other people are the facts. He has invented a device for denying anything he chooses to deny: calling it "fake news".

He came into conflict with the ways of an Establishment that respected facts, science, concern with forming and keeping an accurate registration of reality. As in the Birther nonsense, he aligned himself with, and was a natural part of, the mindset of the politically-paranoid right – a great bog of conspiracy theorists, racists, armed militias, religious fundamentalists, anti-vaccination and other medical cranks.

That vast area of ignorance and unreason and political craziness was and

is Trump's main base of support.

For many, Trump was an anti-Establishment revolutionary. And to a degree he really was – a revolutionary of the right.

In part this was because he aligned with his "base", who are, many of them, a grotesque version, not a parody but a version, of the many anti-Establishment and revolutionary religious sects dotted through history. In the USA these are people thrust out of the education system, confronting and trying to understand a bourgeois society that inflicts indignities and horrors on them, and developing compensatory images of themselves, such as that they are too tough to wear masks in an epidemic.

"The Frontier"

For hundreds of years, until the end of "The Frontier" in the 1890s, as the little pocket of colonies on the East Coast advanced inwards and southwards, civilised America, on its edges, coexisted with areas and people who lived on the level of barbarism – fur trappers, early homestead farmers. That was the world depicted in Western "pioneer" movies and in the novels written early in the 19th century by James Fenimore Cooper.

And today, mentally, but not only in that, civilised America intertwines with people in an earlier age of historical time – the fundamentalists, the paranoid "survivalists", and the militias.

Many of those identify with the real (and more so, the mythical) frontier people of the past, with the enslaving South, with the lawless freedom of the wagon-train pioneers. And of course they, like the old frontier people, are also a product of, and a distorting shadow behind, more advanced America.

The America where it was to Hillary Clinton's advantage to let the story spread that she held Bible classes in the White House (maybe she did!) is a very strange place viewed from Europe.

The old frontiers were the only way they could be with the circumstances and resources of their time. Today, though Trump is also a personification of pure capitalism, with its money-craze and reduction of everything to "the cash nexus", Trump, in his mind, embodies that old distorting shadow and its victims.

Trump is a right-wing revolutionary in the White House. He, the most powerful man in the world, denounces the "deep state", the secret conspirators who "really" rule the USA and the world. He treats the existing political system of rules and customs with contempt and derision.

James Comey, director of the FBI, rendered Trump great help when on

the eve of the 2016 election he "intervened" to remind voters that Hillary Clinton was still not clear of an FBI investigation into things the Trumpites were charging against her. Trump sacked even Comey because Comey refused to give Trump assurances of absolute personal loyalty.

Trump has gone through a number of Attorney Generals to get to Bill Barr, who treats the Department of Justice as a direct tool of the president, to hurt his enemies and protect his friends.

Many of the rules that have governed the behaviour of presidents and politicians have been customary, not binding laws. Like a great brute in an old-style Japanese house with panes of paper partitioning it, Trump has lumbered around inside the US political establishment, ripping and tearing its fabric, acting where he can as a wilful dictator.

There are still restraints on him, but the American political system is a Heath Robinson archaic affair of patchings and improvisations. Much of it is profoundly undemocratic.

The president is not elected by the citizens, but by an electoral college chosen by the state legislatures – by an elite electorate that can nullify the majority citizen vote. Trump is president despite receiving three million fewer votes than Hillary Clinton because of that. In 2000, George W Bush was made president despite losing the popular vote.

Supreme Court

State legislatures can appoint electors to the college and instruct them how to vote irrespective of the popular vote.

The Supreme Court decides all constitutional questions in dispute. Yet its members, who serve for life, are appointed – subject to Senate approval – by whoever is president when a Supreme Court judge happens to die. Trump has already appointed two judges and is nominating a third. The court may outlaw Obamacare, reverse abortion rights, and more, hurtling the country back decades.

The whole US system needs a radical democratic overhaul.

Trump has power to flout the old customary rules and laws – against using his position to enrich himself and his family, for example – because a majority of the Senate are Republican and back him whatever he does. They are locked into a drilled and disciplined phalanx of "Trump, whatever he does" political robots because Trump, via Trump's supporters, can block their re-election.

A tremendous shift has taken place already within the US political structure, and Trump threatens to push it further.

Some of it is reminiscent of the fall of the Roman Republic two thousand years ago.

The institutions were there still, but their functioning and weight in decision-making shifted as Rome became a vast empire and some citizens grew so rich that they could bribe for what they wanted. Dictators were allowed for, for brief periods of special crisis. Finally the victorious general Julius Caesar was appointed Dictator for Life.

A great civil war erupted, and Caesar's adopted nephew, Octavian, emerged as dictator, still preserving the old hollowed-institutions, ruling as Augustus, and calling himself First Citizen.

Trump has pushed the USA to a new stage of presidential power, and the Senate has acted as Trump's enabler.

Take Trump at his political preferences, drives, opinions, and deeds and words as president. He has tried to rule like the "strong man" dictators he openly admires, from Kim Jong-un in fascistic and neo-Stalinist North Korea through Russia's Putin to Turkey's Erdogan.

He has open contempt for the institutions of bourgeois democracy in the USA. He has campaigned against the 3 November election, to stop it, to nullify the whole process. He has tried to sabotage the postal system in order to sabotage the election.

He refuses to commit himself to a peaceful transfer when he loses the election, and proclaims loudly that if he loses, that is proof that the election was rigged. He has been slaving at the mouth to create bloody confrontation in the streets.

It is not only his personal drives and beliefs. He has a mass following, up to 40% of the electorate. He has tight control of the Republican party and the Senate majority.

Trump is an American fascist, and this situation is American fascism waiting to coalesce. It does not follow that it will coalesce. It is a possibility.

The signs are that Biden will replace Trump as president, with or without violent confrontation, and that the Democrats will become the majority in both houses of Congress. However a post-election crisis works out, Trump is bequeathing to America the belief among large numbers that the election will have been stolen.

If Trump gets to rule for another four years, we do not know what he will be able to do, but he will surely do great damage to the institutions of bourgeois democracy in America, such as they are. He will continue to poison the bloodstream of the USA, fomenting fear and hatred against Black people, Latins, and others, and rampant irrationality. □

A socialist vote for Biden



Debate

By Thomas Carolan

Trump's defeat in the election is, as of now, likely. It is by no means certain. A lot can happen in the coming weeks.

It is of fundamental importance to the US working class that he does not win.

The US left is divided. Some see it as overriding principle not to back Biden – they tend to favour a vote for the Green Party presidential candidate, Howie Hawkins, who is a socialist. Others work within the very big tent around the Democratic Party for Biden's election.

But if Biden does not win, Trump will win. If by some freak the Green Party candidate were to win enough votes to lose Biden the election and let Trump in for another four years, it would be a catastrophe for American bourgeois democracy and the American working class.

The US Trotskyist tradition has been never to vote Democrat, not even if there is no available or substantial working-class party to counterpose.

Tradition is important. But tradition can become superstition. For Marxists the truth is always concrete. Working-class political independence is irreplaceably programme, analysis, responses to events. What it means in terms of organisation should be worked out concretely.

Simply to say that the Democratic Party is a bourgeois party, as it certainly is, is insufficiently concrete. It is nonetheless now the party in which the US labour movement involves itself and where we see the great advance embodied in Sanders' campaign taking place.

Working-class political independence is our sine qua non, but being with the workers in order to help them develop in their understanding and politics is also pretty close to the top of our list of the basic things. Isn't it?

We, after Lenin, say that the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party.

We work within it, because that, politically, is where the labour movement and the advanced workers are. It does, of course, draw people to mindless routine activities, to careerism, to the right. We nevertheless are involved in it. If we are strong enough to resist the pressures, it is possible to do our work there promoting working-class political independence.

Blair-Brown

In the Blair-Brown years that largely ceased to be true, and we modified our analysis and relations with Labour. We came close to saying it was just a bourgeois party, and not wrongly. But we never withdrew completely, nor stopped voting Labour against the Tories and Lib-Dems.

We modified our assessment in 2010 and then again with the Corbyn surge.

The Democratic party is a bourgeois, not a bourgeois workers', party. But saying that is not concrete enough. It is the party in which the labour movement involves itself, and right now the party the labour movement looks to, to stop Trump.

Bernie Sanders – who continues to sit as an Independent, not Democrat, senator – and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have demonstrated what can be done now for socialism with the Democratic Party, and that it can be done while maintaining open and independent socialist politics.

The Green Party is more left-wing, but no more a workers' party than the Democratic Party – in terms of sociological support and involvement, maybe less. And voting Biden to stop Trump is not in principle qualitatively different from getting involved with the Democratic Party enough to actively support Bernie Sanders' bid for the nomination.

Quite plainly a lot of the working-class and trade-union forces that will create the future independent workers' party are in and around the Democratic Party.

The dynamic working-class forces against Trump in the election and whatever comes after it are supporting or involved in the Biden campaign. That's where socialists should be too –



with them in the common immediate fight while advocating distinct socialist ideas, gaining the best possibility of influencing them when they are disappointed in Biden and the Democrats in Congress. Backing the Green Party is only a variant of sectarianism, at one remove.

Working-class political independence from all the parties and personalities of capitalist politics is fundamental to Marxist socialism. That is not the same thing as small socialist groups remaining aloof from the workers and socialists who look to the Democrats in the election to break the power of Trump and the Republicans in the Senate.

Sectarianism

Small group organisational self-distancing is not the same thing as political independence. At best it is a token of it. Meanwhile, there is the working class, needing to orient itself in an urgent situation... Our responsibility is to tell workers, even if only half a dozen of them are listening, what their real situation is and what best to do about it.

A parallel seems to exist between how the Labour Party separated from the Liberal Party in Britain, and how a working-class party may emerge in the USA out of the Democratic Party.

There was a long period of intertwining and overlapping, with Labour MPs elected as part of the Liberal Party, the so-called Lib-Labs. Even after the formation of the Labour Party in 1900, a block of miners' union MPs remained part of the Liberal Party until 1909-10.^[1]

Seeking for exact parallels would be idle. What matters is that socialists are free to do their fundamental educational activity, including education on the lessons of Trotsky's 1934 Action Program for the reform of bourgeois democracy in the USA, and to organise workers for socialism.

Socialists can work openly and independently around the Democrats, can't they? Making an absolute principle of never working in or voting for a bourgeois party does not in these circumstances make sense to me. The simple fact is that politics in the USA is immensely backward, almost a land that time forgot.

The experience of Max Shachtman moving to the right once in the Democratic Party inhibits some American socialists still. But while his political

evolution may have had special scope to develop in the Democratic Party, it surely was not caused by it.

I can think of another aspect of Shachtman's experience that bears on this discussion. The Workers Party and the ISL proclaimed that the Communist Parties were not working-class parties. I'll vote for that proposition with both hands. But it is not enough to say that. A large number of Communists wanted to be socialist, thought they were socialists, sided with the workers outside the Stalinist countries, and sometimes, in Hungary, for instance, with workers within the Stalinist states.

To go from the justified characterisation – not workers' but totalitarian parties – to a conclusion of shunning all cooperation with Communist Party members was simply too abstract. It missed out on important aspects of the reality. □

1. A number of working-class "Radical Clubs" previously linked to the Liberal Party joined the Democratic Federation, the first British Marxist organisation, when it was set up in 1881, in protest against the Liberal Party having failed to push through reforms to the land system in Ireland and instead bringing in a Coercion Act to cow the Irish, the justice of whose claims the government had admitted. The DF renamed itself Social Democratic Federation in 1884. Most of the Radical Clubs disaffiliated that same year in protest against SDF support for a Home Rule candidate against a Liberal one.

Trotsky on democracy

Trotsky sketched an approach to fighting for democracy even within the limits of capitalism in his Action Program for France of 1934:

Down with the Senate, which is elected by limited suffrage and which renders the power of universal suffrage a mere illusion! Down with the presidency of the republic, which serves as a hidden point of concentration for the forces of militarism and reaction!

A single assembly must combine the legislative and executive powers. Members would be elected for two years, by universal suffrage at eighteen years of age, with no discrimination of sex or nationality. Deputies would be elected on the basis of local assemblies, constantly revocable by their constituents, and would receive the salary of a skilled worker.

This is the only measure that would lead the masses forward instead of pushing them backward. A more generous democracy would facilitate the struggle for workers' power. □



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- Rail Workers Discuss Fighting Job Cuts, with Janine Booth and John Pencott

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Not just hope, action



By Jim Denham

The author of the [article](#) "The case for backing Hawkins" (Solidarity 565) begins thus: "Anyone committed to basic human decency, let alone socialism, should hope that Donald Trump loses the American presidential election in November. Given the nature of the US's electoral system, this means hoping that Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee, wins."

The conclusion would seem to be obvious: vote Biden.

But no: despite "hoping" for a Biden victory, we should not do anything to actually bring it about and – in fact – advocate a course of action that if it has any measurable effect, will make a Biden victory less likely.

The author arrives at this perverse

conclusion by arguing that "elections cannot be seen as incidental snap-shots... in which we stop all other politics... and then get back to our politics afterwards."

But, surely, relating to the vast majority of class conscious workers, people of colour and other progressive forces, in advocating the only course that can stop Trump is – or should be – our politics? Those people are correct in treating the election as a "referendum on Trumpism" in which a Biden vote is quite obviously necessary. In joining them, nothing prevents us pointing out everything that's wrong with Biden and the mainstream Democrats, or pointing out the need for independent political action and, ultimately, a working class-based labour or socialist party. The creation of such a party is a long way off, but our job is to educate advanced workers and other progressive forces in the need for such a party.

Does campaigning for the no-hope Hawkins-Walker Green Party candidacy

help us do this? No it does not! An American comrade has put it like this: "The Greens, a party that lies dormant between presidential elections, can be a spoiler, but not a significant vehicle for anti-capitalist class education – having no presence in working-class life. Even less, therefore, can it act as a catalyst in key working-class communities hastening a break with capitalist politics."

Space does not allow me to go into whether or not Trump and his movement can properly be described as "fascist" (I think it can, the author seems to suggest it's not), but that's not the crucial issue here. We can all agree, I hope, that Trump represents an extreme right-wing, authoritarian racist movement that represents a mortal danger to democracy, to workers' rights, to women and to minorities not just in the US but world-wide.

Supporting the Green Party in this situation is not just irresponsible, but entirely counter-productive for social-



ists. The American comrade summed it up well: "Under these circumstances, there is no upside for a protest vote for the Greens. If such a vote delivers a victory to Trump, socialists will be held responsible for the debacle. Votes expended on the Greens will not open or strengthen other fronts of resistance in legislatures, workplaces or communities." □

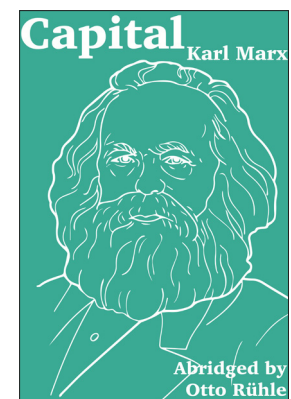
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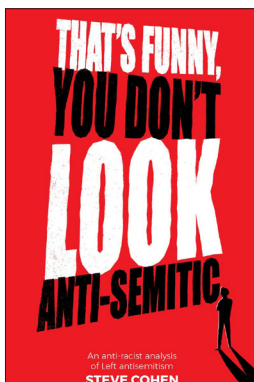
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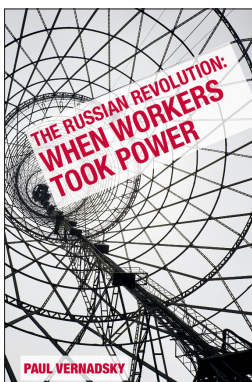
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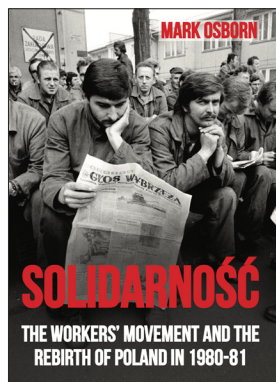
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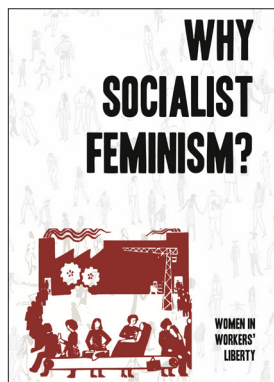
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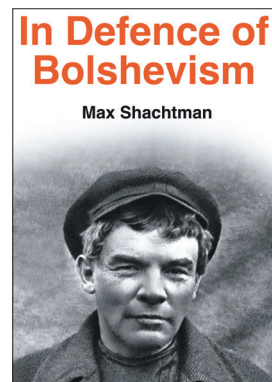
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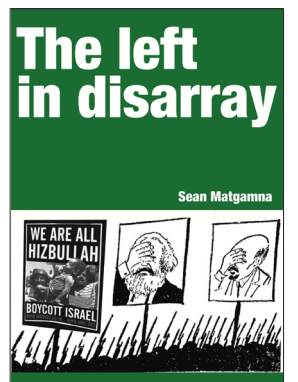
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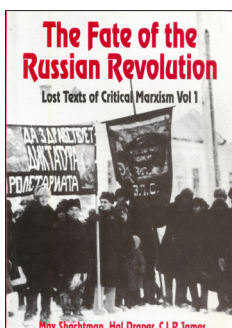
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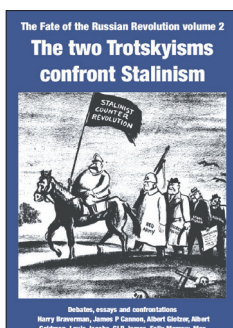
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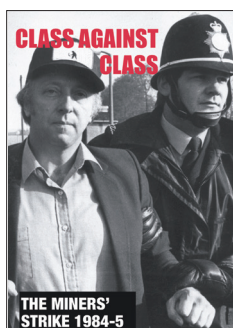
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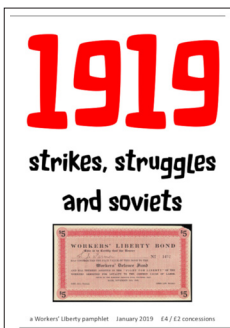
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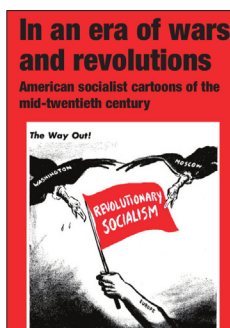
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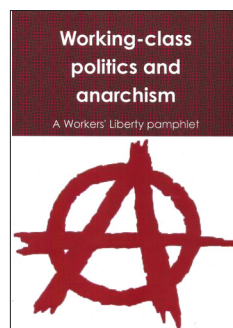
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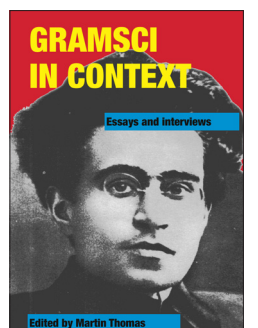
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What Hawkins can build



By Simon Nelson

In the light of the Sanders campaign and a small resurgence of leftist pressure from Democrats, having a straightforward position of never voting for or to even contemplate seeking the Democratic nomination would be counter-productive.

But Sanders is not building anything out of this presidential election. And at almost 80 years old, he is, unfortunately, unlikely to be the figurehead of a new movement for any length of time.

Since Biden won the nomination, Sanders, whether through being told to shut up or feeling burned, has not been at all vocal. His "Our Revolution", the NGO that has come out of the campaign, is extremely limited. What have its local chapters done during this election? Where is their list of demands on Biden? In fact, they don't make any!

Their list of four demands during the election ends with "build a movement". But for what? The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), an organisation that has grown substantially since 2016, and no doubt at the expense of the revolutionary left, has some real potential but seems to be largely sitting this election out, while the vast majority of its membership reluctantly vote for Biden.

Unfortunately the US left is not united



for a Hawkins vote. If it were, that might strengthen the campaign's potential. I have no illusions that the Green Party is anything but an electoral vehicle. The potential of the Hawkins-Walker campaign is not about building the Greens but about the kind of campaigns that they can run during the election, albeit hampered by Covid.

Hawkins, who has been an activist for 50 years in the third camp tradition that we also inhabit, is the only candidate for President that has anything remotely like the kind of program that can defeat Trumpism. That is, politically, if not at the ballot box.

Yes, the US Democratic Party is where the labour movement involves itself now. Does it follow that it would be sectarian to stand aside it, as it would be to stand aside from work in the Labour Party here despite the dangers that brings?

Any socialist movement in the US is going to be built by people who have

looked to the Democrats at some time. But we should not get caught up in a re-imagined realignment strategy. That would be in danger of something closer to the Communist Party Popular Front vision of the 1930s than a serious attempt to split the Democrats.

The checks and balances, and the democracy, limited as they are, in the Labour Party, are still far stronger than they are in the Democrats. Consistent work in the Labour Party is about far more than getting good candidates on the ballot line. Work inside the Democrats is almost solely about that.

More online

The "idiot of Vienna"

Dale Street digs out the real history of the famous saying "antisemitism is the socialism of fools": it didn't come from August Bebel.
bit.ly/as-sf

AOC and the rest of the "awkward squad" have built a successful brand around themselves, but that is all they have built. AOC shows little sign of being truly independent or fighting for real change within the Democrats. We should recognise the shift, but not get carried away with what it means.

The labour movement, i.e. the majority of unions, backs Biden. None of them backs Hawkins. Trump has mostly police unions on his side.

But then the Democrats have had the backing of the vast majority of unions in all recent elections. That is no new phenomenon.

The danger is that we become the ones marshalling people as foot soldiers for Biden, rather than using the opportunity of the election to build the independent working-class perspective that is so urgently needed. □

Watch our 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](#).

Every **Monday at 1.30pm** we have a 10-50 minute video, such as meeting opening speeches or an interview.

Uniformed police at Pride?

By Peter North

The Black Lives Matter movement has reignited the demand for an end to Police racism and racism across society, and given many a necessary reminder of the need to listen and learn from BAME people and to offer our solidarity.

LGBT+ people are now also asking once again: should uniformed police officers be invited to Pride marches?

Pride began as a protest to remember the Stonewall Riots which took place in the US in 1969 when LGBT+ people at a bar called the Stonewall Inn had had enough of being bullied and harassed by homophobic police. Activists in the United Kingdom set up their own Pride protest in solidarity

and to fight for equality in the UK. They were hounded and attacked for doing so from the police and from many others.

Fast forward sixty years, and Pride is a very different thing; a brand-sponsored fiesta, with a high cost for attendees and organisers, joined by police in uniform desperate to improve their image.

But what does it matter? Is it not a good thing that uniformed police are on Pride demonstrating their support?

The police force is a necessary arm of a capitalist state. The establishment that controls capitalist society, made up mostly of rich, straight, white, cis men, needs the police to protect its wealth and operations, enforce its laws and defend its positions. Without police officers willing and

ready to uphold this inequality, we would likely be in a very different place.

When it was illegal to be gay, the police would happily arrest people. When indecency laws unfairly targeted gay men, the cops would at a click of a finger patrol remote toilets in parks or scour gay bookstores to remove literature the state felt to be too queer.

When people protested the homophobic Section 28 laws that likely led to the bullying and suicide of untold LGBT young people, the police would be there on the streets suppressing protest.

More recently, the police arrested LGBT people trying to join Glasgow Pride and charged an LGBT person for holding up a sign with the word "faggot" written on it

Nearby Christian groups attacking marchers as sinners went untouched. And in London, a serial killer was able to kill four gay men with numerous clues apparently missed. The investigation into that case is ongoing, so it is too early to say whether homophobia meant police missed what some are calling obvious clues.

As well as the historical and ongoing police oppression of LGBT people, there is also the oppression of BAME people, and their voice must be heard when it comes to this debate.

This isn't a demand that police officers be banned, but that police not be invited to march in uniform at Pride. A police officer in uniform is a representative of the police force, and the police force with

their history of oppression and ongoing concerns should not be welcome at a protest.

It is also something others marching with their bosses may want to consider. When you march in your workplace uniform or otherwise emblazoned with a company's branding, first and foremost you are promoting your employer, not celebrating your sexuality or protesting for equality.

If companies want to make a difference, they need to pay their tax, take serious action to improve diversity on the boardroom and management, and work with unions to ensure they pay and treat employees properly. Sponsoring a float for Pride is a cheap alternative. □

“What we stand for

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

Capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, blighting of lives by overwork; imperialism, environmental destruction and much else.

The working class must unite to struggle against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, in the workplace and wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses, to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement
- A workers' charter of trade union rights – to organise, strike, picket effectively, and take solidarity action
- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a green society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
- Maximum left unity in action, and full openness in debate

If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! □

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

Shock and learning



Diary of an engineer

By Emma Rickman

It's autumn, and we need our thick coats again. Since the Outage [the annual shutdown for major repairs] something has changed among the apprentices. We are more confident, and there's less work to do, so we are competing, suddenly, for jobs.

In downtime, I do college work, then discover engineers have gone to a job without telling me – "Don't worry about it, do your apprentice work" – I forget basic things, I screw up testing, I fake confidence and dread embarrassment.

K asks us to look at an electric heater in one of the cabins and I go alone, isolate it, struggle to get the cover off, trying to look competent in front of the workers filling the cabin on their break. Finally the other apprentice helps me get it off the wall, disconnect the "Wall...socket...thing...?" "Spur. Fuse spur." With the qualified electrician, we test the heater in the workshop, find no faults, and I put the cover back together. In the cabin, I reconnect the (new vocab, must remember) Fuse Spur into the wall, close the breaker, and switch on the heater – nothing. Burning with frustration, I go for lunch.

After lunch we go back and test the spur – in my anxiety to get it screwed into the wall I've crushed the plastic casing and the fuse. I replace it carefully with the others peering over my shoulder. This is just like that vacuum cleaner switch I destroyed the day before, trying to force it through the too-small hole in the casing with pliers...

That afternoon J, a qualified electrician, asks if I'd like to do a job fitting new plug-sockets in the kitchen. "You're all right with that aren't you? You know what you're doing" he smiles with trust and confidence. I feel ok, I know the



components and I know the tools. I isolate, test for dead, drill and fit the rawlplugs, connect the conduit, wire in the socket. I feel relieved to have done something right and unassisted today. I close the breaker – nothing.

The breakers are not labelled correctly, and I don't want to go through each one again testing for dead. It would make me look stupid for forgetting (as if I hadn't done it correctly the first time) and it might knock off the power to the workshop sockets below, interrupting the welders. I open three breakers I think are likely to isolate the kitchen, then test the new socket I've fitted – 0v on the live, 3v on the neutral.

"Have you isolated?"

I don't want to ask for help. "Yeah that's dead."

I follow the plugs back through the circuit and discover a live has come loose further "up the line". Relieved to have found the fault, I push the copper back into the terminal with the tip of my finger, and it shocks me. Nothing like I thought it would be, no pain, burning or aching, just a prick on my fingertip

and a shudder in my ribcage, like a quick plunge into cold water. It's nothing compared to the embarrassment. I try to laugh it off.

"Ah – ha! – that's not dead then."

J is pretty calm "That shock you?"

"Yeah. Not badly though."

"Hmm...thought you isolated it. What did the test say?"

"I thought it was dead. 3v neutral, nothing live."

The other apprentice goes next door to open the right breaker, which of course he knows without having to check. I test the lives and read 0v, 0v, 0v. J, understandably, double-checks my testing. "You were testing a broken circuit – watch the volts on your neutral."

"You're right – I will do. I feel like an idiot." I feel like a dangerous, sulky teenager, that I shouldn't be there at all, that my boss hired me in a fit of politically-correct corporate arse-kissing, and that I should – for God's sake – go home and stop.

"You're ok – just don't do it again." □

• Emma Rickman is an apprentice in a Combined Heat and Power Plant.

China's coal mines



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

October 1 was the anniversary of the founding of the "People's Republic" of China. Regular readers of the *Morning Star* should turn away now. *Blind Shaft* (2003, director Li Yang), a film set in a coal mining region of China, depicts the appalling conditions underground and corruption among

officials. In 2003 there were 6,700 fatalities (official figures) in Chinese mines.

Two con-men persuade a young lad to join them in the mine, posing as their nephew. After a few weeks they kill him while underground and the mine manager, afraid of an investigation, pays them a large bribe. The next time they try this, they argue and a fight leaves both men dead and their intended victim receiving an unexpected bonus. Although based on a prize-winning novel, the film was banned. □

Our £10,000 target

A quiet week brings our total to £9,084: thanks to Sam for £25. We have until 22 November to reach our £10,000 target, so we should be able to surpass it with a small push. One of the best ways to help us raise funds in the long term is to take out a standing order. If you don't currently have a subscription to *Solidarity* or you are soon due for renewal, you can subscribe or renew online, paying by standing order or direct debit (or send a cheque). □

Resist Sodexo job cuts

From *Tubeworker*

Sodexo, the multibillion pound, multinational outsourcing giant, plans to cut 30 jobs on its TfL catering contract.

It has been cooking up the cuts (pun intended) since late last year, when it won an extension to its contract. Sodexo bosses say TfL re-tendered the contract on the explicit basis of requiring “efficiencies”. TfL denies having asked its contractors to make cuts.

The plans were paused when the pandemic hit, but now Sodexo is using the drop in its revenues caused by Covid as cover to resurrect and expand its cuts plan. It has now upped the number of jobs it plans to cut to 30.

An RMT leaflet for Sodexo workers says: “The cuts they are now proposing are substantially more extensive

than those they initially proposed in late 2019/early 2020. We believe the bosses of Sodexo, a multinational corporation that generated €22.0 billion in revenue in 2019, are using the pandemic as a pretext to cut costs.

“Although Sodexo’s revenue has taken a hit in the economic downturn since the outbreak of the pandemic, we do not accept their claim that they cannot afford to maintain staffing levels on the TfL contract.”

It’s good the union is looking to organise a fightback. Any Sodexo workers who aren’t yet members of RMT should join now; the more workers on the contract who are collectively organised, the more power they’ll have to resist cuts.

Workers in other roles, including LU trains and fleet workers in depots



served by the canteens, also need to pressure Sodexo – out of solidarity with our workmates, but also because fewer canteen staff, and less food cooked on-site, will inevitably lead to a drop in the quality of the service. □

- Workers on the Caledonian Sleeper have struck to demand spaces on the trains to take breaks: see reports on the [strike](#) and on the [pickets](#).

Concessions won in DWP



**John Moloney,
PCS AGS**

Bosses in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have offered a number of [concessions](#) in our ongoing dispute about Job Centre opening hours and arrangements. The union’s Group Executive Committee for the DWP meets on Monday 5 October to consider these concessions and decide the next steps. If the GEC decides the offer isn’t adequate, the dispute will continue and likely move to a formal ballot for industrial action.

We need a comprehensive settlement that covers the whole department, on an indefinite basis. There’s been some suggestion that decisions around opening times and arrangements could be devolved to local managers, but we need a uniform arrangement covering all Job Centres, that remains in place for as long as the pandemic continues. Without that, even if we push the bosses back this time we could be facing a similar crisis in a few months if they make a renewed attempt to extending opening times.

Our members working as

driving instructors are also likely to ballot for action, demanding that driving tests are suspended. The proximity in which they work to students simply isn’t safe in the context of rising infection rates. During the first wave, tests were suspended for everyone except key workers who needed to drive for professional reasons, and those were conducted by volunteer instructors, so no-one was compelled to work. We want that situation restored.

The arts and culture sector is one of the epicentres for job cuts, and PCS members working there are hugely affected by that. The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London plans redundancies amounting to 10% of its workforce. Our branch there is organising to resist that. At the Tate, our members voted to suspend their strike after the bosses offered improved redundancy terms and firmer guarantees about possible redeployment for staff. Those concessions would not have been secured without the strike, so that’s something our members can be proud of and shows that it’s worth mounting resistance to cuts, but there’s no cause for celebration, as workers are still losing their

jobs.

Institutions in this sector are massively reliant on commercial revenues from visitors, which has obviously collapsed during the pandemic. They’re increasingly top heavy, with many museums and galleries having expanded managerial roles and paying senior managers eye-watering salaries.

Resisting

As well as resisting attacks wherever they come, the labour movement needs its own programme for the crisis, to try to turn defence in attack. In the arts and culture sector that would include demands for increased public funding and a rebalancing away from the top-heavy senior management structure.

More generally, we need bold and ambitious demands around social ownership, requisitioning manufacturing capacity to reorient around social need – such as producing medical equipment and improving testing capacity – and the nationalisation of the track-and-trace programmes currently outsourced to the public sector. We also need to demand full sickness and isolation pay for all workers, regardless of contractual

status, as a workers’ right and essential infection control measure.

Winning these demands from a profit-driven Tory government won’t be easy, but the first step is developing and articulating that programme rather than tinkering around the edges of existing policy or making only moderate or timid demands. The “People Before Profit” programme being promoted in the labour movement by activists from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) contains some good policies, but also has some key gaps – such as the demand for public ownership of the banks, the demand for full sickness and isolation pay, specific demands for migrant workers’ rights, and the demand for the repeal of all anti-union and anti-strike laws, to enable workers to take effective action to defend rights and safety.

Such policies, and how we can fight for them, need to be discussed at every level of the labour movement, from workplace groups and branches upwards. □

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



RMT CFDU group launches

A group of activists in the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers (RMT) has launched a “Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic Union” (CFDU), which “fights for rank-and-file democracy and militant industrial strategies.” The CFDU name has been used by a number of previous similar initiatives in the union. This latest initiative has been launched in response to a burgeoning democratic crisis inside the union, which has seen General Secretary Mick Cash use official union communication channels to attack the lay National Executive Committee, and then refuse to carry out his constitutional obligation to circulate policy passed by that Committee. The CFDU’s statement responding to this can be read on its website, [rmtcfdu.wordpress.com](#). Follow the CFDU on Twitter at [@RMTCFDU](#). □

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Food couriers organising nationwide

By Michael Elms

In York and Sheffield, food delivery couriers are continuing an ongoing campaign of boycotts, strikes and demonstrations. Their aim is to civilise a wild-west industry that relies on Victorian-style super-exploitation, painted up as the modern "gig economy".

Deliveroo, UberEats and other operators have used the coronavirus crisis as cover to slash pay and over-recruit – all the while noisily lauding their exploited workforce as "heroes". In Sheffield, much attention has been drawn to the plight of workers who fall foul of Deliveroo's seemingly-arbitrary sacking policy. One union member has been forced to launch a [crowdfunder](#) to fend off starvation while he contests his unjust termination.

The latest group of workers to join the national couriers' fightback is in Wolverhampton. Following weeks of conversations and a meeting held in a carpark, drivers voted to start taking action at UberEats by disrupting the business of their biggest single partner, McDonalds. One Wolverhampton driver, John, spoke to *Solidarity*.

"At first, I was the only one in this area to be in a union. We have a few members now, and we are all speaking to people to get them to understand the benefits of union membership.

"Right now, in Wolverhampton, the pay on UberEats is about half the minimum wage. We decided we needed to do something. We set up this group.

"With UberEats we have a standard rate for delivery which is very low. But we get a "boost", depending on how busy our area is. Three or four months ago the boost was a multiplier of 1.3. But now the biggest boost is 1.1. So for one delivery

you can get £2.60. Even as little as £1.90. You go to a restaurant, they take 15-20 minutes to give you the food, then you have to deliver it, and at the end you're getting £2.50. Most of us in my area are car drivers. For a car you need to pay for petrol, car repairs, and other things. I have a colleague who has worked nine hours today and made £60. After petrol and insurance that comes to £40 for a nine-hour day.

"We have drivers here in Wolverhampton working 80-90 hours a week. And even after that they can't pay all their bills. Drivers rely on tips: tips often make up more of their takings than payment from the platform does.

"We hit McDonalds on Friday [2 October]. We got a call from the local UberEats manager. She said she would improve the boost next week, but we demanded this in writing because we did not believe her. Then she said that the decision was not actually down to her – so we carried on with the action. We spoke to the McDonald's area manager too, who was very nice. But if there is no change this week we will do it again.

"For the next boycott we think we will bring a lot more drivers along with us. We want to put pressure on UberEats because just one day is not enough to move the company. They need to see that we are serious and that we don't want to work on these wages any more.

"My message to other drivers? First of all we are key workers, and we need to be treated with respect. We have been working all this pandemic period. We want to do something about pay. If people are with us and speaking out alongside us, if we are together, we can change things. If we don't work, they don't get money." □

• Abridged. More at bit.ly/do-ue

Millionaire misanthrope hospitalised



By Barrie Hardy

*Old man Trump knows
just how much
racial hatred he stirred up
in the blood spot of human hearts*

The old man Trump folk singer Woody Guthrie attacked in 1954 was Donald Trump's father Fred. Woody was protesting against the racist housing practices of landlord Fred Trump in Brooklyn. Fred Trump also had form for associating with the Ku Klux Klan. In 1927 the KKK held an anti-Catholic march in Queens, New York and Fred Trump was one of seven "berobed marchers" to get arrested.

Racism, like avarice, is a part of Donald Trump's character inherited from his father. In 1989 he took out full page newspaper ads calling for the death penalty for five black and Hispanic teenagers wrongly found guilty of a brutal rape in New York's Central Park. Their convictions, based on coerced confessions secured by the NYPD, were subsequently overturned when a serial rapist confessed to the crime. Trump has insisted on several occasions since that the teenagers are still guilty.

Unlike his dad, Trump has never gone round dressed in KKK regalia, but still sympathises with white supremacist groups. In February 2016 he refused to condemn the KKK or disavow an endorsement of his candidacy made by long time Klan leader David Duke. His most recent show of support for neo-nazi outfits was during the first Presidential debate against Joe Biden, when he refused to condemn the so called Proud Boys, recommending instead that they "stand back and stand by."

The Anti-Defamation League has the Proud Boys down as "violent, nationalistic, Islamophobic, transphobic and misogynistic." What they share with other armed groups in the far right cesspool is adherence to the "white genocide" conspiracy theory – a belief propagated back in 1978 in the notoriously racist and anti Semitic Turner Diaries. Such groups in America are looking for a "race war".

On the very day Trump encouraged the Proud Boys, an unredacted FBI document on white supremacist infiltration of law enforcement was released, linking it with police abuse and tolerance of racism. According to the Department of Homeland Security also last month, white supremacist groups are the biggest terror threat in the USA today. Trump is naturally oblivious to all this because they are among his most ardent supporters.

With Trump things seem to go beyond racism to dislike of humankind in its entirety, with acts of sabotage against the public health efforts of various states and his own administration. He's also oblivious to the well-being of his own supporters, whom he insists on packing into his super-spreader rallies.

When asked if he was afraid of catching the virus Trump said: "I'm on stage, it's very far away, so I'm not at all concerned." Catching Covid-19, like paying income tax, was for the little people, not him. Unlike 210,000 Americans, Trump will probably escape its devastating effects.

If he loses the election though, he should be in line for a very lengthy period of confinement, and it won't be in a luxury private hospital. □

• More inside on Trump and the US elections, page 8-12



Solidarity

For a workers' government

BACK STUDENT RENT STRIKES!

By AWL students

With numbers of uni students testing positive for Covid rising dramatically – 400 at Nottingham Uni, nearly 500 at Sheffield University, over 700 at Northumbria – student action is beginning to get off the ground.

The rising Covid infection has destroyed university bosses' claims that face-to-face teaching was sustainable and campuses were "open for business". Thousands of students are now in lockdown in crowded halls. Given a choice, many students would now prefer to go back to their home town to study online or defer their degrees.

At Glasgow Uni students have been offered a four-week rent rebate; but that is too little, too late. Students must have the right to end or defer university accommodation contracts!

Support for that demand is growing. It is backed by the University College Union and National Union of Students (NUS). Students cannot wait for university managements to sort out their mess, or the Government to financially bail out universities.

Student activists, drawing in some first years, at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and else-

where, are now discussing rent strikes to back up the demand to get out of contracts.

Last week NUS, together with "Cut the Rent" (a student-led national network) organised a rent-strike training session. National co-ordination needs to continue and develop into an on-going democratically-organised planning forum.

Demands

Many other demands for the wider student body need to be raised including cuts to extortionate rents, stronger rights against private landlords, financial help in the face of joblessness, and fee amnesties for international students (who pay their fees upfront).

Action on the ground reflect the multifaceted problems of student livelihoods. Students at Edinburgh, where there are 25,000 students in Uni accommodation, are organising for a Living Rent. The tenants' group Acorn organised a protest in Coventry against one of the many national private student landlords.

Immediate demands for students in lockdown – for food and welfare support and an end



to punitive fines for breaking lockdown – must be pressed for by campus student and trade unions.

Fee rebates for home students, as now being demanded by [@RefundUsNow2020](https://twitter.com/RefundUsNow2020), are not the answer! Students will not benefit from a fee rebate until sometime in the future, if ever. The demand is "justified" on grounds of "lower-quality" online teaching, i.e. putting a monetary value on years of learning, discussing and thinking, which is divisive and ultimately inhuman.

Long-term marketisation of universities has lead to this chaos. Students must link up with staff who are also now fighting cuts, to save jobs, and over the greater workload of preparing online teaching.

Joint student-staff campaigns – such as the ones being set up at at Cambridge, Goldsmiths and elsewhere – are the way to fight for safe campuses and the longer-term future of higher education. □