



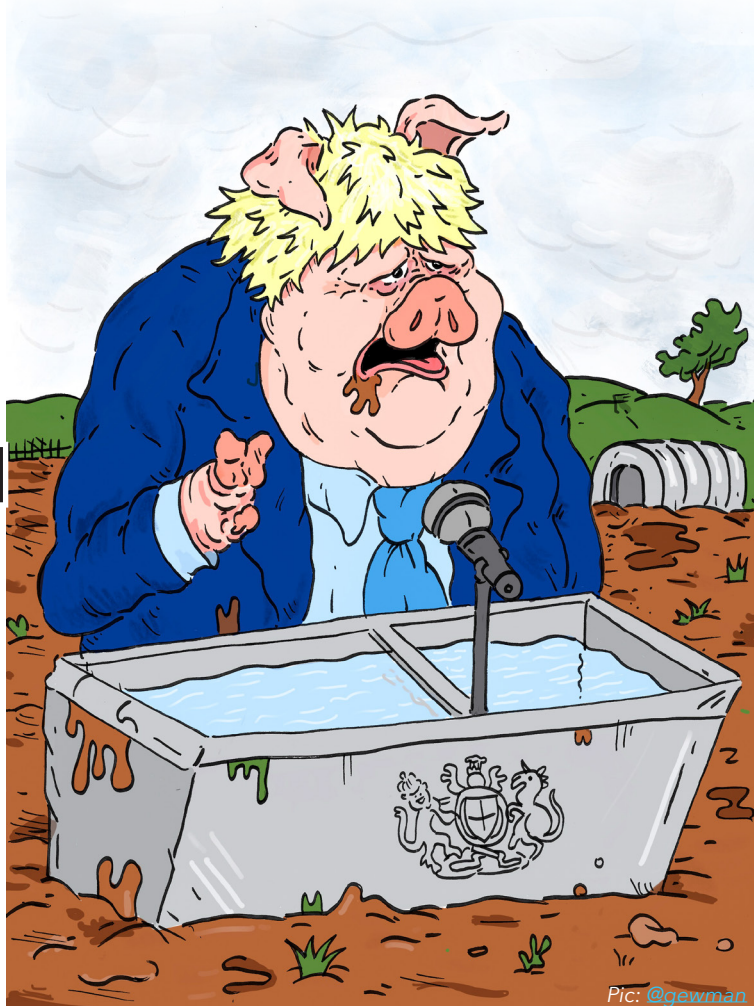
For social ownership of the banks and industry

THE ARROGANCE OF THE SUPER-RICH

» **Oust
Johnson, oust
Tory policies**

» **Against
Police Bill and
Borders Bill**

» **Unions:
launch a pay
fightback!**



Pic: @gewman

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The arrogance of the super-rich



Boris Johnson rose to be Tory leader and prime minister because of his talent for lying, not despite it.

The job of a Tory prime minister who has to win elections is to help the ultra-wealthy while also convincing enough of the working-class majority that we're being helped too. Modestly, of course, because "the country can't afford" more, but helped.

The job also is to push the majority into accepting limitations, and getting us at least to half-believe that similar limitations are respected by the super-rich.

All that is not a matter just of Boris Johnson's personality. The basic patterns are built in. If the type is Johnson, the system it serves is capitalism – the system that works "as if" everything is regulated by equal exchange in the market, and yet produces huge inequality of power and wealth. The class it serves is the super-rich capitalist class.

David Cameron had a different personal manner. But in 2010 he told us his would be "the greenest government ever". Then three years later he told his officials to "cut all the green crap".

Within the general frame of Tory politics, Boris Johnson goes more for the style of "everyone's friend" than for the "if it's not hurting, it's not working" of Thatcherism. His record shows him as

someone who thinks he can get away with saying anything for effect, as long as he can then devise a new bit of bluster or clowning quickly enough and change the subject. Indeed, that was the "skill" that convinced Tory MPs in July 2019 that Johnson was the only one who could twist and turn unscrupulously enough to get them through their Brexit impasse. Only someone like him could sign a Brexit deal dishing the Northern Ireland Unionists worse than the original Theresa May formula which he himself had helped to defeat – and then denounce that same deal and try to scrap it before it has even come properly into effect.

The story of the Downing Street parties during lockdowns – several of them, it now seems – shows that he grouped around himself officials of a similar mindset.

If the Tories oust Johnson, we will feel that the air is a bit less dirty, and at least that Sunak or Truss or whoever succeeds him will have been taught to watch their step.

If it's only a change of personal style, though – a shift to subtler, more careful political dissimulation, which maybe the Tories think will serve now they have got Brexit and if they can finesse the Northern Ireland protocol – then we will have missed the bigger lessons. And opportunities.

That the government is discredited improves the terrain for campaigns, demonstrations, strikes. Unless we take advantage of that, the Tories will,

sooner or later, regain their balance.

The hour is late, but we must mobilise the campaigns against the Police Bill and the Borders Bill, and fire up the campaign against the Health and Social Care Bill.

Pay offensive

Solidarity is pressing in the trade unions for them to start a pay offensive. All Boris Johnson's talk about "levelling up" has been as much a lie as anything he has said about Downing Street parties. Without a union offensive, food-price and energy-price inflation will cut deep into living standards, especially for the worst-off.

Covid may fade for some months, but it is still running high, and new variants are certain. *Solidarity* argues that the labour movement must press for the structural social measures necessary to contain it longer-term, and to prepare for future pandemics: full sick and isolation pay for all, requisitioning of resources for the NHS and social care to be run as adequate public services under public ownership and control, workers' control of workplace safety, requisitioning of Big Pharma, rational environment policies in place of the ruthless agribusiness and deforestation which creates constant potential of new pandemics.

Solidarity also presses for the unions, and the Labour Party's ranks, to demand that Labour's leaders seize the political opportunity.

The Economist, a ruling-class magazine fed up with Johnson, has de-

scribed Keir Starmer's response neatly: "deploying boredom as its secret weapon... trying to look as dull as possible... [Starmer] specialises in policy-free speeches that amount to little more than an hour of looking presentable in front of a flag".

Make Labour fight for the Labour Party's conference policies! □



Social inequality has deepened the Covid pandemic; the pandemic has deepened inequality. This pamphlet, from Labour Left Internationalists, offers ideas for the labour movement to regroup and fight back on socialist lines. □

momentuminternationalists.org

Tuning in beats dropping out

By Colin Foster

On 26 January, Laura Pidcock resigned from her seat as a Constituency Labour Party representative on Labour's National Executive (NEC).

Some Labour leftists who have resigned or reduced activity over the last two years have speculated that Pidcock will help launch a splinter group.

Her statement, however, said only that "energies are finite", she has found being in a minority on the NEC "frustrating", and she wants to "put [her] energy elsewhere".

Activity

Since losing her seat as an MP in December 2019 she has been president of the CLASS think-tank (funded by the Unite union and others) and secretary of the People's Assembly Against Austerity (also relying a lot on funding from Unite).

She will have been working closely

with Counterfire, a splinter from the SWP which has its main activity now in the backrooms of the People's Assembly and of Stop The War. Counterfire never came into the Labour Party in the Corbyn years, but also seems to appreciate the poor prospects of "splinter party" types like Chris Williamson or the Northern Independence Party.

Left

According to the rules, Pidcock's vacated NEC seat should be filled by another left candidate, but the Starmer leadership may finagle. With a profile as a former MP and shadow minister, Pidcock was the best-polling of the left NEC candidates in 2020, so her move hurts the left for the coming 2022 contest.

Sticking in there and fighting it out with the right is the way to regain ground.

Tuning in beats dropping out. □

Covid: not nearly "over" yet

By Martin Thomas

The Tory government has said that it will probably scrap the vax mandate for health workers due to come into force from 2 April.

A mandate to be vaccinated to protect others (partially, of course: no vaccine is 100%) has some logic; but this mandate has always had many arguments of practical advisability against it.

For the Tories to try to enforce it from 2 April while they have hinted at dropping even self-isolation rules from 24 March could hardly be workable. The harm from health workers being redeployed unsuitably or losing their jobs, and the NHS becoming even more understaffed, would be great; and by then practically all those health workers will surely have some immunity, though not in the best way, by having been infected.

Health unions have opposed the mandate, while being pro-vax.

The labour movement should see it as part of our job to convince workers to be jabbed, and to push employers to facilitate that. A statistical analysis by the *Financial Times* (1 Feb) indicates that the Omicron peak of hospitalisations in the USA would have been 91,000 rather than 161,000 if the US had the same vax coverage as Denmark (which has reached its high levels without mandates). The UK stands between the US and Denmark, nearer Denmark.

Omicron levels are still high. Thanks to vax, it is much less deadly than earlier waves; but death rates are still sizeable, and declining only minimally.

There will be new variants over time. Covid has not settled down to a worrisome background problem. We still need to push on vax and on sustainable social measures (isolation pay, boosted NHS and care, workers' control of workplace safety, etc.). □

Tommy Robinson rallies racists in Telford

By Daniel Round

Tommy Robinson rolled in to Telford on Saturday 29 January, exploiting local grooming and child sexual abuse cases to whip up racism against the town's Muslim population and migrants.

Joined by around 1,000 supporters, including football hooligans performing Nazi salutes, Robinson launched into a racist tirade that accused "20-35%" of Muslim men in Telford of being paedophiles who prey on "England's daughters".

Robinson's rhetoric has become more Trumpian since his release from prison, with lots of conspiracist talk about shadowy collusion between the "liberal" media, a treacherous judicial system, and politically correct elites in Westminster.

Another high-profile speaker at the rally was Anne Marie Waters, the ever rightwards-drifting leader of the racist For Britain party, who attempted to outflank Robinson with even more explicitly anti-Muslim hatred, and a fantastical, fascist vision of patriots standing up against "filth". After the speeches came a screening of Robinson's latest film about himself, I



March against a "Free Tommy" protest, 2018

mean, about the grooming cases.

200-or-so anti-fascists mobilised for a counter-protest, first gathering for a rally – featuring speakers from Stand Up to Racism, the local Muslim community, and unions including the NEU and UCU – before marching over to an area opposite Robinson's event.

"Refugees Welcome" leaflets from Another Europe, outlining with clarity the government's inhumane response to the plight of refugees, were well received

by most members of the public and provided a different angle to the SUTR-SWP material.

While it was dispiriting to be outnumbered, it is worth noting that for the far-right this was a national mobilisation, whereas a large majority of the anti-racists were from around the Midlands (with sizable contingents from Dudley, Walsall and nearby Shrewsbury). The counter-protest was energetic and diverse, and received a good amount of support from passers-by.

Nevertheless, the numbers point to a wider issue the left has in mobilising to counter the far-right threat. Telford has now become a key battleground, with racists latching on to and twisting local grievances to pitch themselves as a populist alternative to a corrupt political and legal establishment. They had been planning 29 January for some time, and they intend on returning soon to continue stoking tension and division.

The labour movement needs a fresh approach to this renewed threat. Rather than effectively outsourcing actions to Stand Up to Racism – with a handful of local union branches then "supporting" the SUTR events, as in Telford – the movement itself needs to build sustained, resourced and joined-up campaigning in areas targeted by racists, and meet every national mobilisation with a bigger national mobilisation.

The numbers Robinson managed to assemble were lower than he would have expected – and much lower than his previous "Free Tommy" and EDL demos – but with signs of increasing cooperation between far-right groups (For Britain and Britain First, for instance, both participated on 29 Jan.), economic woes gathering pace, the Tories ramping up attacks on migrants to push through their Borders Bill, and the rise of QAnon-style conspiracy theories relating to Covid, anti-racists need to get organised and be on alert.

After Telford, we should raise concerns about the new fertile ground for the far-right in our union branches, CLPs, Momentum groups, etc. and build a much stronger socialist response. □

Quorum used as clampdown

By a Sheffield Heeley CLP member

The Labour Party rule book includes "model standing orders" which say the Constituency Labour Party (CLP) meeting quorum should be 5% of members or 75, whichever is lower, for all-member meetings, or 25% of delegates, or a figure agreed upon with the Regional Executive Committee. In Sheffield Heeley CLP (an all-member-meetings CLP) we are seeing a proposal from region to change our quorum to either 5% or 75. That would almost double our quorum, which we already have had difficulty reaching, with online meetings the norm since early 2020 and disillusion since Keir Starmer's election as leader. Party units should reject moves to restrict business meetings by unobtainable quorums, especially given that accurate confirmation of party membership is presently impossible since central-



"The meeting will now come to order"? Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves has said "membership is falling, and that's a good thing."

ly-held records are in disarray. Increasing participation is vital, but we can do that by bringing members to meetings which can take decisions about fighting for our class interests and being at the forefront of the struggle for a better world. □

Support Tang Mingfang!

By Ralph Peters

Tang Mingfang, a former worker at Foxconn's factory in the south Chinese city of Hengyang, has [appealed](#) to Amazon and Foxconn to speak out against his jailing and torture by Chinese police after he exposed the situation there.

In addition to more "normal" abuse of workers' rights such as illegally extensive use of precarious agency workers, 16-18 year-olds were being compelled to work 60 hours a week, and sometimes beaten if they didn't work hard enough.

Tang's revelations three years

ago forced Amazon to investigate. He himself was jailed and tortured – after Foxconn called in the police. Now, as he appeals to a higher court, he is demanding Amazon speaks out against his persecution.

The factory in which Tang worked is owned by Foxconn, which is Apple's largest supplier as well as producing Amazon devices like Alexa.

"Ban on suicide"

In one year alone, 2010, 14 workers at its Shenzhen industrial complex committed suicide by jumping off the factory roof. Foxconn responded by introducing a

"ban on suicide", removing protections from the families of workers who committed suicide.

Foxconn's owner Terry Gou, the wealthiest man in Taiwan with \$7 billion, is known for advocating a much closer relationship between the island and the Chinese regime and economy. Gou has been lobbied to become leader of the right-wing KMT party again, despite being their losing candidate in the 2019 Presidential election.

Neither Amazon, Apple, nor Foxconn is likely to do anything to support Tang Mingfang. The international trade union movement should. □



Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom.

Wednesday 9 February, 2-3.30pm: Third Camp socialism and the Iraq War: SOAS Workers' Liberty. B203, Brunei Gallery, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H 0XG

Sunday 13 February

11am-12.30pm: How to stop the next pandemic. Ecosocialist reading group.

6.30pm: Divisions in Ireland: 100 years on. AWL Online Forum.

Wednesday 2 March, 6-7.30pm: Fighting for the Health Service. Sheffield Workers' Liberty Students. University Arms, 197 Brook Hill, Broomhall, Sheffield S3 7HG

For our calendars of events, updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, see workersliberty.org/events or scan QR code



The Morning Star on splintering



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

There always was an element within the Corbyn movement that was an apolitical fan club.

They had little record of left-wing activity beyond personal adulation of Jeremy, and focused on a determination to downplay evidence of antisemitism and, very often, support for Brexit. Now they threaten to tear up their membership cards and relish electoral defeats for Labour. They are well represented on websites like Skwawkbox and The Canary and on both the features pages and letters page of the *Morning Star*.

Starmer

One of the most outspoken of these people is Chelley Ryan, a blogger and tweeter who has articles published in the *Morning Star* in which she complains about the emotional anguish that Starmer is putting her "and thousands of others" through and demands "respect" for her decision to leave the party.

When, in early January, the right wing press speculated (wrongly and probably mischievously) that Corbyn might transform his Peace and Justice Project into the Peace and Justice Party, Chelley was given the best part of the centre-page spread in the *Morning Star* (12 January) in which to enthuse at the prospect of a new party led by her hero: "Because he is the most unifying figure the left have. Because he's the most inspiring political figure for generations. Because he has the political weight and credibility to light that spark."

Since the 2019 general election, the *Morning Star* and its political masters at the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) have been all over the place on the Labour Party.

Vote

In the local elections of May 2020, the paper failed to call even for a critical Labour vote (except, unaccountably, in Wales), carried an uncritical interview with the Northern Independence Party's Thelma Walker, and noticeably failed to address what it described in an editorial (13 April 2020) as the "widespread belief that a non-Labour vote only helps the Tories in England and Wales, and the SNP in Scotland".

Ms Ryan's latest cri de coeur only

added to the confusion, and someone had to clear things up: step forward Nick Wright, unreconstructed Stalinist and (like Seumas Milne and others in Corbyn's inner circle) a former member of the Straight Left grouping that in the 1980s worked within both the CPB and the Labour Party.

Corbyn

Despite a turgid writing style, Wright is more politically sophisticated than most contributors to the *Morning Star* and has a grasp of at least some labour movement fundamentals. The day after Chelley Ryan's declaration of undying fidelity to Jeremy Corbyn appeared, a similarly prominent centre-page article by Wright ("Don't abandon Labour – embrace the class struggle") was published, pouring cold water on hopes for a new Corbyn-led party: "Corbyn's victories were contingent upon a particular moment – and the circumstances which created them will not reoccur in the same way."

Wright even quoted what he called a "compelling point" from a recent article by Momentum's Jeremy Gilbert: "it is a pretty basic principle of political strategy that we don't give our enemies what they want unless we are forced to do so" – in other words, don't give the

Labour leadership what they want by walking away.

Of course, being a Stalinist, Wright throws in the standard lies like "profound illusions about the neo-liberal EU" within Labour's membership being to blame for the 2019 election defeat, as well as the accusation that concerns about antisemitism within Labour were "specious" and merely intended to "negate Corbyn's moral stature". This from a contributor to the *Morning Star* – a publication that as recently as June 2018 had to apologise for publishing an antisemitic article.

Socialists

But still, Wright's piece contains some grains of wisdom, like the statement that: "It is frivolous to act as though there is no role for socialists within the Labour Party that has a proven capacity to respond to deep shifts in popular consciousness."

Very true, comrade Wright: but why attribute this foolishness to what you pompously and dishonestly call "the disaggregated fragments of Britain's Trotskyite and Maoist movements" – and not to repeated articles, editorials and letters published by the *Morning Star*? □

Eighty Days and the US West



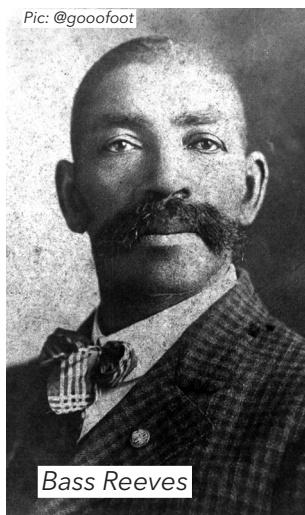
Letter

Sacha Ismail's TV review of *Around The World in 80 Days* ([Solidarity 620](#)) motivated me to watch the rest of the series. Initially, judging by the first episode, hadn't thought much of it. It does get better as the story develops and Fogg and his companions further circumnavigate the globe.

The programmes make a good stab at adventure drama which can be enjoyed by both adults and children. I certainly don't recall the updated political themes, particularly the anti racist stance, cropping up in the 1956 version starring David Niven, which I saw as a kid at The Astoria, Old Kent Road.

I was particularly interested when the character Bass Reeves appeared in the penultimate episode, played by Bermondsey-born former Eastenders actor Gary Beadle. Reeves is a new addition to the story, and was the first black Deputy US Marshal west of the Mississippi when appointed in 1875.

A song about Reeves features on the 2018 album *Black Cowboys* by folk/blues artist Don Flemons. The album is subtitled Songs from the trails to the rails and part of the African American Legacy series, co-produced by the



Bass Reeves

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

You wouldn't know it from the decades of output of Hollywood "westerns", but a large proportion of the workforce in the US West were black Americans who'd moved west following the abolition of slavery. The Flemons album has a brilliant 40 page booklet outlining the role Afro-Americans played in the development of the West, with some fascinating photographs. There are also 18 songs he's written illustrating various aspects of the black experience in the American West. □

Bas Hardy,
Liverpool

Bring Your Own



Poetry

Bring your own booze
Bring your own excitement
Bring your own rules
Bring your own entitlement
Bring your own germs
Bring your own immunity
Bring your own free pass
to party with impunity

Bring your own scorn
Bring your own spin
Bring your own speed
Bring your own sloe gin
Bring your own tippie
that your servant bought
Bring your own bottle
and don't lose it if we're caught

Bring your own self-regard
Bring your own confidence
Bring your own superiority
Bring your own arrogance
Bring your own toasts
Bring your own boasts
of how hard you are working
at impressing your host

Bring your own high horse
Bring your own wealth
Bring your own bare face
Bring your own breath
and let your hypocrisy take it from you
And bring the common people's piss
so we can take that too. □

Janine Booth

Second hand books!

Workers' Liberty is selling hundreds of second hand-books – politics, but also fiction, history and much more. Visit bit.ly/2h-books for the current stock and prices, and to order. □



Fighting toxic masculinity at university



Alexandra, a student activist at the University of Sheffield, talked with Katy Dollar

Sexual harassment is widespread at university. I have not personally heard of anything about lecturers – not to say it doesn't happen – but between students it is a big problem.

There is a Facebook page, [Sheffes-sions](#), where students post about this – “I got groped in XY club”; “A guy come on to me in this way”; “My flatmate tried to come into my room and force sex on me”, etc.

And there has been a huge problem of spiking across both universities in Sheffield. It was happening at clubs, at student parties. People talking to friends about it and were reporting it to staff in clubs. Then the national campaign Girls Night In happened

We helped stage a demonstration. It was happening a lot in specific clubs, and the clubs themselves were doing nothing to prevent it: not bag-checks, not responding appropriately when women reported it, not agreeing to check CCTV to see if people could be identified. I call them perpetrators: they were also to blame.

Both unis announced new initiatives: drug-sniffer dogs, drugs policies. Nothing actually happened.

Roar, the Student Union's sports night, was one of the places it was quite bad. As a result of the campaign, they cancelled one Wednesday and then continued as before. They held an impromptu meeting to discuss the night. Not many people turned up because it was hurriedly put together and wasn't properly advertised.

All sports teams had to do compulsory consent training, but not everyone did. The captain of my team wouldn't go because he didn't “want to be told off for being a man”.

Sports is particularly bad. Even within

my small sports team, members have come to me to say someone else on the team has been inappropriate. Imagine what it's like on one of the bigger ones.

People don't get into sports to act out inappropriately. Somewhere along the line a culture has been created. We all need to hold ourselves and teammates accountable. Don't brush off behaviours as “just what sports lads are like” or “boys will be boys”. The cycle needs to be broken. We need to challenge toxic masculinity.

Though quite a few of my friends have been spiked, spiking itself has died down. But sexual harassment seems to be even worse. In lockdown people forgot how to behave. Locked away on the wrong channels of the internet, people learnt this bad behaviour, this toxic culture. The internet doesn't have borders. Pick-up artists used to hold seminars in small rooms. Now they are in videos watched by millions.

The student body needs to hold its university and its SU to account. Make them listen to our demands and follow

through on promises. There needs to be more visible anti-harassment stuff on campus. There isn't a feeling that if you sexually harass then there will be repercussions. The university is so big, not like school where your headteacher knows everyone. There needs to be more punishment for people caught, not just a slap on the wrist.

It's imperative for student groups to take this on, and not to see the university as a big institution you're powerless against. □

Cambodia: Union busting sparks world-wide outrage



Eric Lee

By Eric Lee

Chutzpah. There is no other word to describe the actions of the Naga World company, which runs hotel casinos in Cambodia.

In a recent statement, the company boasted of its pro-union credentials: “Because of the strong dedication towards protection of interests and rights of the staff's welfare, the company has encouraged and emphasised to the staff to unionise since the company's inception in 1995”. That's great – not only allowing workers to join unions but actually encouraging them to do so.

Except that none of that is true.

Naga World has a long history of union-busting going back at least 13 years. The company's refusal to recognise its employees' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining has been reported both to Cambodia's Ministry of Labour and the International Labour Organisation multiple times.

In 2009, according to the Geneva-based International Union of Food Workers, the company “unfairly dismissed 14 union leaders and members during collective bargaining to prevent the union from pursuing its wage demands. Management refused to reinstate the union leaders even after an Arbitration Council decision ordering reinstatement. The collective bargaining rights of more than 4,000 union

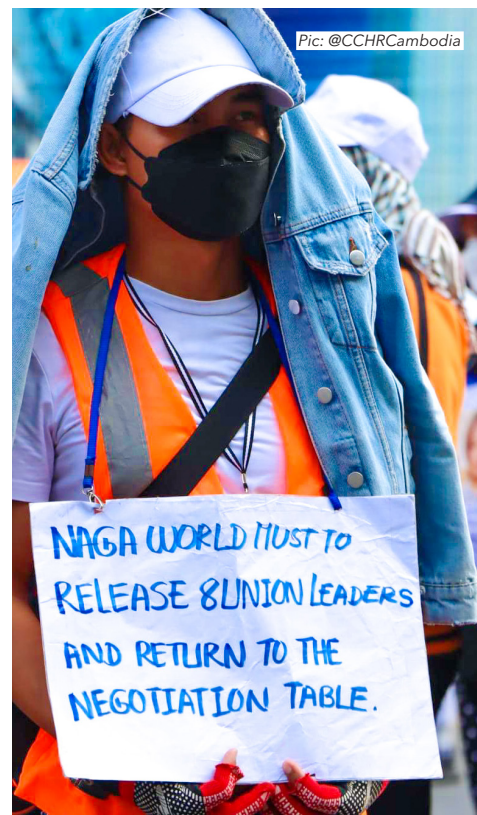
members were never restored.”

So much for their historic commitment dating back 27 years to ensuring its employees' rights. Naga World is a union-buster.

The IUF also revealed that “further attacks on the union occurred in 2013 and 2019, and in 2020 management used the pandemic to terminate all of the union leadership and the majority of active union members.”

And now the situation has escalated.

On 18 December 2021 workers at Naga World began striking to protest management's refusal to engage in good faith negotiations over the forced



Pic: @CCHRCambodia

mass redundancy of over 1,300 workers that left many destitute.

Instead of agreeing to negotiate in good faith with the union, the police – no doubt acting on company orders – began arresting workers and leaders of the union. There are extraordinary photos showing the workers forming a human cordon around their leaders to prevent further arrests.

On 4 January, union President Sithar Chhim was violently arrested on the picket line by plainclothes police.

At the moment, there are eight union leaders in custody. They are charged with the offence of “incitement,” which carries a sentence of up to 5 years imprisonment.

They are being denied access to legal representation, with Covid restrictions being given as the excuse.

The terrible behaviour of the company, and the heroic militancy of the workers have sparked world-wide interest.

The ILO Director General, Guy Ryder, has expressed deep concern over the arrests and has called for the immediate release of those arrested.

The IUF has launched a major online campaign on LabourStart demanding freedom for the jailed union leaders. After just one week, the campaign had over 10,000 supporters – making it the largest LabourStart campaign in several years.

To show your support, please visit bit.ly/22-nw □

• Eric Lee is the founder editor of Labour Start, writing here in a personal opinion column.



Lessons for socialist activists and the Labour left from the Labour Party under Corbyn 2015-20. 60 pages, £4. □

workersliberty.org/publications



Activist Agenda

On 5 February, the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign's regular 5th-of-the-month protest at the Chinese Embassy (6pm, Portland Place, London W1B 1JL) will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Ghulja Massacre.

Free Our Unions is [calling attention](#) to new Tory legislation (“secondary” legislation following the 2016 Trade Union Act) which imposes on unions a levy of 2.5% of total income to cover the costs of the Certification Officer.

Neurodivergent Labour has produced a [briefing](#) on the potential impact of the Police Bill on neurodivergent people, explaining why NDL strongly oppose it. □

• Links and info for these and other campaigns, suggestions for labour movement motions and petitions: workersliberty.org/agenda

Capitalism is still ramping up waste



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

On 25 January Chile's newly appointed environment minister, Maisa Rojas, called on the UK to take responsibility for the mountains of textile waste accumulating in the Atacama desert. An estimated 39,000 tonnes of waste fast fashion, most of it from the UK, has been illegally dumped, forming toxic mountains of detritus.

A few days earlier, Poland forced the UK to spend £1 million taxpayers' money to repatriate 1,500 tonnes of plastic, aluminium and textile waste illegally dumped by UK firms. Nobody knows who is responsible and nobody has been prosecuted.

These are just the latest examples of the accumulating pile of excreta from 21st century capitalism's social metabolism. Since 2018, when China banned the import of plastic waste, the escalating problem of "waste colonialism" has become more obvious as rich nations scramble to find new dumping grounds.

Green capitalism has long promoted the fantasy that economic growth can be decoupled from material consumption. But material use and material waste has stubbornly tracked GDP growth. The world produced 14 billion tons of material waste in 1945, 35 billion tons in 1980, 50 billion tons in 2000, 92 bil-

lion tons in 2017 and still rising. Scientists estimate that the planetary boundary stands at around 50 billion tons a year but this requires careful waste management, which is currently non-existent. (p.101-102, *Less is More*, Jason Hickel).

Of course, inhabitants of richer nations produce far more solid waste than those in low income countries. The average person in a high income country produces about 28 tons of material waste a year, and someone from a low income country, four tons. Yet it is overwhelmingly the richest within the rich nations who are the source of the most waste, and their conspicuous consumption sets the standard. For CO2, the richest 10% of the world population account for 48%. To be in the world's richest 10% you have to earn over £48,500, which excludes nearly 90% of British wage workers. In any case, workers everywhere have little say in the products they are served up or the waste management systems that capitalist governments organise.

The endless pursuit of profit works the workers of the global South into an early grave and exhausts their natural resources in order to provide consumer goods for the rich and further ecocidal means of production for capital. Their waste is then dumped back onto the



people of the poorer nations or into the atmospheric and oceanic commons poisoning the land and the destroying the future.

Resistance

As the mountains of waste grow, so too resistance. Regulation is frustrating rich nations attempts at waste colonialism. China banned the import of plastic waste in 2018 and since then disputes have emerged as other countries are turning ships full of waste away, refusing to be dumping grounds for the rich.

But whatever regulations are imposed, the accumulation of waste will continue as long as the world economy grows. Workers producing private jets, superyachts, dirty fossil cars, digging coal and pumping oil: the global in-

dustrial complex is geared to the enrichment and luxury of those who hold the economy in an ecocidal death grip.

The myth of endless economic growth has been sustained by a promise that there will be a "trickle down". Ecological science tells us there can be no trickle down. If everyone consumed like the top 10% we would blow the entire carbon budget consistent with 1.5 degrees of warning 10 times over within the next eight years. If we all consumed like the top 1% we would be in the danger zone before the end of

2022 (see Oxfam report).

It is possible to imagine curbs being placed on the excess consumption of the rich (heavy taxation, rationing of luxury goods etc.) and more effective waste management (standardisation to aid repair and recycling systems, regulation to outlaw built in obsolescence etc.). But even if such radical reforms were politically possible, capitalist growth itself depends on material throughput. The hockey stick of GDP growth translates in the physical world as hockey sticks of waste accumulation, species extinction and global heating.

As the reality of escalating ecocide becomes more apparent to the world's workers, it gives us common cause to bring the system to a halt and reassess. The clock is ticking. □

Beijing: Behind the Winter Olympics

By Ben Tausz

The Chinese government has been carefully preparing its propaganda in the run-up to the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, opening in Beijing on 4 February.

Every Games is an occasion for self-promotion by the host state, and grubby cash-in opportunities for big business. This year, too: the Chinese government hopes to showcase a tightly managed image and launder its reputation abroad.

These Games have faced an especially intense backlash in connection to Chinese state repression, particularly the abuses in Hong Kong and against the Uyghurs. Beijing will be attempting to counter this. And, given the government's increasing emphasis on jingoistic nationalism, it must surely see a chance to boost patriotic sentiment at home.

Beijing has, for example, contracted a former Fox News and HSBC exec to run one of its PR campaigns, in which western social media influencers will pump out puff pieces to their followers. Meanwhile, international journalists seeking to cover the preparations have accused organisers of obstruction and opacity, and even harassment and freezing-out in retaliation for giving space to criticism of the government.

True to form, the International Olympic Committee has happily assisted: deflecting questions about persecution; engaging in a publicity stunt to dismiss fears over the safety and freedom of Peng Shuai (the tennis player who disappeared after accusing a former vice-premier of sexual assault); and refusing to engage seriously with concerns that Olympic gear may be produced using Uyghur forced labour.

The Games have also been an opportunity for the politicians of rival states



to posture. Countries including the UK and USA have announced diplomatic boycotts, citing human rights concerns. While athletes will participate – and of course, corporations like Coca-Cola and Intel maintain sponsorships – ministers, royals and government officials will not attend.

Many rights groups have applauded this and called for other countries to

follow suit. But diplomatic boycotts are an empty gesture. Officials, aristocrats, and bourgeois politicians skipping some glad-handing and banquets will do nothing to ease the crackdown.

Moreover, their professed "deep concern" about human rights can only be cynical opportunism in service of their imperial jockeying, given the bloodshed and repression these governments are willing to ignore, assist, or perpetrate when it suits their interests.

We cannot trust or rely on these states or their stunts to fight oppression. We must use the period of the Games to speak up independently of them: to draw attention to the repression; foster grassroots solidarity; level demands on our governments for more meaningful actions (such as tightening requirements for open-book scrutiny of workers' and human rights in corporate supply chains); and turn up pressure on complicit businesses. □

How Socialist Worker fails to support Ukrainian rights

By Sacha Ismail

The Socialist Workers' Party are not apologists for Putin's regime or its foreign policy. Yet in practice their stance on the threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine will feed into such apologetics on the left.

The SWP website published [three articles](#) in the last week of January, sharing three key themes:

That an important aspect of potential escalation in Ukraine is the rivalry and manoeuvring of big imperialist powers, primarily the US and Russia.

That the left and labour movement should oppose all ruling classes in the name of working-class solidarity and internationalism.

That we should seek to avert war.

These ideas are correct. But as used by SW, to evade the immediate reality of the current escalation, Russia's threats against Ukraine (and actions against it in recent years), and the central issue now, Ukraine's right to national self-determination, they become misleading.

Imperialist

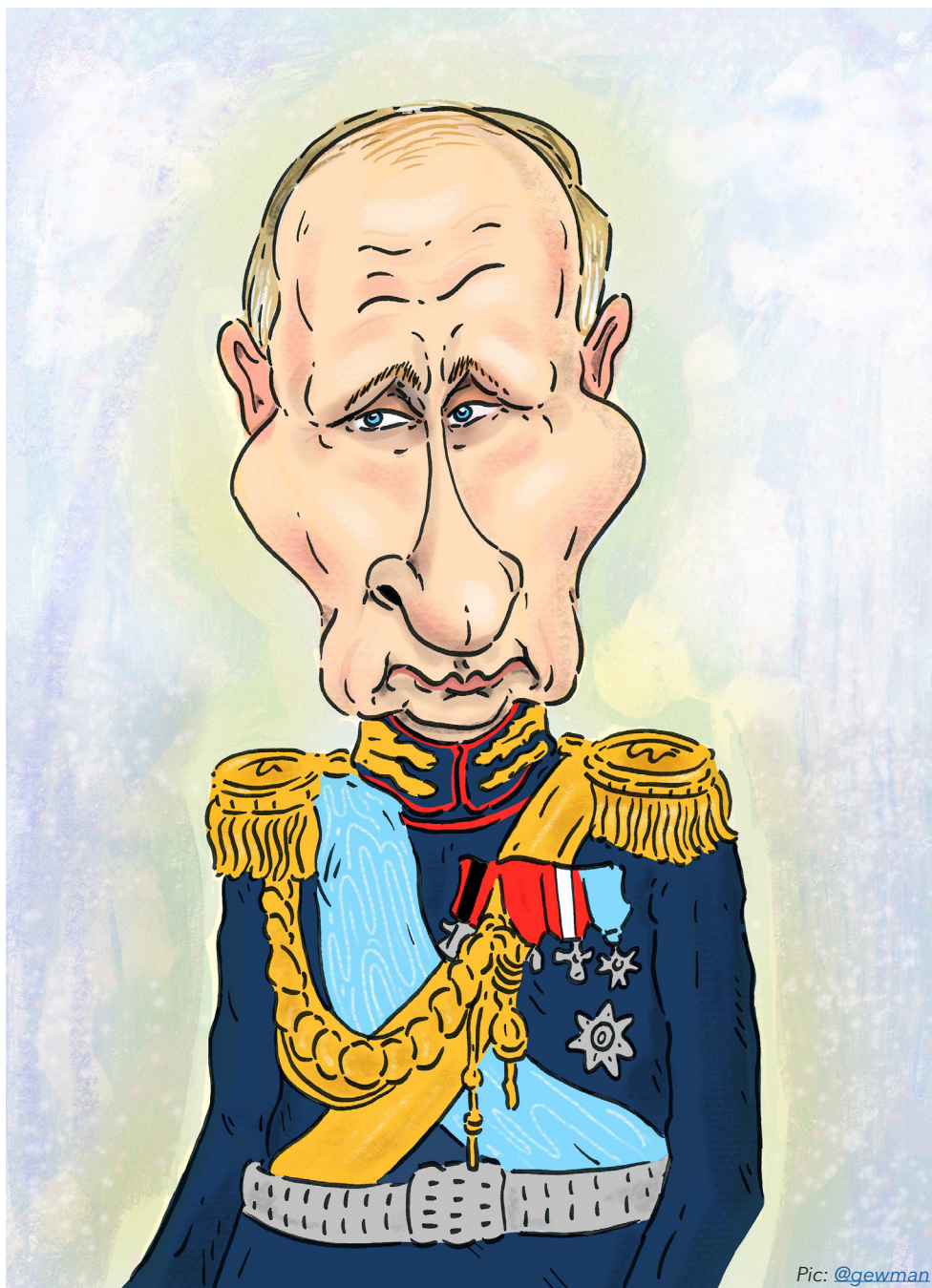
Socialist Worker attacks Russia's foreign policy, calls it imperialist, and emphasises its interventions to prop up right-wing forces allied to the Kremlin. But whereas it is quite definite about the nature of Russian intervention in Syria and Belarus, it avoids specifics about Ukraine in favour of generalities about US-Russia rivalry.

For SW (29 January), the reason why "some 100,000 Russian troops with tanks and weapons are in towns on the border of Ukraine" is fundamentally a matter of "resisting" NATO's expansion in Europe – "for Russia to maintain its power and empire status", to be sure.

Despite criticism of Russia as well as the US, woven into the presentation are an implication that Russia's stance over Ukraine in particular is defensive, and assertions that we are duty-bound to play down Russia's threats because the British government is allied with the US rather than Russia.

The headline on a mid-December overview by the SWP's leading writer, Alex Callinicos, was: "West's expansion is behind threat of Ukraine war". On 24 January SW concluded: "In Britain socialists should build opposition to the US and British states beating the drums of war".

SW makes a big deal of the conflict's roots in capitalist competition. Its 21 January article is headlined "How capitalist competition threatens new Ukraine war".



SW is eager to emphasise divisions between NATO governments over how to deal with Russia, with some European states taking a more conciliatory stance. Missing completely is the fact that the US itself has [pressured](#) Ukraine to make concessions to Russia.

SW's 29 January piece makes much of the issue of gas supplies to Europe.

Obviously the wider framework of capitalist and imperialist competition is important to this conflict. The role and weight of the gas issue can be usefully discussed. But SW is using Marxist-sounding phrases ("the system of competition between capitalist states", "struggle for vital natural resources") to blur out the very immediate issue of Russia's threats to Ukraine.

Ukraine in the sense of the people of Ukraine, rather than "Ukraine" as a counter on the geopolitical board, is written out completely.

Leon Trotsky, by contrast, [wrote](#): "What characterises Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations... it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics".

Ukraine is an independent state, for now. But it became independent only 30 years ago, after centuries of Russian oppression. SW does not even mention this – or the more recent and ongoing history, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its proxy war in which something like 14,000 Ukrainians have died and Russia has carved out satellite statelets from Ukraine.

Dissolving everything into generalities about inter-imperialist rivalry, SW dismissively describes Russian aggression against Ukraine as "a small spark" (21 January).

In a war, we are told, "the primary victims will doubtless be working class

and poor people on all sides" (21 January). In itself that's true. Socialists must agitate against war, and support the working class and the left in every state. But once again the fate and rights of the people of Ukraine are faded out. Instead Ukraine figures only as an arena in which the conflicts of the big powers may be fought out.

To justify its stance SW appeals (24 January) to Lenin arguing ([in World War One](#)) that "in every country preference should be given to the struggle against the chauvinism of the particular country, to awakening hatred of one's own government". They conclude: "So, in the West, socialists' main job is to unite around opposition to our ruling class's drive to war."

Ruling class

Always, not only in world wars, socialists oppose and fight the ruling class and government of our own country (indeed, even when we may positively support some action they are taking). But that isn't all. Consider this.

50 years ago one of the 20th century's most important anti-colonial struggles, Bangladesh's "liberation war", triumphed because India invaded to end Pakistan's genocidal [assault](#) on the Bengalis. Obviously Indian socialists opposed their country's government, including by exposing the motivations and contradictions of its policy in Bangladesh. If they had made opposition to India's role the core of their position, they would in fact have given covert backing to Pakistan.

The Western powers will not send troops to oppose Russia in Ukraine. Nor do we want them to; nor did they do so in 2014. The possibility of a Russia-Ukraine war becoming submerged in anything even slightly like World War One (when the national rights of Serbia quickly became only a secondary detail) is fortunately minimal.

We should make Ukraine's rights the central factor in our stance on this conflict. Opposing war means, first of all, opposing Russian action against Ukraine. □



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The couriers' strike: "recognise our power"



Interview

By Parirs Dixon

Parirs Dixon, courier driver and chair of Sheffield IWGB (Independent Workers of Great Britain), spoke to Sacha Ismail from Solidarity on Northern couriers' struggle for their rights.

As soon as Stuart introduced the new "linear pay" structure, we told them we were going to strike. They delayed it, but as soon as they brought it back, we did what we said we were going to do. That was 6 December.

I've been in the IWGB more than two years, but this is my first strike. However, I've been central to it. I think getting a union involved is absolutely, 100%, the right thing to do. It gives you power. That's why we've been able to have the longest gig economy strike in UK history. Speaking for myself it's made me feel very positive about being active and helping other workers.

Some drivers are sceptical about unions. So you get people who don't want to take part in the strike, but also people who are taking part but don't want to join the union. The only way to overcome that is winning. That's another reason winning this one is important.

When you win, you get noticed. People start to say, they won it, we can too. Getting wins is the biggest thing to get people pushing.

In the other cities the strike has spread to, they've adopted their own distinctive tactics. For instance in Chesterfield they did something we've not

done in Sheffield, which is an all day strike. In addition to Chesterfield, Sunderland, Blackpool and Huddersfield, we've had some other cities getting in touch. We need to develop this in the places that have started and then see what else is possible.

Beyond UK cities, we've had global solidarity, workers taking notice of our dispute – in Italy, Hong Kong, Poland, Australia, Spain...

This is all great but I'm not satisfied, because we've not got the result we started for.

We've made some headway. We've got meetings with the UK management of Stuart. We've had a win on pay for waiting times. We need to keep going.

The strike is how we'll win, but beyond the strike and after the strike, we need unity and solidarity among all drivers. That's the real power. When we have solidarity, if someone gets disrespect from a certain restaurant, say, we can discuss what to do, and we might strike that restaurant – it will be different next time we go there. That's how we assert couriers' interests.

Strike pay is a big deal, because we've been going for a long time – so please donate to the strike fund. Do things on social media, put something on Twitter, send an email to Stuart. If you can come to our picket lines in Sheffield and elsewhere, that's great.

We're in a situation where everything is going up, gas and electricity have gone up and will be going up again, the cost of petrol is up, we have to pay for insurance in order to drive, and yet at the same time companies like Stuart are trying to cut our pay.

All drivers, in fact all workers, need to

remember that we're at the bottom of pyramid, but we're the ones who generate the income. If we stop working, that stops. When we interfere with companies' income, they start to get notice; we can scare them and make them meet our needs. We need to recognise our power. Even for self-employed workers, it's not really an individual job – we need to recognise it's collective, get everyone in and act collectively. It's not easy: get a union behind you, that's 100% needed. □

Sheffield courier and IWGB union activist Raja Khan (aka Iky) added:

I've been working for Stuart for four years. I was a senior driver and team leader for the company. I've decided to turn against them and take part in the strike! I joined the IWGB at the start of the dispute.

Particularly in an industry like this, workers are really hit hard by loss of earnings, which is why we decided, rather than shutting everything down,

to target businesses really important to Stuart. That's why we've targeted McDonald's. It's impacted them – they know they've got a problem – which is why they've reached out to us for discussions, something they've never done in my four years.

They've conceded two of our demands but the main one, on the pay structure, remains.

We want to get the message out as widely as possible, to the general public, to let them know everyone is watching.

We also want to get the message out about support. We want people to share our stuff on social media, come and support us, make donations.

I think that today everyone is really scared – everyone just thinks I need to go to work, I need to pay my bills and so they're scared. But if you're not happy with things, if you want to change them, you can't be scared. You've got to have the courage to make a move. □



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Strike in private schools

By a Lewisham teacher

Teachers who are members of the National Education Union (NEU) in 23 private schools run by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) are set to strike against the employers' plan to withdraw from the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).

The formal ballot for strike action returned a 95% "yes" vote on an 84% turn-out easily exceeding the anti-union law thresholds, demonstrating the level of anger among members and the effectiveness of a well-organised and serious campaign by the NEU. The NEU has good density and a high number of reps in GDST. It is likely that the strikes will close many schools.

The first strike day is set to be 10

February, with a demonstration on that day, after the picket lines, at 11.15 at GDST head office, 10 Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DH followed by a strike rally at Emmanuel Centre. The strike action will escalate to build pressure on the employers and build members' confidence. The one-day strike on the 10th will be followed by a two-day strike and then a three-day strike. That seems like a good model.

The employers have responded by bleating about how the final decision on the pensions won't be made until February. However, once the final decision had been made it would be too late. This decisive action by the union may mean we get the "final" decision we want, and if not puts our members in a stronger position to fight. □

Uni strikes restart from 14 Feb, but stronger fight required

By a Cambridge UCU activist

University members of the University and College Union (UCU) in 68 branches now have mandates to strike over either or both of the long-running USS pensions dispute and the pay, equality, workload and casualisation dispute (the so-called “Four Fights”). Late in January, the union’s General Secretary announced the next steps in the dispute: ten days of strikes (14-18 Feb, 21-22 Feb, and 28 Feb – 2 Mar), followed by “rolling regional” action throughout March.

Increase

Ten strike days is an increase on the three in December (and more than many of us expected), but those ten plus the regional dates in March and April do not equate to the escalating action called for by the overwhelming majority at UCU’s Branch Delegate Meeting (held on 18 Jan).

Worse, the proposed strategy represents a clear decoupling of the two strike issues: five days on week 1 will be a USS pensions strike only (in which 24 of 68 branches will not take part), and the three days in week 3 will be only the Four Fights branches (leaving out five branches that only have USS pensions mandates). On only two days out of ten will all our members be using our strike mandates together.

The news of this new strategy is un-

likely to be met with fear by our employers: decoupling the disputes weakens the strike issues which affect members who are either permanently or casually employed in disproportionate ways, and the rolling regional action is likely to lead to far fewer days lost to action per institution.

Disruption

A winning strategy is not one that prioritises extending the dispute for as long as possible. On the contrary, it is one that seeks to maximise rapid disruption: days lost to strikes, and work blocked or postponed by the actions short of striking that we also have won mandates for.

Effective action requires raising cash for strike action urgently. UCU activists should be appealing to the wider trade union movement. This is more necessary for some branches than others, and particularly in the case of Goldsmiths UCU who will be striking across February as they also continue a local fight to stop compulsory redundancies (see page 13).

Our General Secretary promised in her election manifesto to support our strike funds. To this end, she should be sending thousands from her senior-grade salary so the rest of us can hit our employers where it hurts.

It seems at this stage the union leadership favour decoupling because they believe a victory in the pensions fight

is likely to be easier and quicker. And solving something is better than nothing. But believing either issue can be solved in isolation may be misleading, given we are negotiating with some of the same bodies in both actions (such as Universities UK). UCU’s revised proposals to resolve the USS pension scheme cuts have been summarily dismissed. As one UCU member said in a recent discussion, “we’re either winning both, or neither”.

Amidst the discussion of what is and is not a “winning strategy”, we cannot lose sight of how this strategy was decided. Rank and file members, elected to represent their branches, had their mandates overturned by a majority of Higher Education Committee (HEC) members (who decided the overall strategy), and then by a majority of “HE Officers” (who turned said strategy into the dates presented to members).

Rank-and-file

We need rank and file activists in union leadership bodies prepared to serve our members’ interests, and in the manner that they demand. We must reflect on that need in our union’s upcoming National Executive elections, and vote for independent left candidates prepared to stand up for rank and file democracy. HE activists in Workers’ Liberty are endorsing Rhian Keyse and others.

The announced actions could weaken

the dispute if left as is, but we still have several months of live mandates, and can still organise to seize control of the strikes and take the fight right to the employer. To this end, we must organise in branches to win a “Special Higher Education Sector Conference” which can mandate the union’s HEC to adopt a new route forward. Key in such a conference must be the re-coupling of the two disputes, and the escalation of the industrial action.

Disorientation

Demobilising union activists by weakening and elongating the action at this stage is more likely to disorient them. In the majority of our branches our ballots are time-limited until early May. In order to have legal strike mandates during summer exams we will require many to re-ballot in April. The last thing we want in March-April is a de-escalated, weakened, de-coupled dispute.

Much additional strength will come from organising across all campus unions and with students in solidarity, and so there are many avenues we need to explore to maximise our impact in the coming weeks. The strategy to build a winning dispute is nevertheless clear: mobilise the rank and file, win control over the strategy, re-couple, escalate and intensify the strikes. □

- Goldsmiths strike fund bit.ly/sf-g – UCU national fighting fund bit.ly/sf-u

Students plan solidarity

By Abel Harvie-Clark

Energised by the University and College Union (UCU) strikes at the end of 2021, student solidarity campaigning is taking a grip across the UK. After the rent and fee strikes of 2020-21, left-wing students are channelling energy into supporting the ongoing disputes of their teaching staff, as well as looking outward to the wider workers’ movement.

Red Square Movement (RSM) has set up as a national organisation to coordinate this action and carry forward the campaign for free and liberated education. On 26 January it held an online meeting



with over 70 students, with good geographic distribution across the UK, to discuss solidarity with the upcoming UCU strike days, and voted to send a letter to the UCU leadership outlining their support for escalating action, as UCU branches have voted for.

Forming a democratic struc-

ture to incorporate the many student solidarity campus groups is a first task for RSM. At the same time, students are getting ready for the Student Strike called by NUS for 2 March. Alongside the teach-outs and festival vibes planned, RSM should organise some direct action for the

day, demonstrating the pressure students can put on the government and university bosses (see page 13).

At University College London (UCL), the largest campus in the UK, a student referendum overturned the SU’s undemocratic decision not to support the strikes. Left-wing and anti-marketisation spirit is strong amongst

students – by continuing to organise campus groups, building strong connections with local union branches, and coordinating nationally, we can have a big impact on class struggle in higher education and beyond. □

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What is the sym



Unexpurgated Connolly

Introduction, by Sean Matgamna

A major strand in James Connolly's politics was industrial unionism and solidarity strikes.

He learned much about that in his activity in the USA between 1903 and 1909. The Industrial Workers of the World (referred to in the *Old Wine* article here) was founded in those years.

The message of industrial unionism spread across many countries in the

years before 1914, producing better organisation and great struggles, but also other strands. One of those was unionism reorganised on the basis of industry-by-industry but, within that form, retaining much of the content of the older, bureaucratic, conservative craft-based unionism, which had often been limited to better-off workers.

Larkin

Connolly, with James Larkin, spread the message in Ireland with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. By systematic use of sympathy strikes and industrial boycotts, the ITGWU helped the workers of Dublin win gains and

organisation. The Dublin employers hit back with a lockout: the "Labour War" of 1913-14.

Solidarity action

The ITGWU leaders appealed to English trade unionists for the wider solidarity action they needed. They got donations, food aid, some partial boycott action, but not the needed full solidarity, not even from the National Transport Workers' Federation, which had been formed as an industrial alliance in 1912.

Reflecting on the experience, Connolly remained faithful to industrial unionism, but in the article *Old Wine in*

New Bottles developed a critique of its inadequacies, and pointed to parts of a solution: union democracy, union structures which would enable rank-and-file initiative, wildcat strikes.

Unlike several other Connolly articles, neither *Old Wine*, nor *The Dublin Lock-out: On The Eve*, has been cropped in versions available in printed anthologies or on the web. The text here titled *What Is The Sympathetic Strike?* is however not widely available. It is the latter part of an article in *The Irish Review* of October 1913. □

What is the sympathetic strike?

By James Connolly

What is the Sympathetic Strike? It is the recognition by the Working Class of their essential unity, the manifestation in our daily industrial relations that our brother's fight is our fight, our sister's troubles are our troubles, that we are all members one of another. In practical operation, it means that when any body of workers are in conflict with their employers, that all other workers should cooperate with them in attempting to bring that particular employer to reason by refusing to handle his goods. That in fact every employer who does not consent to treat his workpeople upon a civilised basis should be treated as an enemy of civilisation, and placed and kept outside the amenities and facilities offered by civilised communities.

In other words, that he and his should be made "tabu", treated as unclean, as "tainted", and therefore likely to contaminate all others. The idea is not new. It is as old as humanity. Several historical examples will readily occur to the mind of the thoughtful reader. The Vehmgerichte of Germany of the Middle Ages, where the offending person had a stake

driven into the ground opposite his door by orders of the secret tribunal, and from that moment was as completely cut off from his fellows as if he were on a raft in mid-ocean, is one instance. The boycott of Land League days is another. In that boycott the very journals and politicians who are denouncing the Irish Transport Union used a weapon which in its actual operations was more merciless, cruel and repulsive than any Sympathetic Strike has ever yet been.

And even the Church, in its strength and struggles when it was able to command obedience to its decrees of excommunication, supplied history with a stern application of the same principle which, for thoroughness, we could never hope to equal.

Such instances could be almost indefinitely multiplied. When the peasants of France rose in the Jacquerie against their feudal barons, did not the English nobles join in sympathetic action with those French barons against the peasantry, although at that moment the English were in France as invaders and despoilers of the territory of those same French feudal barons? When the English peasantry revolted against their masters, did not all Eng-

lish aristocrats join in sympathetic action to crush them? When the German peasantry rose during the Reformation, did not Catholic and Protestant aristocrats cease exterminating each other to join in a sympathetic attempt to exterminate the insurgents? When, during the French Revolution, the French people overthrew kings and aristocrats, did not all the feudal lords and rulers of Europe take sympathetic action to restore the French monarchy, even although doing it involved throwing all industrial life in Europe into chaos and drenching a Continent with blood?

Necessity

Historically, the sympathetic strike can find ample justification. But, and this point must be emphasised, it was not mere cool reasoning that gave it birth in Dublin. In this city it was born out of our desperate necessity. Seeing all classes of semi-skilled labour in Dublin so wretchedly underpaid and so atrociously sweated, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union taught them to stand together and help one another, and out of this advice the more perfect weapon has grown. That the Labour movement here has utilised

it before elsewhere is due to the fact that in this city what is known as general or unskilled labour bears a greater proportion to the whole body of workers than elsewhere. And hence the workers are a more moveable, fluctuating body, are more often as individuals engaged in totally dissimilar industries than in the English cities, where skilled trades absorb so great a proportion, and keep them so long in the one class of industry.

Out of all this turmoil and fighting the Union has evolved, is evolving, among its members a higher conception of mutual life, a realisation of their duties to each other and to society at large, and are thus building for the future in a way that ought to gladden the hearts of all lovers of the race. In contrast to the narrow, restricted outlook of the capitalist class, and even of certain old-fashioned trade-unionism, with their perpetual insistence upon "rights", this union insists, almost fiercely, that there are no rights without duties, and the first duty is to help one another. This is indeed revolutionary and disturbing, but not half as much as would be a practical following out of the moral precepts of Christianity.

For the immediate present,

the way out of this deadlock is for all sides to consent to the formation of a Conciliation Board, before which all disputes must be brought. Let the employers insist upon levelling up the conditions of employment to one high standard; treat as an Ishmael any employer who refuses to conform, and leave him unassisted to fight the battle with the Union; let the Union proceed to organise all the workers possible, place all disputes as to wages before the Board for discussion, and only resort to a strike when agreement cannot be reached by the Board; and as all employers would be interested in bringing the more obdurate and greedy to reason, strikes would be rare. And when strikes were rare, the necessity for sympathetic strikes would also seldom develop.

Thus we will develop a social conscience, and lay the foundation for an orderly transformation of society in the future into a more perfect and a juster social order. □

• Latter part of an article from *The Irish Review*, October 1913. The full article there is titled: "Labour in Dublin". Crosshead here ours.

pathetic strike?

Old wine in new bottles

By James Connolly

Scripture tells us in a very notable passage about the danger of putting new wine into old bottles. I propose to say a few words about the equally suicidal folly of putting old wine into new bottles. For I humbly submit that the experiment spoken of is very popular just now in the industrial world, has engaged the most earnest attention of most of the leaders of the working class, and received the practically unanimous endorsement of the Labour and Socialist Press. I have waited in vain for a word of protest.

In the year of grace 1905 a convention of American Labour bodies was held in Chicago for the purpose of promoting a new working-class organisation on more militant and scientific lines. The result of that convention was the establishment of the Industrial Workers of the World – the first Labour organisation to organise itself with the definite ideal of taking over and holding the economic machinery of society. The means proposed to that end – and it is necessary to remember that the form of organisation adopted was primarily intended to accomplish that end, and only in the second degree as a means of industrial warfare under capitalism – was the enrolment of the working class in Unions built upon the lines of the great industries. It was the idea of the promoters of the new organisation that craft interests and technical requirements should be met by the creation of branches, that all such branches should be represented in a common executive, that all united should be members of an industrial Union, which should embrace all branches and be co-extensive with the industry, that all industrial Unions should be linked as members of one great Union, and that one membership card should cover the whole working-class organisation. Thus was to be built up a working-class administration which should be capable of the revolutionary act of taking over society, and whose organisers and officers should in the preliminary stages of organising and fighting constantly remember, and remembering, teach, that no new order can replace the old until it is capable of performing the

work of the old, and performing it more efficiently for human needs.

As one of the earliest organisers of that body, I desire to emphasise also that as a means of creating in the working class the frame of mind necessary to the upbuilding of this new order within the old, we taught, and I have yet seen no reason to reconsider our attitude upon this matter, that the interests of one were the interests of all, and that no consideration of a contract with a section of the capitalist class absolved any section of us from the duty of taking instant action to protect other sections when said sections were in danger from the capitalist enemy. Our attitude always was that in the swiftness and unexpectedness of our action lay our chief hopes of temporary victory, and since permanent peace was an illusory hope until permanent victory was secured, temporary victories were all that need concern us. We realised that every victory gained by the working class would be followed by some capitalist development that in course of time would tend to nullify it, but that until that development was perfect the fruits of our victory would be ours to enjoy, and the resultant moral effect would be of incalculable value to the character and to the mental attitude of our class towards their rulers. It will thus be seen that in our view – and now that I am about to point the moral I may personally appropriate it and call it my point of view – the spirit, the character, the militant spirit, the fighting character of the organisation, was of the first importance. I believe that the development of the fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation; that, indeed, the most theoretically perfect organisation may, because of its very perfection and vastness, be of the greatest possible danger to the revolutionary movement if it tends, or is used, to repress and curb the fighting spirit of comradeship in the rank and file.

Since the establishment in America of the organisation I have just sketched, and the initiation of propaganda on the lines necessary for its purpose, we have seen in all capitalist countries, and notably in Great Britain, great efforts being made to abolish sectional

division, and to unite or amalgamate kindred Unions. Many instances will arise in the minds of my readers, but I propose to take as a concrete example the National Transport Workers' Federation. Previous to the formation of this body, Great Britain was the scene of the propagandist activities of a great number of irregular and unorthodox bodies, which, taking their cue in the main from the Industrial Workers of the World, made great campaigns in favour of the new idea. Naturally their arguments were in the main directed towards emphasising the absurdity implied in one body of workers remaining at work whilst another body of workers were on strike in the same employment. As a result of this campaign, frowned upon by leading officials in Great Britain, the Seamen's strike of 1911 was conducted on, and resulted in, entirely new lines of action. The sympathetic strike sprang into being; every group of workers stood by every allied group of workers; and a great wave of effective solidarity caught the workers in its grasp and beat and terrified the masters. Let me emphasise the point that the greatest weapon against capital was proven in those days to be the sporadic strike. It was its very sporadic nature, its swiftness and unexpectedness, that won. It was ambush, the surprise attack of our industrial army, before which the well-trained battalions of the capitalist crumpled up in panic, against which no precautions were available.

Since that time we have had all over these countries a great wave of enthusiasm for amalgamations, for more cohesion in the working-class organisations. In the transport industry all Unions are being linked up until the numbers now affiliated have become imposing enough to awe the casual reader and silence the cavilling objector at Trade Union meetings. But I humbly submit that, side by side with that enlargement and affiliation of organisations, there has proceeded a freezing up of the fraternal spirit of 1911; there is now, despite the amalgamations, less solidarity in the ranks of Labour than was exhibited in that year of conflict and victory.

If I could venture an analysis of the reason for this falling-off in solidarity, I would have to point out that the amal-

gamations and federations are being carried out in the main by officials absolutely destitute of the revolutionary spirit, and that as a consequence the methods of what should be militant organisations having the broad working-class outlook are conceived and enforced in the temper and spirit of the sectionalism those organisations were meant to destroy.

Into the new bottles of industrial organisation is being poured the old, cold wine of Craft Unionism.

The much-condemned small Unions of the past had at least this to recommend them, viz., that they were susceptible to pressure from the sudden fraternal impulses of their small membership. If their members worked side by side with scabs, or received tainted goods from places where scabs were employed, the shame was all their own, and proved frequently too great to be borne. When it did so we had the sympathetic strike *continued* →

A note of explanation

Shortly after finishing [part three](#) of *The Unexpurgated Connolly* [*Solidarity* 615], I was hit by a stroke. My memory was unaffected, but I am having to learn to walk again. The following people have helped me greatly. Among comrades: Martin Thomas, Andrew Peak, Paul Cooper, Jill Mountford. Among family: Christine Bastogne, who let her home in Liège be disrupted and plans a spell in London. My grandson Charley Matgamna Carlyle, a bit short of 17, whose presence in London was more effective than he knew. My son Thomas Ruah Carlyle, who came to London at the beginning, stayed, and is coming back. My granddaughter Nina Ruah Carlyle, aged 20, who came here before Xmas, staying, sometimes on her own, until early February. She is helping with the manuscript, by taking dictations, and with everything. Much love and thankfulness to all of them. □

Sean Matgamna

continued → and the fraternisation of the working class. But when the workers handling tainted goods, or working vessels loaded by scabs, are members of a nation-wide organisation, with branches in all great centres or ports, the sense of the personal responsibility is taken off the shoulders of each member and local officials, and the spirit of solidarity destroyed. The local official can conscientiously order the local member to remain at work with the scab, or to handle the tainted goods, "pending action by the General Executive".

As the General Executive cannot take action pending a meeting of delegates, and as the delegates at that meeting have to report back to their bodies, and these bodies again to meet, discuss, and then report back to the General Executive, which must meet, hear their reports, and then, perhaps, order a ballot vote of the entire membership, after which another meeting must be held to tabulate the result of the vote and transmit it to the local branches, which must meet again to receive it, the chances are, of course, a million to one that the body of workers in distress will be starved into subjection, bankrupted, or disrupted, before the leviathan organisation will allow their brothers on the

spot to lift a finger or drop a tool in their aid. Readers may, perhaps, think that I am exaggerating the danger. But who will think so that remembers the vindictive fine imposed by the NUR upon its members in the North of England for taking swift action on behalf of a persecuted comrade instead of going through all this red tape whilst he was suffering? Or who will think so that knows that Dublin and Belfast members of the Irish Transport Workers' Union have been victimised ever since the end of the lock-out by the Head Line Company, whose steamers have been and are regularly coaled in British ports, and manned by Belfast and British members of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union?

The amalgamations and federations that are being built up today are, without exception, being used in the old spirit of the worst type of sectionalism; each local Union or branch finds in the greater organisation of which it is a part a shield and excuse for refusing to respond to the call of brothers and sisters in distress, for the handling of tainted goods, for the working of scab boats. A main reason for this shameful distortion of the Greater Unionism from its true purpose is to be found in the campaign against "sporadic strikes". I have no doubt but that Rob-

ert Williams, of the National Transport Workers' Federation, is fully convinced that his articles and speeches against such strikes are and were wise; I have just as little doubt that they were the best service performed for the capitalist by any Labour leader of late years. The big strike, the vast massed battalions of Labour against the massed battalions of capital on a field every inch of which has been explored and mapped out beforehand, is seldom successful, for very obvious reasons. The sudden strike, and the sudden threat to strike suddenly, has won more for Labour than all the great Labour conflicts in history. In the Boer war the long line of communications was the weak point of the British army; in a Labour war the ground to be covered by the goods of the capitalist is his line of communication. The larger it is the better for the attacking forces of Labour. But these forces must be free to attack or refuse to attack, just as their local knowledge guides them. But, it will be argued, their action might imperil the whole organisation. Exactly so, and their inaction might imperil that working-class spirit which is more important than any organisation. Between the horns of that dilemma what can be done? In my opinion, we must recognise that the only solution of that problem is

the choice of officers, local or national, from the standpoint of their responsiveness to the call for solidarity, and, having got such officials, to retain them only as long as they can show results in the amelioration of the condition of their members and the development of their Union as a weapon of class warfare.

If we develop on those lines, then the creation of a great Industrial Union, such as I have rudely sketched in my opening reminiscence, or the creation of those much more clumsy federations and amalgamations now being formed, will be of immense revolutionary value to the working class; if, on the contrary, we allow officialism of the old, narrow sectional kind to infuse their spirit into the new organisations, and to strangle these with rules suited only to a somnolent working class, then the Greater Unionism will but serve to load us with great fetters. It will but be to real Industrial Unionism what the Servile State would be to our ideal Co-operative Commonwealth. □

• From *The Age*, 30 April 1914. The version available in pamphlets and on the web is the same, with one obvious typo corrected from the original, and with crossheads added.

The Dublin lockout: on the eve

By James Connolly

Perhaps before this issue of *The Irish Worker* is in the hands of its readers the issues now at stake in Dublin will be brought to a final determination. All the capitalist newspapers of Friday last join in urging, or giving favourable publicity to the views of others urging the employers of Dublin to join in a general lock-out of the members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. It is as well. Possibly some such act is necessary in order to make that portion of the working class which still halts undecided to understand clearly what it is that lies behind the tyrannical and brow-beating attitude of the proprietors of the Dublin tramway system.

The fault of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union! What is it? Let us tell it in plain language. Its fault is this, that it found the labourers of Ireland on their knees, and has striven to raise them to the erect position of manhood; it found them with all the vices of slavery in their souls, and it strove to eradicate these vices

and replace them with some of the virtues of free men; it found them with no other weapons of defence than the arts of the liar, the lickspittle, and the toady, and it combined them and taught them to abhor those arts and rely proudly on the defensive power of combination; it, in short, found a class in whom seven centuries of social outlawry had added fresh degradations upon the burden it bore as the members of a nation suffering from the cumulative effects of seven centuries of national bondage, and out of this class, the degraded slaves of slaves more degraded still – for what degradation is more abysmal than that of those who prostitute their manhood on the altar of profit-mongering? – out of this class of slaves the labourers of Dublin, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union has created an army of intelligent self-reliant men, abhorring the old arts of the toady, the lickspittle, and the crawler and trusting alone to the disciplined use of their power to labour or to withdraw their labour to assert and maintain their right as men.

To put it in other words, but words as pregnant with truth and meaning: the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union found that before its advent the working class of Dublin had been taught by all the educational agencies of the country, by all the social influences of their masters, that this world was created for the special benefit of the various sections of the master class, that kings and lords and capitalists were of value; that even flunkies, toadies, lickspittle and poodle dogs had an honoured place in the scheme of the universe, but that there was neither honour, credit, nor consideration to the man or woman who toils to maintain them all. Against all this the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union has taught that they who toil are the only ones that do matter, that all others are but beggars upon the bounty of those who work with hand or brain, and that this superiority of social value can at any time be realised, be translated into actual fact, by the combination of the labouring class. Preaching, organising, and fighting upon

this basis, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union has done what? If the value of a city is to be found in the development of self-respect and high conception of social responsibilities among a people, then the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union found Dublin the poorest city in these countries by reason of its lack of these qualities.

And by imbuing the workers with them, it has made Dublin the richest city in Europe today, rich by all that counts for greatness in the history of nations. It is then upon this working class so enslaved, this working class so led and so enriched with moral purposes and high aims, that the employers propose to make general war.

Shall we shrink from it; cower before their onset? A thousand times no! Shall we crawl back into our slums, abase our hearts, bow our knees, and crawl once more to lick the hand that would smite us? Shall we, who have been carving out for our children a brighter future, a cleaner city, a freer life, consent to betray them instead into the grasp of the blood-suckers from whom

we have dreamt of escaping? No, no, and yet again no! Let them declare their lock-out; it will only hasten the day when the working class will lock-out the capitalist class for good and all. If for taking the side of the Tram men we are threatened with suffering, why we have suffered before. But let them understand well that once they start that ball rolling no capitalist power on earth can prevent it continuing to roll, that every day will add to the impetus it will give to the working class purpose, to the thousands it will bring to the working class ranks and every added suffering inflicted upon the workers will be a fresh obstacle in the way of moderation when the day of final settlement arrives.

Yes, indeed, if it is going to be a wedding, let it be a wedding; and if it is going to be a wake, let it be a wake: we are ready for either. □

• *The Irish Worker*, 30 August 1913. There titled: "If it is going to be a wedding, let it be a wedding; and if it is going to be a wake, let it be a wake".

Johnson turns on the jobless

By a Jobcentre worker

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has introduced new, harsher rules on sanctioning Universal Credit claimants. Previously, jobseekers had three months in which they could look for jobs in their preferred sector. Now, they must start accepting jobs in any line of work after four weeks or face sanctions. Remember, most claimants won't even have received a payment until the fifth week.

The government has done this because they want to ram people into the burgeoning vacancies in industries like

construction and social care. They are using the threat of sanctions to push people into lines of work in which they may have no experience or interest, and which may be considerably worse-paid and use their skills less than their normal work. No doubt the Tories also reckon a bit of demonstrative bashing of the unemployed will appeal to their flagging voter base.

Research is pretty clear on the effects of such sanctions. Forcing people into unsuitable and often insecure work damages careers and earning prospects. Studies have failed to find any clear correlation between sanctioning

claimants and increased employment.

Sanctions also sour the relationship between claimants and the Jobcentre staff who are supposed to be helping them find decent jobs. If DWP were serious about helping claimants back to work they would give staff the time and resources to help them. Instead we are told to ram our diaries with ten-minute appointments in which it's difficult to provide any meaningful assistance.

The union, PCS, has policy against sanctions and conditionality. This policy has not translated into serious campaigning, let alone industrial action. At the time of writing, the union leader-

ship has issued no statement to members on the changes.

If the union's DWP Group Exec behaves as lethargically on sanctions as it has on Covid safety, the heavy lifting will likely be left to local branches and workplace activists. Though the anti-union laws ban "political" strikes, the Independent Left group in PCS has argued for industrial action against sanctions on a health and safety basis: the implementation of unjust disciplinary measures on claimants also puts DWP workers at risk. Such an approach could unite the interests of workers and claimants. □

Making change real in Unison



By a Unison member

The Time for Real Change campaign in the public services union Unison has released a [statement](#) about the General Secretary instructing staff to not support committees and attempting to block the new National Executive (NEC: which has a left majority for the first time ever, led by TFRC) from

making meetings more regular and accountable.

There is also an attempt to block proposals on electing senior officials and clarifying the paid release to attend NEC meetings.

The previous leadership in Unison had agreed to pay employers for full release for some NEC representatives, but not those on the left.

Unison should be proud of having a significant number of seats reserved for low paid women workers. Too often these posts go unfilled or uncontested. If there are hundreds of low-paid

women put off from standing for elections because they know their employers would not grant them release, then members need to know what systems would be in place for release.

Without sharing personal information, the process needs to be transparent and the decisions need to be made by elected and accountable committees, not behind closed doors or by senior staff in HQ and certainly not used as patronage for NEC members loyal to the union machine.

Dispute

The current dispute between the NEC, which has the rule book on its side, and the General Secretary (plus the now-minority on the NEC) could drag on. We need to find a way to show members that the new leadership is fighting for the members and engaging them more in Unison's structures.

This will need to be led at a grassroots and branch level. TFRC needs to consider how to reach the thousands of active Unison members like those who voted to reject the local government pay deal; and to engage the many who have become demoralised about a union that has led very little in national opposition to government attacks in the last decade.

TFRC does continue to try to reveal Unison's complex and hidden structures and decision-making, alongside running [candidates](#) in the forthcoming national service group executive elections.

But most Unison members will have little knowledge (or, to be honest, little interest) about what happens on NEC meetings and its sub-committees, especially since the membership is not informed of or allowed to scrutinise policies and practice.

The few reps in branches who attend regional meetings get watered down and vague reports. □

Goldsmiths out from 7 Feb

By Cathy Nugent

From Monday 7 February the University and College Union (UCU) at Goldsmiths University of London will be striking again to stop the redundancies and restructuring plan which the management claims is necessary to reduce the college's deficit.

This strike action, which will take place on ten days over three weeks with a break for reading week, follows 15 days of strike action last term. While autumn action pushed back the timetable for the redundancies, management failed to respond positively to any of the union's counter-proposals in the collective consultation process, indicating their intention to cause maximum attritional hurt to all staff, not least the 46 who face the sack.

Goldsmiths management face a determined fight. In the third week of the strike (28 February to 4 March) UCU members will, it is hoped, be joined by Unison members who are also af-

ected by the immediate redundancies.

Core

If the management get away with these redundancies there will be more to follow, alongside a full scale restructure. That will involve the introduction of a "core curriculum" – a sort of "general studies" course which cannot but replace some of the more specialist in-depth courses of specific degrees. That's bad news for future students as well as for staff.

Alongside strike action the UCU nationally is supporting an academic boycott of Goldsmiths. This is about building support across higher education, asking academics to show solidarity by refusing to give guest talks and participate in events and new research partnerships.

Build support for the boycott and ask for strike fund donations in your union branch. More: goldsmithsucu.org □

More online

Hospital workers reinstate strikes

Great Ormond St, from 2 Feb: bit.ly/go-2f

Solidarity with Ukraine

Nadia Whittome's speech from 31 Jan protest: bit.ly/ukr-s

"Student strike" 2 March

The National Union of Students (NUS) has called a ["student strike"](#) on 2 March to coincide with the UCU's last national strike day. It's good that NUS is calling action de facto in support of the uni workers' disputes. But the action is advertised around generalities on free education and inclusiveness, not specifically the disputes. NUS talks of "taking over central London" on 2 March, but in specifics only a "teach-in" or "rally" in a "park space". Activists are calling on NUS to encourage students to be on picket lines throughout the weeks of UCU action, and to organise a demonstration outside a government (or similar) office in London on 2 March; and to involve students in deciding on the solidarity actions, both on 2 March and across the weeks of UCU strikes. □

“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

“We are the union”



Diary of a tubeworker

By Daniel Randall

It's always easier to "talk union" on the job when the union is balloting for industrial action. I often tell workmates, "the union isn't an insurance policy, it's a tool for us to win change at work." It's easier to grasp that when we're voting about whether to go on strike.

Workmates for whom our recent ballot on the Tube was the first experience of an industrial action ballot, and who aren't well-versed in the restrictions of the anti-union laws, had pretty good instincts about it all. "I don't get it," says one, "why can't we vote online? Or set up a ballot box in the mess room and all vote here? Surely it'd be easier for people to participate..."

It was our second LU-wide, all-grades ballot since the turnout thresholds were imposed. Our first, in February-March 2020, was cancelled when the pandemic broke out. "What happens if we don't hit the thresholds?", a workmate asked during a quiet moment on the gate line on Boxing Day. "Do we just have to accept what the company throws at us?" I explained that we don't, that we can still fight, that we can re-ballot... but there's no denying it would be a huge setback, and I admitted to my workmate that I was a bit nervous about it.

They brushed off my worries. "We'll

be fine. Pensions are involved. That's an issue everyone cares about. Who can't be bothered to put an envelope in the letterbox to defend their pension?"

The Omicron wave started taking off in a big way around the second week of our ballot. That definitely knocked the campaign. I caught Covid and had to isolate over the new year, during the last two weeks of the ballot. Fortunately, my health and safety rep counterpart more than picked up the slack on our stations, and I was still able to contribute by phone banking from home.

I was out of isolation and back to work in early January. We got the ballot result on 10 January: a 95% majority for action on a 51% turnout. I was elated. When I was next on shift with the workmate who'd been airily confident about hitting the thresholds, I told them, "well, you were right, we did it!" Somewhat to my surprise, they were pretty downbeat. "Only just, though. 51%. That's still nearly 5,000 people who couldn't be bothered to walk to the post box!"

I'd have liked a bigger turnout too, but the reaction seemed an indication of how many of us have internalised the restrictions, when really they're arbitrary impositions.

After a fuck-up in central comms from the union was cleared up (a reference to a separate ballot of TfL, as opposed to LU, employees, which didn't meet the thresholds, led a lot of LU members to believe our ballot had failed), the discussion about when we're going to strike started in earnest. Those are some of the best and most enthusing

moments you can have as a union rep, encouraging your fellow workers to engage with their union, take ownership over it, use it to fight.

"When's the union going to tell us to strike, then?" I was asked.

"Wrong way round," I answered. "We are the union; we decide when we want to strike."

A discussion in the mess room followed about what would be the best timing, and how long the strike should be. These are the moments when "the union" stops being conceived of as something external, a body we pay a monthly fee to in exchange for services, and comes into being anew as a collective in the workplace itself. Being a rank-and-file workplace militant is about endeavouring to make those moments the rule rather than the exception. □

• Daniel Randall is a London Underground station worker and RMT union rep

Bart's strike to 13 February

By a Unite member

Cleaners, porters and ward catering workers in the country's biggest NHS trust will strike for two weeks from 31 January to 13 February over pay and inequality.

These workers' jobs are contracted out to Serco across the five hospitals in the Bart's NHS Trust. Pay and conditions for many workers fall below the NHS agreement "Agenda for Change", but they are also striking to demand at 15% pay increase.

The strike follows a yearlong organising drive by Unite amongst Serco staff, that has recruited over 250 new members to date. This helped to get the ballot for strike action over the 50% turnout threshold demanded by the anti-union laws.

In the face of this, the third strike against Serco at Bart's, the contractor has said it wants to give up the contract with Bart's a year early, in April 2023. Unite members are keen to ensure this results in the service being brought back in house, and a campaign is under way to achieve this.

The campaign and dispute by Serco workers at Bart's standards in stark contrast to the national efforts by Unite, and other health unions Unison and GMB, over NHS pay, and shows there is no way round on-the-ground organising.

Serco workers' pickets will run from 05:30 on 31 January at Whipp's Cross, Royal London, and Bart's Hospitals. □

Ulysses, the film

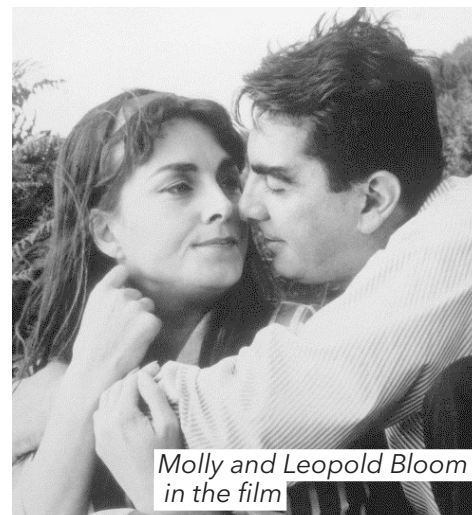


Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

On 2 Feb 1922, 100 years ago, Sylvia Beach put a few copies of a new book in her bookshop window in Paris. The book was *Ulysses*, written by an almost unknown Irishman, James Joyce. Book and author went on to great literary fame and controversy. It was only in 1967 that a film version, a low-budget one, was directed by Joseph Strick.

Like the novel, the film follows one day (16 June 1904, now "Bloomsday") in the life of Leopold Bloom (Milo O'Shea), aimlessly wandering the streets of Dublin, although the film shows Dublin as it was in 1967. The film was almost as praised and condemned as the book. Few went as far as Karl Radek who, in 1934, called the book "a dung heap swarming with worms"; but the one shot of male nudity (from the



Molly and Leopold Bloom in the film

back), the occasional use of the word "fuck", and the sexually charged final words of Molly (Bloom's wife, played by Barbara Jefford), were enough to produce apoplexy in some.

Strick was evicted from the Cannes Film Festival. His film was banned in Ireland until 2000, but could be screened in private clubs. □

PCS prepares for ballot



John Moloney

The union is gearing up for our consultative ballot for industrial action over the cost of living (14 Feb to 21 March). At my level, I'm involved in some of the background work, but the most important work has to be done at the grassroots. National communications can't substitute for a base in the workplace. We have to inspire activists as we have a mountain to climb in getting the turnout. In that regard, Unison's result in its local government ballot, where it got a 14.5% turnout, albeit it was all postal, is sobering. It should go without saying, but direct person-to-person conversations are key. Members need to be spoken individually. Effective communication not just about having a nice website. Our aim is to speak, individually, to every member for whom we have a phone number, ideally before the end of the first weekend of the ballot. In-person conversations are preferable; phone calls are next best; then email or text. We have a branch app that reps and branch officers can use to contact members, and update membership details. Branches hopefully will be organising local phone-banking in addition to any national call effort.

Activists in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the department where we have most members, continue to discuss strategies for defending workplace safety. My own view is that a fight over being forced into the workplace and safety in the workplace can feed into and strengthen a fight over the cost of living. Mobilising DWP members for action over workplace safety will help raise levels of consciousness and confidence for the broader national fight over cost of living.

PCS has recently donated to the strike fund for striking food couriers in Sheffield and other cities in the north of England, who are members of the IWGB union. I've met with the UVW recently to discuss how we can support their security guard members at Great Ormond Street Hospital, who'll be striking from 2 February. One of the demands in that strike is for full sick pay. The pandemic has shown us how key this is. When workers can't afford to take time off work, that's a huge public health risk. I'm suggesting to the national union that we donate to the UVW's strike fund and mobilise to help their struggle. □

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of PCS, personal capacity



From Tubeworker

Union reps in the RMT on the Tube in London are due to meet on 1 February to discuss a strategy for the dispute for jobs, conditions, and pensions. Tubeworker has already set out our views on the next steps, arguing for a programme of escalating strikes to be called as soon as possible.

Whenever we strike, we expect a barrage of shrill abuse from the tabloid press. We'll be told we're "holding London to ransom", and we'll see misleading or straightforwardly false narratives about our strikes, often

claiming we want more money even when the strike has nothing to do with pay and everything to do with maintaining services for the public.

Papers like the *Evening Standard* and the *Metro* are generally right-wing and anti-union. We can hardly expect a fair hearing from them. And our disputes don't live or die on the altar of media opinion, what matters is our strength in the workplace and the effectiveness of the action.

But public support for our disputes can make a difference. Even though passengers will be inconvenienced by our action, we should do whatever we can to persuade them that the demands of our dispute – centrally, for a proper-

ly-staffed Tube – are in their interests as passengers too. Our fight is not just for our own conditions, it is for the future of public transport in London.

The wider labour movement in London – trade union branches and local Labour Parties – can help build that support by campaigning in their local areas in support of our disputes, and by demanding Transport for London (TfL) bosses and London Mayor Sadiq Khan stand up to the government rather than passing on Tory cuts. We encourage anyone active in a union or Labour Party to pass a motion of support (suggested wording bit.ly/m-lu), and get active to fight for a better public transport system in London for both workers

and passengers. A demonstration opposite Parliament, demanding decent funding for TfL and backed by all London Underground (LU) unions, was held on 1 December.

We need more actions like that, as well as local protests at stations targeted for job cuts.

Perhaps it's time to re-launch the "Hands Off London Transport" campaign, which the RMT launched with working-class community campaigners and others in the labour movement to oppose the closure of ticket offices and job cuts associated with the Fit for the Future re-structure in 2014-2016.

The other LU unions must also mobilise their members to take action! □

Bus drivers strike over pay

By Ollie Moore

Bus drivers in the Greater Manchester area will strike to win improved pay on 31 January, and for three days each week in February, on 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23 and 25.

The dispute has already seen multiple days of action, most recently on 20, 24, and 26 January.

The drivers, who are members of Unite, are demanding improvements to their basic pay rate, currently £12.40 per hour. A Unite statement said: "A major sticking point in the dispute is First Manchester's refusal to honour the anniversary date of 1 August (when the pay increase for 2021 was due to come into effect) and to backdate the pay increase from this date."

First Manchester's parent company, First Group, is the second largest bus operator in the UK, and made an operating profit of £224.3 million in 2021.

Supporters can donate to the strike fund using the following details: Unite 6/235 Branch Fund, Unity Bank Account Number: 33204828 Sort Code: 60-83-01 □

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Questions and answers on Ukraine

By Dale Street

Are the breakaway 'People's Republics' in Donetsk and Lugansk an expression of the democratic rights of the local Russian population?

No. The supposed "popular anti-fascist uprisings" in Donetsk and Lugansk in 2014 are a political myth. The creation of the "People's Republics" was part of Putin's response to the ousting of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovich by the mass protests of early 2014.

The two "People's Republics" could not have been created, and could not have survived, without Russian political, financial and military support, including Russian troops on the ground.

Putin's aim was to weaken and destabilise Ukraine, in order to draw it back into Russia's sphere of influence. As the Ukrainian socialist organisation "Social Movement" explains in a recent statement:

"Contrary to the myth popular among some Western leftists, the regimes in the 'DPR' and 'LPR' are not the result of popular will. The heads of the 'DPR' and 'LPR' are integrated into the ranks of the ruling elite of the Russian Federation and have become the mouthpiece of the Kremlin's most aggressive predatory sentiments."

Was the referendum held in the Crimea in March of 2014, which led to its absorption by Russia, an expression of the democratic rights of the peninsula's Russian population?

No. Although some – but certainly not all – opinion polling indicated majority support for accession to Russia at the time, the referendum was neither free nor fair.

The referendum was held at just ten days notice, after Russian troops had occupied the peninsula, seized the Crimean Parliament building, dissolved the regional government and appointed a new one which obediently agreed to call a referendum. In the run-up to the referendum Ukrainian television channels were blocked and replaced by Russian channels, only pro-Russian-accession campaigning took place, the Ukrainian government was consistently portrayed as Nazis, and the referendum voting paper did not even contain an option for maintenance of the status quo.

The referendum provided no more than a pseudo-democratic veneer for a decision already taken in Moscow: annexation of Crimea, to ensure Russian control of the naval base in Sevastopol.



Haven't Ukrainian governments since the Maidan protests of 2014 been right-wing nationalistic, and neo-liberal?

Yes. But that does not distinguish them from most other governments in the world. And Putin's rule in Russia is arguably far worse: authoritarian, autocratic, corrupt, imperialist, and an ally and financier of far-right parties throughout Europe.

But, just as the Maidan protests were not a "fascist coup", so too none of the post-Maidan governments have been a "fascist junta". "Right-wing" is not the same as "fascist".

The narrative of "fascism in power in Ukraine" was concocted by Moscow in 2014 as a way of galvanising and justifying (in the name of "anti-fascism") the separatist movements which it created as a cloak for pursuing its own political agenda.

In any case, in a debate about a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine the question is irrelevant. No-one on the left argues, for example, that Palestinians are not entitled to national self-determination until they end the reactionary and corrupt rule of Hamas and Mahmoud Abbas.

How strong is the far right in Ukraine?

Numerically, the far right is an insignificant political force. In post-2014 elections it has never secured more than 2.5% of the popular vote.

In the 2014 presidential elections the candidates of Svoboda and the Right Sector – the two far-right organisations which, although not numerically significant, had been prominent in the Maidan protests – won 1.16% and 0.7% of the votes respectively.

In the last parliamentary elections (2019) a "united front" of the National Corps (the political wing of the Azov Battalion), the Right Sector, the Governmental Initiative of Yarosh (created by former Right Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh) and Svo-

boda won just 2.15% of the vote. The strength, and negative impact, of the far right lies in a different direction.

In December 2013, before the Maidan protests had really "kicked off", the academic Andreas Umland warned in an article in the *Kyiv Post* of the real danger which it posed:

"Svoboda and the minor ethno-nationalist parties present on the Maidan have already done a lasting disservice to the Ukrainian nation by impregnating the protest movement with their peculiarly Banderite slogans, ideas and symbols unpopular in southern and eastern Ukraine.

"A particularly sad outcome is that the ethno-nationalists have poisoned Ukrainian civil society with formulas that will disturb the formation of a unified Ukrainian civic community. One day historians may conclude that Putin and Tiahnybok (Svoboda leader) did jointly succeed in tearing the young Ukrainian state apart."

In an article published in 2018 Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko likewise wrote of the way in which "they (the far right) mainstreamed nationalist symbols and slogans among the (Maidan) protestors, in this way pushing the sceptical majorities in south-eastern regions further away from supporting Maidan."

In the four years since the Maidan, Ishchenko continued, issues once "the hobbyhorse of the far right" had become state policy. The far-right "nationalist historical narrative" had become increasingly mainstream, although it was not shared by "majorities in Ukraine's south-eastern regions."

Overall, the far right was "contributing to a self-destructive nationalist radicalisation dynamic."

That destructive dynamic was not the exclusive property of the far right. In 2014 former Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko, for example, had described the Crimea and the Donbass as regions "where our language practically does not exist, where our memory is non-existent, where our church is absent, where our culture is absent, utterly foreign lands."

Since 2014, due to the influence exercised by the far right on such issues (out of all proportion to its level of support), a historically based Ukrainian identity has been promoted and increasingly mainstreamed which is not "broad" enough to be endorsed by all the country's national minorities, especially by sections of the ethnic-Russian or Russian-speaking minority.

And this, as Umland noted, apart from being

wrong in itself, simply played into Putin's hands.

Isn't Russia within its rights to take action in response to the threat posed by NATO expansion?

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union NATO and the European Union have expanded eastwards. Former Warsaw Pact countries, and former countries of the USSR itself, have joined both NATO and the EU.

But Russia is not acting with its "rights" if it invades Ukraine. It is acting in pursuit of its own imperialist interests. Since Putin came to power he has pursued an imperialist policy of bringing former states of the USSR back into Russia's sphere of influence. Russia too has pursued an expansionist foreign policy.

Despite its nuclear arsenal Russia is not the world superpower that the USSR was. But socialists are not advocates of equal opportunities for imperialist power blocs, nor advocates of affirmative action for currently lesser imperialist powers.

The socialist programme is for the abolition of imperialist power blocs – not for a levelling-up and equality between them

Russia may or may not invade Ukraine. But surely our focus must be on opposing our own ruling class? As the German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht put it: The enemy is at home.

Liebknecht wrote, in a leaflet published in 1915: "The main enemy of the German people is in the home camp." Liebknecht was not arguing that the only enemy of the German working class was its own ruling class.

Socialists should always oppose the ruling class of our own country. But that cannot be counterposed to opposition to Russian imperialism, especially in the event of an invasion of Ukraine.

As an article in the current issue of the *Oakland Socialist* puts it:

"Some on the left in the West (west of Ukraine) call for simply 'opposing our own imperialism'. Stopping there means ignoring the reactionary role of Russian imperialism. There is no way to unite the working class on that basis.

"What would those people say to socialists in Ukraine or Russia then? How could such politics possibly unite any sector of workers throughout the region? This call is hardly different from the left which ignores the role of Russian imperialism in shoring up and adding to the immense crimes of Assad in Syria." □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

STRIKING TO TAME “GIG ECONOMY” BOSSES

By Michael Elms

On Sunday 30 January, a strike by couriers working for JustEat and Stuart Delivery was on its 36th day. Drivers in Sheffield and other cities are organising daily pickets and protests to fight off the 24% cut in their base rate of pay that Stuart implemented late in 2021, while their own revenues doubled and their top executive enjoyed a 1,000% pay increase, taking his remuneration to £2,000,000.

On that day, drivers sprung a surprise action against a large, busy McDonald's drive-thru in the Woodseats area of Sheffield, blocking off the drive-thru entrance with a pair of large jeeps and staging a demonstration with members of the local community.

Paul Blomfield, MP for Sheffield Central, spoke: "I'm here to support the strikers in this dispute, which is really important not only in terms of the issues they are facing in their own working conditions, but also in terms of the fundamentals of the gig economy, which is exploiting too many people... we hope that people will be inspired by this dispute to challenge employment practices across the country."

Dee, a long-standing member of the IWGB in Sheffield,

Eddie, one of the drivers



said: "I started doing deliveries about five years ago. It was the same problem. They give you high pay to bring drivers in then they start bringing it down. And now look; there's loads of drivers here with no food, no rent. Stuart needs to open their eyes and see what they're doing to us. They're making millions and millions but they can't even give us a pay rise? The money is too low. You can't live like this."

Eddie, one of the drivers, said: "We have all been risking our lives all through the lockdown. We have families to feed and bills to pay. And it is a shame to the company. We have not had any support from them, all through this hard time. It is time for them to address this issue once and for all. It's for the betterment of everybody that this will continue for as long as it takes. We are not relenting on this. The struggle continues."

A supporter of Workers' Liberty's Sheffield branch, which has been assisting the drivers from the very start, said: "I want

to thank all the drivers who have been making sacrifices, showing courage, daring, audacity and determination and talent which has been hidden under the contempt that this company holds them in. This strike has revealed the incredible resources, the incredible solidarity, incredible power and energy that these drivers have got.

"And they deserve respect. They deserve a great deal more respect than this company is giving them. They deserve more respect than society is giving them. I'm not a member of the IWGB union, I don't represent them. But since 2019 I have been working with drivers like Dee to help them build this union. I have been doing that because I am a socialist and I believe in solidarity and in organising the unorganised..."

"We have fought an arrogant and contemptuous attitude from the big platforms, who think they have found a goldmine, as if no-one has ever done this before... but are using techniques of exploitation that go back 100 years. They are using divide and rule. They are using insecure employment.

"Support the IWGB, support the drivers. This is only the start."

Daily strikes continue. □