

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

STRIKES SHOW HOW TO BEAT PRICE SURGES



Brixton Tube Station, closed by strike on 21 June

See page 3

Ukraine: Russia destroys rights

Ukraine's war is for national self-determination

Page 2, plus p. 3-4

Heatwave means deaths, floods

Without urgent action on CO₂, heatwaves will get worse worldwide

Page 6

Post workers to strike in August

Royal Mail workers will ballot from 28 June to 19 July

Page 13

James Connolly on partition

He saw that partition would block democratic progress

Pages 10-12

The ideas that Starmer wants to ban

In Ukraine, Russian occupation means destruction of rights

By Dan Katz

Ukraine continues to be attacked by the Russian armed forces, directed by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Russia's superior artillery is battering eastern Ukraine, destroying towns and villages. It is impossible to calculate exactly how much damage has been done in nearly four months of war, but the *Economist* magazine believes it may take \$500 billion to rebuild Ukraine.

The Mariupol steel plant, where the last defenders of the south eastern Ukrainian town holed up, employed 11,000 workers before the Russian invasion. It was one of the biggest steel plants in Europe, producing four million tonnes of steel each year. It is now in ruins.

About 90,000 Ukrainians remain in Mariupol, down from a pre-invasion population of 500,000. Most have no reliable access to water, electricity, internet or healthcare. Over 20,000 died in two months of fighting, and 90% of residential buildings were damaged or destroyed.

Corpses lie uncollected in Mariupol and there are fears of a cholera outbreak.

Russian-imposed officials state that benefits can only be paid to those who have applied for Russian passports. Screens showing Russian television have been set up in Mariupol's town squares and civilians are told they have been liberated from fascism.

Last week the political leaders of France, Germany and Italy went to Ukraine to express solidarity against the Russian invasion. The three states are amongst the least enthusiastic supporters of Ukraine's war in the EU and their backing is symbolically important for Ukraine. Each leader – president Macron of France, Chancellor Scholz of Germany and Prime Minister Draghi of Italy – backed Ukraine's entry into the EU membership process. That is the right thing to do.

However, these leaders are difficult allies for Ukraine. They are half-hearted. They should provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to defend itself and repel Russia's army, but they stop short. They are scared of doing the right thing because continued war is a threat to bourgeois stability – as if such threats could be avoided, with Putin in charge in Russia.

And it is by no means clear that Putin intends to stop at "freeing" the besieged Ukrainian town of Severodonetsk and "liberating Donbas". Kharkiv in north eastern Ukraine is

being subjected to renewed bombardment and may be the next city to be isolated and under renewed attack.

A serious danger to Ukraine will come at the point Putin decides to propose a peace deal to the advantage of Russian imperialism. Western European powers – Germany, Italy, France – may well turn on Ukraine and demand it settles with Russia. They have plenty of levers which they can pull to put pressure on Ukraine: they can promise EU membership and funds to rebuild; and they can threaten to withhold arms and funding.

France and Germany have done this before, forcing Ukraine to sign the terrible pro-Russia Minsk 2 Agreement in 2015.

Socialists

And on the left, some of the British socialists continue to get the politics wrong.

Socialist Worker maintains that NATO is "preparing for a wider war," oblivious to the known facts. If NATO had wanted a wider war it would have happened already. In fact, the NATO states, divided in many ways, are looking for a way to end the war, not broaden it.

Germany has promised arms and money, but failed to deliver on all its promises.

Ukraine seems close to running out of some munitions. The West – centrally the US – is calibrating its response quite precisely: enough weapons to Ukraine to stop it being overrun, but not enough to force the Russians out, or even to stop the Russian forces from slowly winning.

Why would the NATO states choose to broaden the war? The German and French governments clearly find the

current war alarming, and wish they could find a way to end it. Russian aggression is bad for bourgeois political stability and bad for making money.

Socialist Worker attempts to make a case against Ukraine's war by pointing out the apparent friendship between Boris Johnson and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but they miss the point entirely.

Zelenskyy

Of course, Zelenskyy is not left-wing. And of course we side with the Ukrainian workers against Zelenskyy. We stand with the Ukrainian trade union movement: fight the Russian invasion and fight for workers' rights against Zelenskyy.

At Unison conference, held in Brighton last week, a Stop the War speaker was heckled, interrupted and talked down by an incensed Ukrainian trade union leader (over Zoom) who objected to anyone who equivocated on backing for Ukraine. But the Ukrainian unions don't back Zelenskyy. They oppose the anti-union laws being considered by Ukraine's parliament.

Just as our support for free speech is not dependent on what a person might say, or our support for free elections is not dependent on how people might vote, our support for Ukraine's right to self-determination is not dependent on the nature of Ukraine's government.

We back Ukraine because primitive, nationalist-driven Russian imperialism is attempting to abolish Ukraine's right to self-determination. Ukraine is resisting subjugation. That is the basic case for backing Ukraine's war.

In the same way the Trotskyists backed Ethiopia's fight against the attempt of Italian fascism to conquer Ethiopia, despite Emperor Haile Selassie. We backed Vietnam against America, despite Ho Chi Minh's totalitarian, Stalinist rule.

We also recognise that Ukrainian workers will lose all their political and trade union rights under an occupation regime. The areas seized by Russia in 2014, the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, have been run by Moscow-dependent gangsters.

In the areas in southern Ukraine currently occupied by Russia, the Russians rule by terror. Abductions of Ukrainian oppositionists are commonplace. Locally elected councils are replaced by military-appointed Quislings. This is also a war for the defence of workers' and democratic rights.

Socialist Worker makes calls for an end to the war in Ukraine, without con-



Pic: Miki Jourdan

ditions. But, clearly, if Putin calls a stop tomorrow he will have gained large territories and driven many people from their homes. Should Putin keep the territory? *Socialist Worker* remains stumm. In contrast we say clearly what we think: Russian troops out of Ukraine, now! Defend Ukraine! Arm Ukraine! □



Action on Covid-19

Recent [research](#) suggests that Omicron subvariant infections, though milder than previous variants, add little to immunity against Omicron re-infection. Israel and Germany have new spikes which may rise as high as Portugal's mid-May to mid-June one. Rates are rising in Britain. Even if this spike is small, others will come. So, prepare:

- a sustained public-health testing-and-surveillance system
- good sick pay for all
- restore NHS funding and repeal privatisation
- requisition private hospitals to augment NHS resources
- bring social care into the public sector with NHS-level pay and conditions for staff
- workers' control of workplace safety (especially ventilation)
- specialist clinics for post-Covid conditions, and recognition of them as a "disability" in employment matters
- requisition Big Pharma, especially its patents and technical know-how, to speed vaccine production and delivery world-wide. □



Summer schedule

No. 640 will be on 29 June, but then we will skip some weeks in the holiday times of July and August. Nos. 641-4 will be 13 July, 27 July, 17 August, and 31 August. □

Strikes show how to fight price surges



On 21 June railworkers had our first all-out strike since 1994, and for the first time since 1989 London Underground workers joined the strike. The entire rail network ground to a halt. 50,000 rail workers walked out.

On 23 and 25 June, again, workers in Network Rail and 13 mainline train company workers will strike to bust a pay freeze and defend jobs and conditions.

This is the cutting edge in the fight against the Tory government. By the end of June the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) will announce the result of its pay ballot in BT, EE, and Openreach. Royal Mail workers in CWU will ballot from 28 June. The civil service union PCS will ballot its members in September. Teachers in the NEU will have an indicative ballot from 1 Octo-

ber, and the NEU promises campaigning with support staff too.

We need to learn lessons from the last wave of widespread strikes, in 2011 over pension cuts. We want solidarity, and combining to strike at the same time for maximum impact, rather than letting the bosses and the government deploy their full strength against us section by section; but that can't mean waiting until every single contingent is ready.

We want unions to have clear demands (clearer than just "a substantial pay rise"). We want unions to spell out clearly to their members, in advance, that they're planning action sufficient to beat the employers and the Tory government. We want disputes to be under democratic rank and file control, with elected local strike committees, and national meetings of representatives from those committees.

The government has shown that it will u-turn on issue after issue. Many employers face staff shortages, and

many of them have done very well for themselves in the last couple of years. This is a good time for strikes to win, as long as unions go for tactics designed to win, not just protest action to signal dismay.

The entire labour movement should rally to support the rail strikes. The strikes have dominated the headlines since they were announced. RMT members have been vilified by the press. The Tories have been rattled, threatening new laws to restrict the right to strike and to allow agency workers to be used as strikebreakers.

The RMT rail union demanded that the government, the paymaster of the railways, take part in the negotiations, and the government refused. Network Rail made an offer of **just 2%** pay rise – at a time of 10%-plus price surges. The union rightly rejected that out of hand, but is continuing talks will continue. We want the maximum possible transparency in all negotiations so the membership can decide on the next steps and

know what is on the table at any time.

On 21 June Unite joined RMT on strike on the Tube. That ought to increase the pressure on the two other Tube unions, TSSA and Aslef. Many Aslef drivers do support RMT strikes, but plenty don't. On the national rail Aslef has some strikes in the week 21-25 June, but has suspended their scheduled strike on Hull Trains.

TSSA is now balloting on Network Rail, and Aslef has a live (and refreshed) ballot mandate on the Tube.

Keir Starmer sent out a [memo](#) warning frontbenchers not to appear on picket lines. Junior frontbenchers Kate Osborne, Navendu Mishra, and Lloyd Russell-Moyle, at least, defied that memo on 21 June.

Local Labour Parties should defend those MPs if Starmer dares to try disciplinary action against them, demand on the contrary that all Labour MPs be forthright in backing the strikes, and mobilise their own members to swell the picket lines. □

London's Russians Against War

By Michael Baker

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a group has been slowly gaining attention in London for protesting weekly near the Russian embassy in Notting Hill. The group initially called itself Russians Against War, but has since rebranded as the Russian Democratic Society (RDS).

RDS began in January 2021, alongside protests in Russia over the arrest of opposition leader Alexey Navalny. Much like the movement inside Russia, it didn't gain much attention until more recently. Since the beginning of the invasion, RDS has staged weekly protests, mostly opposite the Russian embassy, with placards and an "open mic" for speakers.

The demands at each protest vary: common ones are the immediate removal of all troops from Ukraine and the release of all political prisoners in Russia, but protestors are free to promote their own.

Numbers also vary: some of the demonstrations, such as the one held in Parliament Square on 8 May, attract several thousand; others just a few dozen. The focus is making sure the protests take place,

to make it clear that there are Russians who oppose the war. As it becomes increasingly difficult to protest inside the country, the émigré community is trying to speak out as loudly as it can from abroad, to show the world that Putin's leadership is not going uncontested. In their own words:

"As Russia descends into chaos, we strive to build a coalition of ordinary people ready to collaborate and contribute to Russia's social, economic, and political future. Our call to action is to lead Russia to a legitimate system of democratic governance. This is our constitutional right."

Ukrainian

Some Ukrainians are reluctant to give attention to Russians (even those who oppose the war) right now. RDS acknowledges this, but tries to cooperate with Ukrainian groups in the UK. On some weeks RDS does not arrange its own protests, and instead encourages its members to join planned Ukrainian-organised events. Ukrainian activists also speak at RDS events.

When the Parliament Square demonstration took place, protestors walked over to join from the London Euromaidan

protest just down the road, forming a crowd dotted with both white-blue-white and blue-yellow flags (the worldwide opposition movement has opted for the new white-blue-white flag to promote the idea of a new, "fairer and freer" Russia). These are careful first steps towards desperately needed cooperation.

Liberal

The political makeup of the group is broad. The majority of those who attend regularly are liberal (aligning particularly with Alexey Navalny's party), with a smaller left contingent and an even smaller conservative one. In the words of Dmitry, who has been attending RDS protests since early on, "Navalny's party is doing a great job to address issues of corruption in Russia, but it is not enough. We need to talk about environmental issues, gender equality, workers' rights and much more. That's why we need a strong left-wing presence within the Russian opposition. This is essential if we want to see freer and fairer Russia".

With partial exceptions on a couple of the larger demonstrations, almost none of the British left beside Workers' Lib-

erty attends the group's weekly protests. At a time when support for the Russian anti-war movement is (on paper) one of very few things the British left can agree on, the only representation of that anti-war movement in our own country is being ignored. This is a mistake, and one that it would be a pleasure to see rectified. □



Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, and unless otherwise stated those below are online over zoom. We have many local (in-person) meetings, see [online](#).

Thursday 23 June, 7pm: first of three Zoom study sessions on Marxism and wars

Thursday 30 June, 6.30pm: Ideas for Freedom 2022 Walking Tour: Rebels, radicals and revolutionaries of Clerkenwell

Friday 1 July, 7pm: Ideas for Freedom 2022 Film Night: The Young Karl Marx

Saturday 2 – Sunday 3 July: Ideas for Freedom 2022, Camden School for Girls – book now!

Friday 26 August – Sunday 28 August: AWL Summer camp, Lurgashall, Surrey

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



Reply to a reader on Ukraine



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Reader Andrew Northall objects (letter in *Solidarity* 637) to my description of a *Morning Star* editorial as “repeat[ing] its refrain that the invasion was an ill-judged but understandable response to NATO’s expansion ... an error of judgement on Putin’s part.”

Andrew complains that I left out the fact that the editorial used the words “crime” and “gross” [error of judgement], and thus I claimed it said the opposite of what it actually did. Andrew argues that my description of the *Morning Star*’s stance (together with that of the Communist Party of Britain, who control the paper) amounts to dismissing their claims to oppose the invasion as “somehow soft, hollow, in fact secretly pro-invasion.”

Let me clear: yes, I do believe that

many CPB members and *Morning Star* contributors are “secretly pro-invasion” and some not so “secretly”.

The very Antidoto column that Andrew objects to provides the evidence regarding one prominent CPB member and *Morning Star* contributor: “the paper’s International editor, Steve Sweeney ... has broken cover. On 8 May he was a speaker (in a ‘personal capacity’) at the London “Victory Day” rally organised by George Galloway, Harpal Brar and their openly pro-invasion Workers’ Party”.

The same column also quotes the *Morning Star* editorial regarding Finland and Sweden joining NATO: “[It] illustrates just how the errors of judgement and miscalculations that allowed the Ukraine situation to get out of hand now threaten not just the prospects of peace on our continent but also the security of the Russian state.” I concluded from this: “In plain language that seems to mean that NATO, not Russia, is the



Pic: @kiehart

The Zdvizh River

aggressor”.

I’m confirmed in that opinion by the fact that the CPB carried a big banner on the 18 June demonstration: “Stop the War. Britain out of NATO”. No call on Russia to withdraw.

Russia, not NATO, invaded Ukraine. NATO’s eastern expansion took place mainly in 1999 when the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined, and in 2004 when Bulgaria and six other nations joined – in every case (as far as can be judged) driven by the wishes of

those countries’ populations, and at a time when Russia had friendly links with NATO.

On one point, Andrew is correct: he states that “far from opposing NATO, the invasion has served considerably to strengthen it”. And that consideration (raised in several *Morning Star* editorials and CPB statements) is in fact the *only* basis on which they oppose the invasion, meaning that my description of their “opposition” as simply regarding it as “ill judged”

is absolutely fair. Similarly, the repeated references to Russia’s “legitimate security concerns” means that my description of the *Morning Star* / CPB stance as regarding the invasion as “understandable” is also a fair short-hand summary.

The *Morning Star* and CPB have repeatedly condemned Western supplies of weapons to Ukraine, which means that for them “stop the war” is on the basis of Ukrainian weakness and Russian military gains. □

Union conferences should hear from workers, not bosses

By Dale Street

“To introduce the debate about making work better we thought it would be really good to organise a bit of a panel,” said GMB National Officer Mick Rix at the start of the third day of the GMB union congress (13-16 June).

The panel members were Paul Bedford (Deliveroo), Emma O’Dwyer (Uber), and Carl Lyon (Evri, formerly Hermes). These are not GMB activists. They are senior members of management in the three companies.

The discussion was set up on the congress podium as a cosy round-table discussion. According to Rix: “The gig economy does not have to be the Wild West of workers’ rights. I do think it can be a force for good.”

Describing Deliveroo as “one of the newest members of the GMB family”, Bedford’s answer was: “By doing what we’ve done and by entering partnerships with unions to support the proposition that we offer to riders.”

Lyon was “very proud of our relationship with the GMB.” His answer was: “It’s about making sure we continue on the journey we’re on, and making sure that the GMB and the union are a big part of that.”

O’Dwyer was likewise “pleased about the partnership we have and the work that we do together, and the friendship which Ali (GMB rep in Uber) and Mick provide in helping us navigate through this.”

GMB Regional Secretary Hazel Nolan chimed in:

“We’re in the change-management business as a union. It’s not our job to hold back the tide. It’s our job to embrace it, but to make sure it’s our workers, our members, that are winning out of that as well.”

Subsequent exchanges and answers to (pre-selected) questions from the floor of the congress continued along the same lines.

Partnership between employers and unions was good, partnership could deliver for bosses and workers alike, employers could learn a lot from the GMB, and the GMB was only too ready to help them.

Bedford, for example, looked forward to getting the help of the GMB in improving procedures to “offboard” (i.e. sack) workers: “One of the areas we discussed with Mick, where we want to get the GMB in to help us immediately when the agreement starts in the autumn, is to look at how we offboard.”

Challenge

A slightly off-message question from the floor which challenged the value of partnership deals and the exploitative nature of the gig economy was slapped down by O’Dwyer:

“Look, I think it’s very easy to sit on the sidelines, and to say there’s no point in engaging and what will you achieve.

But today 80,000 drivers are workers and they weren’t workers before, and that’s because of the work the GMB has done.”

In fact, recognising drivers as workers (in the legal sense of the term) has been the result of a succession of legal judgements.

It’s good that the GMB wants to break into newer sectors of the economy.

But pretending that the gig economy can be “a force for good”, collaborating with employers to help them sack workers, and chumming up with their representatives – including at trade union conferences! – is no way to do that. □

Work from home and union organising



Letter

Millions of office workers are now in the workplace maybe two or three days each week in the workplace, otherwise working at home.

Most workers welcome this, if only because it saves on commuting.

But it’s a problem for

union organising. Work-from-home tends to atomise workers. Their managers find sufficient control and surveillance by electronic monitoring. But workers can’t have the chats around work, in tea or meal breaks, or after work, which best underpin a culture of us seeing our workmates as people whom we should support and who will support us.

It’s harder for union activ-

ists to get new recruits into the union if they rarely or never meet them. It’s difficult for picket lines to be effective, or union meetings to happen in or near the workplace, if many workers are at home.

Unions will have to adjust. I don’t see how that can be done without union activists maximising our days in the workplace, even if it’s inconvenient or costly. Union activists being there five days

a week means that even workers in two days a week will be met eventually.

I’ve heard it said that currently many unions have difficulty persuading workers to be union reps at all, let alone be more present in the workplace. If the wave of strikes now tentatively suggested by union leaders grows and wins, that could help change the problem. □

Chris Reynolds,
London

Bechdel test gets an update



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

Cartoonist Alison Bechdel has given us a cheeky update to the Bechdel Test in response to internet drama about rom com *Fire Island*, a rewriting of *Pride and Prejudice* with the Bennet sisters replaced with a group of queer, working-class, Asian-American men.

The accidentally ubiquitous Bechdel test is a set of criteria to judge the representation of women in film, from comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*.

To pass a movie has to:

- have at least two (named) women in it
- who talk to each other
- about something besides a man.

The blunt instrument of gender-equality judgement was found lacking when *New York Magazine* writer Hanna Rosin said *Fire Island* gets "F-" on the Bechdel Test.

"So @hulu #FireIslandMovie gets an F- on the Bechdel test in a whole new way," wrote Rosin in a since-deleted tweet. "Do we just ignore the drab lesbian stereotypes bc cute gay Asian boys? Is this revenge for all those years of the gay boy best friend?"

Twitter being Twitter, this comment blew up, with many criticising Rosin for criticising the representation in a film centred on gay Asian Americans.

Rosin deleted the tweet and issued an apology that included a screenshot of her original complaint. "I deleted a tweet that many of you rightly pointed out was offensive," wrote Rosin. "I've read your responses and I hear you. My tweet was careless and thought-

less. Truly. The movie was telling a story about queer AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) men, whose experiences don't show up enough in movies or anywhere else." She went on, writing, "What I had to say was beside the point, not to mention a buzzkill on a fun summer movie. It's a cliché but the fact that I didn't see it coming means I have a lot to learn."

Alison Bechdel by this time had already responded with a corollary to the Bechdel test:

"Two men talking to each other about the female protagonist of an Alice Munro story in a screenplay structured on a Jane Austen novel = pass."

Fire Island's use of Austen to provide a template for broader representation is very neat, given how Austen brought women's relationships to the fore.

As Virginia Woolf muses in *A Room of One's Own*, the inspiration for the

Bechdel test: "All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much has been left out, unattempted."

"And I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends... It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex."

Shockingly a three-line comic strip from decades ago has not provided a sturdy test for media representation that captures nuance and changing expectations. There are two indicators of agency in the language of film, speaking and looking, and it is worth thinking about how women (and other oppressed groups) are largely marginalised from both. □

Tories push to curb human rights

By Sade Sawyers

Ever since the 1998 Human Rights Act incorporated the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law, there have been noises from disgruntled right-wing politicians about scrapping it.

Now, in its push to clear the way for its scheme to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda, this government is proposing to do it. It claims to believe that European Court of Human Rights has Brits by the neck, suppressing our rights. In reality getting rid of the Human Rights Act would leave many vulnerable groups with their backs against the door. Over fifty leading UK human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the End Vi-

olence Against Women Coalition, have signed an open letter setting out the dangers people will face if we ditch the ECHR.

The Human Rights Act has been an important piece of the jigsaw of the still fragile Good Friday Agreement, and thus of avoiding a return to the violence and turbulence of pre-agreement Northern

Ireland. Women also have reason to be worried, as the Act has been key to defending the rights of women against a range of public bodies. It has also been argued that its repeal could see the UK moving further down the road of authoritarian regimes like Russia, removing yet another channel for scrutinising and constraining just or cruel

actions by the state against the people.

The Tories' substitute for the ECHR is a so-called "British Bill of Rights", which Amnesty's chief executive has called a "watered down substitute".

Are people in Britain willing to have their rights further placed in the hands of the government? We should remember the many threats

and challenges to our liberties and oppose the government's plans. □

Trans rights: consensus not won yet

By Mohan Sen

New research about UK "public opinion" on trans rights shows that anti-trans activism does not at all reflect overwhelming "common sense". Supporters of trans rights are far from a tiny minority. It shows also how far we have to go, and the need for pro-active education and argument.

The *Guardian's* reporting of research by the More in Common group, which polled 20,000 people over two years and organised focus groups this year, suggests a broad pro-trans rights consensus, with certain gaps. That reflects the presentation by *More in Common*, evidently concerned to damp down right-wing-driven culture wars on these issues. The optimism, or complacency, does not reflect what they actually found.

46% of More in Common's respondents agreed that "a trans man is a man and a trans woman is a woman". 32% disagreed. Even among 18-24 year olds, 28% disagreed. 15% of those defined as "progressive activists" (which probably does not mean actual activ-

ists, but strongly left-leaning people) disagreed.

63% believe schools should tell students some people are transgender. But less than two thirds, even for that? And only 30% think primary schools should tell children. (Only slightly more think primary schools should tell children some people are gay.)

46% told More in Common that trans women who have not undergone gender reassignment surgery should not be allowed to use women's changing rooms (versus 24%), and 42% that they should not be able to use women's toilets (versus 29%). For those who have had surgery, 28% and 26% still said no.

Large numbers oppose the provision of unisex toilets; there is no majority for them being provided in any location and a plurality opposed to providing them in schools. (Another survey, in the USA, found 59% of trans people avoiding public toilets altogether.)

We must agitate and argue for trans rights in ways designed to maximise our hearing with those that disagree, but argue we must. □



Activist Agenda

A motion (bit.ly/mo-pe) protesting at the 29 March 2022 Labour Party National Executive ban on Workers' Liberty has been ruled in order in London, after previous declarations that it was out of order.

On 5 July, from 6pm, the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign will co-sponsor a protest at the Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London W1, with other Uyghur support groups.

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement's conference is 16 July at Birkbeck, London (bit.ly/lcfm-c).

• Links, info, etc. on many campaigns: workersliberty.org/agenda



Protesting transphobes in Bristol

100-200 people in Bristol on 19 June protested against "Posie Parker" □ bit.ly/pp-bris



Heatwaves bring deaths, floods, and more



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

The heatwaves have come early this year. The week starting 13 June saw wildfires in Spain, France, Portugal, Germany, and Morocco, and temperatures in continental Europe over 40°C, breaking several records.

Between March and May multiple weather stations across India and Pakistan recorded temperatures between 45 and 50°C.

Climate scientists have said that such extreme temperatures are now 30 times more likely than in pre-industrial times. It will get worse, by an additional factor of between two and twenty times, if we exceed 2°C of global heating.

Above a certain combination of heat and humidity ("wet bulb temperature"), the body cannot cool, and dies after a few hours. According to recent empirical research, healthy young adults get heat stress above a "wet-bulb" 31°C. The survival temperatures for children, pregnant women, and adults with underlying health conditions are lower still. In Kolkata and

Mumbai last month, wet-bulb temperatures exceeded 30°C.

India's major cities have faced power outages during the heat waves. So far there are just 90 heat-related deaths reported, but parts of India could be teetering on the edge of much greater catastrophe.

Heat stress particularly affects the world's one billion agricultural workers and 220 million construction workers, and the global textile workforce of 66 million, who mostly work in poorly ventilated sweatshops. The ILO estimate that by 2030, heat stress will reduce the hours worked by over 2% worldwide, losing \$2.4 trillion of goods and services.

Respiratory

Warmer temperatures also sets off chemical reactions from vehicle exhaust fumes causing rapid spikes in ground level ozone, which in turn can lead to a range of respiratory problems. [Delhi](#) has recorded toxic levels of air pollution every day since the heat wave started in March.

A wildfire is currently raging in the Sierra de la Culebra mountain range in Zamora, Spain, home to one of Europe's largest wolf populations. The fire started just months after

new wolf pups were born, and they may be unable to survive. A 2019 [paper](#) found that wildfires now threaten over 4,400 species with extinction.

Fires

The Zamora fire was started by an electrical storm and is so fierce that it managed to cross over a 500 metre reservoir. Hundreds of people have been evacuated from their homes. Particulate matter and smoke will pollute the air for thousands of miles, bringing higher risk of heart disease and strokes.

Wildfires also turn forests and peatlands from carbon sinks into carbon emitters. Last year wildfires contrib-

uted 6,450 megatonnes of CO₂-eq to the Earth's atmosphere. (Total CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels in the EU in 2020 [amounted](#) to 2,600 megatonnes.)

Extreme temperatures are intensifying both floods and droughts. The Indian heatwave has caused a rapid melting of glacial ice, exacerbating flooding from early monsoon rains. In North East India 600,000 people have been displaced by flooding.

Swollen rivers are claiming lives and destroying homes across Bangladesh, Nepal and India.

The heatwave also hits global food production. The Indian wheat harvest is ex-

pected to be 4% down on last year, with a 15% drop in output from the Punjab, the country's breadbasket.

All these effects are being felt today in a world on just 1.1 degrees of warming compared to pre-industrial times. The [UN](#) has found that there is now a 50% chance that global temperatures may rise 1.5°C before 2026.

Human activity, organised by the mindless drive of private capital for endless profit, is accelerating the heating of the world. We now need a long, hot summer of strikes to rebuild workers' organisations that can pose a serious alternative to capitalist class rule and runaway global heating. □

Two views on PCS



Eye on the left

By Sacha Ismail

Since they parted ways in the 1990s, the Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal, both descended from the 1960s-80s Militant, have mutated in different directions. In civil service union PCS they take very different stances, as their reports on its [24-26 May conference](#) show.

Socialist Appeal (SA) is not very numerous in PCS. The Socialist Party (SP), which for almost two decades, until 2018, led the governing "Left Unity" (LU) bloc with the current leadership of general secretary Mark Serwotka, are more numerous.

The SP is now highly [critical](#) of LU, even though LU now acts not very differently from before the SP and Serwotka parted ways. SA overflows with [praise](#) for the Serwotka leadership.

SA's report explains why the SP's call for the national strike ballot over pay and other issues to start not on 1 September, but 1 July – only a month after the conference – was unworkable. The SP's report makes no real attempt to defend their proposal, arguing only that a July ballot would have been viable if the union had already spent time preparing (which, as it rightly says, it had not).

SA explains much of what the SP advocates in PCS as a product of their desire for "prestige", i.e. to appear left-wing against the leadership, rather than serious proposals for class struggle.

But SA's criticisms of the SP are made to defend the "prestige" of the PCS leadership.

SA paints this leadership up as a class-struggle socialist force. It attributes Left Unity's recent victories in union elections to "twenty years of consistent campaigning". You wouldn't

know from their article that Left Unity's life as anything but an electoral machine has shrivelled, or that in many PCS elections the LU vote has declined and the SP's Broad Left Network and the Independent Left (which Workers' Liberty is active in) have won a majority of votes. Or that those twenty years have seen retreat after retreat by the union, often without any real fight.

In PCS's biggest section, in the Department of Work and Pensions, the LU leadership has recently resisted pushes to organise any action, even through bureaucratic lobbying, to defend the jobs of thousands of mainly young fixed-term jobcentre "work coaches" hired early on in the pandemic.

The SP's militancy is indeed often a matter of positioning itself; when it was in the leadership of PCS it behaved differently. It adopts more left-sounding, and often actually left-wing, positions in unions where it's in opposition to the leadership, like the NEU; in PCS, it has veered from being part of a timid leadership to vocal left posturing. It says nothing critical on the leadership's record during its involvement.

SA specialises in "Marxist" rhetoric – as cover, in PCS, for a quite conservative reality. I'd guess they want to replace the SP as a "Marxist" group in favour with the leadership, to access seats on union committees and so on.

Both groups oppose labour movement support for Ukraine; SA in particular is extremely bad on this. Ukraine was a [big issue](#) at PCS conference; yet the SP report doesn't mention it, and SA says only that it was discussed. The SA conference [bulletin](#) set out general "arguments" about Ukraine at length, but said nothing about the motions.

The SP may not want to mention that the conference took a pro-Ukraine position; SA may want to avoid open disagreement with general secretary Mark Serwotka, who supports Ukraine.

Opportunism all round. □

Break the left's Brexit silence!

By Mohan Sen

Right-wing Labour MP Stella Creasy (*Observer*, [19 June](#)) has called for the Labour leadership to break its silence over Brexit.

Creasy is vague. She doesn't advocate restoring free movement between Britain and the EU27, as we do. But she's right that "Labour cannot make people's lives better until it dares to start talking about Brexit... Silence on the issue, for fear of saying the wrong thing, means the Tory dogma and narrative on Europe will go unchallenged".

A few days earlier, shadow minister Anna McMorrin was reprimanded by the Labour leadership for [suggesting](#) (in an internal Labour meeting) that Britain should re-enter the Single Market and Customs Union. Dissident Tory MP Tobias Ellwood has [called](#) publicly for rejoining the Single Market on 1 June.

A Labour spokesperson told the media: "Labour Party policy is clear. We need a strong collaborative relationship with EU partners, but that does not involve membership of the customs union or the single market."

Why not? Whatever about Creasy and McMorrin, the Labour left should seek to break the stifling silence about Brexit that has settled over the labour movement. The Tories' hard Brexit is feeding economic dislocation and stoking communal tension in Northern Ireland.

The internationalist left should embolden and organise trade unionists and Labour members to speak out for lower borders, to push for reversing Brexit, and to argue at Labour conference in September for a recommitment to free movement. □

“Progressive economics”: think-tanks or struggles?

By Sacha Ismail

I’d guess several hundred people, many young, attended part or all of the “Progressive Economics” conference held by the Progressive Economy Forum (PEF) think tank at Greenwich University on 11 June. There were 150 at the closing plenary.

It was an informative and lively event touching on crucial issues and asking important questions. But the dominant politics were not radical and the labour movement as a presence and an idea largely absent.

Socialists should work for left-wing economic debate to be rooted in and in dialogue with the workers’ movement and workers’ struggles, rather than sidelined to conferences of the academic or think-tank type, like this one.

The opening plenary presentation by health equity academic Michael Marmot, available as video on the PEF website, stressed the need to restore the huge cuts in local government funding since 2010, an idea largely absent from debates in Labour councils, and local Labour Parties. Marmot provided a wealth of useful facts and data, and made a powerful indictment of the Tories and case for radically different policies. Despite a focus on pay, conditions and rights at work, however, his speech lacked any mention of the labour movement or sense of working-class agency.

The workshop session on local government did not focus on Marmot’s call to restore councils’ funding from central government, but rather on the popular catchphrase “community wealth building” (CWB), which for many “left-wing” councillors functions as an evasion of the fight to restore cuts.

At the local government conference of public sector union Unison, opening the day after Progressive Economics, the motions and agenda did not contain a single reference to CWB or similar. Though in many cases politically woolly and lacking proposals for a serious fight, the motions to Unison at least recognised that increased central government funding is pivotal.

In the closing plenary of the PEF event, left-wing economist Grace Blakeley made a big deal of rejecting “top-down solutions”; but what she advocated was not empowering the labour movement to fight for social change from below (she barely mentioned the labour movement or workers), but local projects to gener-

ate economic activity, apparently without trying to win resources from central government or concessions from capital. I was reminded of both the “community wealth building” problem and of Michael Roberts’s criticism of Blakeley’s failure, in her book opposing “financialisation”, to call for public ownership of the banks and high finance.

If “bottom up” economics and politics mean evading rather than confronting the concentrations of wealth and power run from the top of society, they will not serve the working class.

The packed-out session on social care was good. Economist Sue Himmelweit spoke thought-provokingly about social care from the standpoint of women’s labour and “feminist economics”; Chris Thomas from the Institute of Public Policy Research gave a surprisingly radical presentation, including left-wing analysis of how social care is run now and a striking criticism of the limitations of the Beveridge Report that informed the creation of the post-war welfare state.

The session was made by the speech from left-wing Labour MP Nadia Whittome, before her election and again during the pandemic a care worker herself. Nadia began from care workers’ labour, rights and attempts at organisation; asserted the need for full democratic public ownership of the sector; and called for a grassroots mass movement to challenge the private-sector care bosses, both in workplaces and politically.

Unfortunately that session was for some reason much shorter than the others, and there was almost no time for discussion.

The next session in the same room, on “Workers and the crisis”, was very poorly attended – the two speakers and three audience members, one a full-time unelected staff member for a



Pic: @PEF_online

Clive Lewis speaking about a Green New Deal

union. The speakers were Greenwich academic Alexander Guschanski, who presented useful data on workers’ incomes, living standards and inequality, and ideas about what has caused our retreats; and Ben Sellers from the Institute of Employment Rights (IER).

Anti-union laws

The IER has long soft-pedalled or ignored the central issue of repealing the anti-union and anti-strike laws in favour of a one-sided focus on collective bargaining, and Ben’s speech reflected that. I challenged him on this and it ended up being the central theme of the session. I’d say this problem has got worse since I discussed it in 2018.

The three speakers in the session on “Financing the caring, green economy” set out some ideas for how the financial sector should swivel to serve positive social and climate goals, but the solutions they advocated – better regulation or nudging, and more activity by central banks and other state bodies – are utterly inadequate to achieve such reorientation, to say nothing of actual democratic control over finance.

No one raised the idea of public ownership of the sector until I did, citing the policy the Fire Brigades Union won at TUC Congress and Michael Roberts’ pamphlet for the FBU; but I got a number of approving nods in the audience.

Of the two speakers that replied, one seemed not to understand my question, appearing to think advocating a public development bank answered my call for wider public ownership of the sector; and the other argued for a “mixed economy” in finance on the grounds that “We wouldn’t want Boris Johnson’s government to control the whole banking system”. The left shouldn’t want the Tories and those they represent to control the healthcare, or social care or energy systems either; but we should call for comprehensive public ownership in those sectors, combined with multiple

forms of democratic organisation and control.

In terms of finance, there is certainly room for different forms of ownership and organisation – but the key question is who owns and controls the big banks and financial institutions.

The low turnout for the “Workers and the crisis” session surely reflected a severe shortage of trade union and labour movement activists at the conference, despite many of the organisers being labour movement-connected (the director of PEF is James Meadway, formerly economic adviser to John McDonnell).

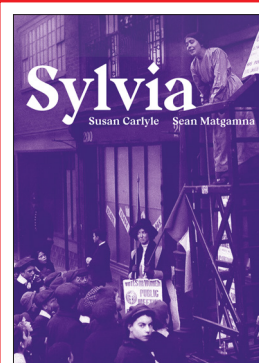
As well as Nadia Whittome, John McDonnell spoke; so did Alena Ivanova of Another Europe is Possible and Greenwich academic Yuliya Yurchenko, active in the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and Ukrainian socialist organisation Sotsialniy Rukh. The best wing of the broad Labour left was represented there, but sadly was not decisive.

The closing plenary heard from former Labour leader and shadow cabinet member Ed Miliband, sounding vaguely radical but unsurprisingly committing to little – and the other speakers, James Meadway and Grace Blakeley, did not challenge him on the Starmer leadership’s record or policies.

Trade unionists and workplace activists were pretty much totally absent. Few speeches or contributions referred to working-class struggles, union campaigns or policy debates in the unions (or in democratic structures within the Labour Party).

PEF has just produced a report arguing for a £15 minimum wage – by 2024. That’s good, but PEF appears to have no real idea of the workers’ movement fighting for a higher minimum wage now.

To repeat: left-wing economics should be rooted in and in dialogue with working-class organisations and struggles. □



The story of Sylvia Pankhurst including her working-class organising in the East End of London. £4 (inc. post) bit.ly/shop-wl



For socialists to understand and confront left antisemitism from primitive or Stalinist roots to the “anti-imperialism of fools”. 265 pages, £9.99 bit.ly/shop-wl

Johnson's tattered "Orange card"

By Micheál MacEoin

The Tories have set a course for a major confrontation with the EU, as the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill threatens to rip up large parts of the Brexit deal agreed between the UK and Europe.

Long-awaited, the Bill, if passed, would remove the direct effect of parts of the Withdrawal Agreement in domestic law. This would prevent it from having supremacy over UK law, allowing the UK to override parts of the Protocol.

UK authorities, including Parliament, ministers and the civil service, would therefore no longer have to comply with parts of the Protocol which have been disapplied.

The Clause removing the need to apply EU customs law to certain goods gives UK ministers powers to remove the need for checks on goods from Great Britain destined to remain in Northern Ireland through the creation of a "green channel". How, in the absence of checks, this would stop exporters claiming falsely the goods are not destined for further transit into the Single Market remains a open question.

More drastically, the Bill proposes that a dual regulatory framework applies to Northern Ireland, allowing businesses a choice of whether goods placed on the market in Northern Ireland meet EU rules, UK rules, or both.

This will start to become important when EU and UK standards begin to diverge. It could cause a headache for some sectors, such as agri-food, who rely on north-south trade on the island of Ireland. For example, the dairy industry is concerned that if grain fed to dairy cows in the North meets UK but not EU standards, it could become impossible to sell milk in the Republic of Ireland and the wider EU.

Constitutionally, the Bill is concerning due to the wide powers it provides to ministers. It would allow ministers to disapply other parts of the protocol in future (not just those specified in the current Bill), as well as make regulations for new arrangements. This would be



done through secondary legislation, essentially avoiding proper parliamentary scrutiny.

Provocatively, the Bill also states that UK courts are not bound by decisions of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on matters related to the protocol, and cannot refer matters to the ECJ. This was a key ask of the Brexit ultras of the European Research Group (ERG) and betrays the fact that Foreign Secretary Liz Truss worked closely with the ERG in developing the legislation.

Law

Predictably, the EU has resumed its legal action against the UK for earlier breaches of the agreement. It is reportedly also considering tariffs against specific UK goods with a symbolic or political significance, such as Scottish whisky and car parts from the Midlands.

The Bill is a deliberate breach of international law, though the British government has cooked up legal advice justifying it with reference to the "doctrine of necessity". This holds that it is permissible to breach a treaty obligation if to carry it out would create "grave and immediate peril". In other words, the government is arguing that the deal it negotiated and signed is

creating "peril" in Northern Ireland! As well as being nonsense, it also does not explain why the UK is taking other remedies, such as triggering Article 16.

The answer is, of course, that the government is not really interested in fixing the Protocol. Beyond the technical specifics, the Bill is fundamentally a political attempt to save Johnson's premiership, by provoking a conflict with the EU to ensure the continued support of the Tory Brexiteer right.

Within that, Truss has been jostling for position in a future anticipated leadership election by pushing the Bill further than even Johnson wished to go.

As well as this, the Bill is an attempt to induce the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) back into the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Tories hoped that the DUP would comply. However, though the party welcomed the Bill, it is reserving its position (and maintaining its leverage) until the Bill passes through Parliament.

This could take months. As well as opposition in the Commons, the Bill is likely to hit a temporary blocker in the House of Lords (where the Tories do not have a majority) because of the extensive delegated powers it gives to ministers.

All of this continues to put strain on the power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland. The Tories are cynically claiming that the Bill is necessary to salvage the Good Friday Agreement, which the DUP and some Tory ministers, including Michael Gove, opposed at the time.

Consent

The Tories have rediscovered the importance of "consent", a term which applies in the Agreement almost exclusively to whether or not Northern Ireland should remain a part of the UK. Indeed, this question would be settled in a border poll through a simple ma-

jority, and would not require majority support from both nationalists and unionists.

"Consent" has now been stretched arbitrarily to argue that the Protocol needs full cross-community support, including from unionists, as a way of entrenching a unionist veto as a convenient wedge against the EU. Yet, "consent" was not required for Brexit itself, which was opposed by most political parties in the North and most voters in the 2016 referendum!

A majority of Assembly members in Northern Ireland have sent an open letter to the British government, asking it to stop claiming that they are acting on behalf of the North in pursuing the new Bill.

Not that this will stop Johnson and the Tories. Alistair B Cooke and John Vincent wrote in their study of the first Home Rule crisis (1885-6) that the "Irish policies of British governments at Westminster cannot be explained in terms of Irish circumstances. They must be explained in terms of parliamentary combinations."

As it was then, so it is now. Johnson, in a farcical historical re-enactment, is playing his own "Orange card" to save his dying political career.

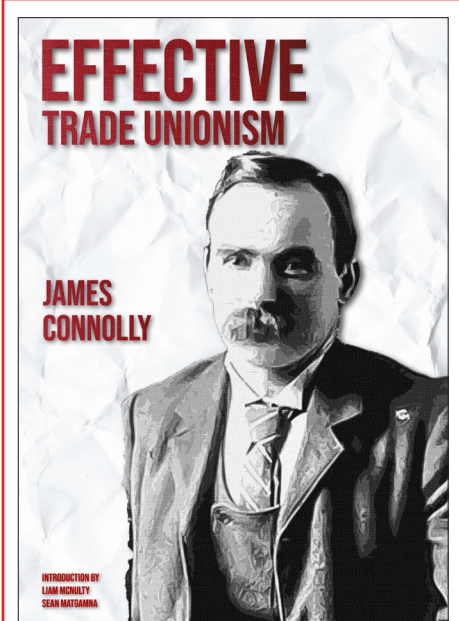
The British labour movement should demand that Brexit is unwound. The Irish labour movement should elaborate a programme for a federal united Ireland, with minority protections and social "levelling up" across the island. □

Our videos

Watch Workers' Liberty's videos and playlists, and subscribe to our youtube channel! Many have subtitles. **Playlists include:**

- The State, Crime, Prisons, and Police
- Socialist Feminism
- Black Lives Matter
- Socialist commentary on the Covid-19 crisis
- ABCs of Marxism, an introductory series
- An introduction to Marx's Capital, in 19 parts, with Martin Thomas
- Tubeworker/Off The Rails, videos by the producers of the bulletins □

Watch, subscribe, like, comment and share: youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK



Aiming to replace capitalism with socialism, James Connolly's organising and ideas evolved considerably. One idea he clung to from the turn of the century to his death in 1916 was industrial unionism, workers' solidarity across grades and trades, and sympathetic strikes. That is how he saw his work in the Irish Transport Union. Out late June 2022; £5. □

workersliberty.org/publications

Urgent challenge for French left

By Martin Thomas

It's good that France's neoliberal president Emmanuel Macron comes out of the 19 June second round of France's National Assembly elections with only 246 seats out of 577, way short of a majority.

And Jean-Luc Mélenchon's electoral tactic has worked well. The Nupes alliance agreed just one candidate from among its four components – Mélenchon's La France Insoumise, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the Green EELV – in each constituency, and so reached the second-round run-off in 370-odd seats, far more than it would have done with four first-round candidates everywhere. It came out with 146 seats, up on the 72 its components had in 2017.

With a weak, discredited, unstable government, amidst price surges, strikes and protests can and must also surge.

But, as well as those strikes and protests, the future also depends on politics – on when France's battered left will revive itself, and revolutionary socialists with clear ideas will win hegemony in it.

Nupes got 146 seats; but that was below the range of pollsters' estimates for it after the 12 June first round, which was 150 to 220. One factor is that pollsters and Nupes had expected that in run-offs with the fascistic Rassemblement National, centrist and soft-right voters, and some first-round abstainers, would rally to Nupes. They didn't.

Le Pen

The RN has 89 seats, way above after-12-June estimates of 10 to 45, let alone its 2017 score of 8 seats. Marine Le Pen, and before her, her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, have long been able to rally personal "protest votes" in presidential elections; but until now the RN (formerly Front National) has been weak as a party, in neighbourhoods, in local government, in parliament. Its parliamentary breakthrough may help it build a strong and more solid membership base, and make it a worse threat.

Nupes is not the united front for struggle which French workers need, but an electoral cartel. It couldn't even use its favourable 12 June score to rally people among the 52% who abstained then to clinch results for it in the run-

offs. At 54%, abstention was higher on 19 June.

France's Fifth Republic constitution, brought in after a "soft" military coup in 1958, was designed for rule by dominant presidents assumed to be able to keep parliament docile through refraction of their individual political credit. For over 35 years now it has muddled through long periods of misalignment between president and parliament.

The prospects for muddling through are not good now. The old mainstream-right party, Les Républicains (LR), did ok on 19 June (64 seats), but neither LR nor the Socialist Party and EELV components of Nupes currently have an interest in helping Macron out. Macron's supporters talk of new National Assembly elections soon: even if he can he pull that off, he'd more likely come out worse in a re-run than better.

For some time now, sections of the French left have talked of a "Sixth Republic", parliamentary democracy in place of the presidential regime. The political standoff gives that idea new life, so long as it is tied together with socialist demands for public owner-

ship, workers' control, and social provision. □

Our pamphlets

Browse, download, buy, or listen to [our pamphlets](#) including:

- The German Revolution: selected writings of Rosa Luxemburg
- For Workers' Climate Action
- Two Nations, Two States
- Workers Against Slavery
- How to Beat the Racists
- Shapurji Saklatvala: Socialist Rebel in Parliament
- Stalinism in the International Brigades
- Left Antisemitism: What it is and How to Fight it
- Arabs, Jews, and Socialism: Socialist Debates on Israel/Palestine
- The Occupation of the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead 1984
- When workers beat the fascists
- Automation and the working class □

workersliberty.org/publications/

Left seeks place in Momentum election

By Mohan Sen

Labour Left Internationalists (LLI) is seeking to stand candidates in the elections for Momentum's National Coordinating Group, to shake the organisation into active support for workers' struggles.

LLI was formerly Momentum Internationalists, which in its turn was formed in 2020 by people previously active in Labour for a Socialist Europe. It has combined campaigning for free movement, for solidarity with Ukraine, for unity with Labour left campaigns on issues like housing, with arguing for democracy in Momentum and for Momentum to organise visibly and regularly to support strikes and protests.

In the recent Momentum "policy primary", motions originating in and around LLI on free movement, on public ownership of energy, and on curbing police, won through as priorities.

Momentum still has 20,000 members. But it needs to be remobilised.

About 25 people marched

with Momentum on the 18 June trade union demonstration – from an organisation with 20 paid staff. They carried a banner for Momentum's "Trade Unionist Network", which has held a few online meetings but done nothing else we know of. No mobilisation for picket lines. No pres-

ence at union conferences. No campaigning on the streets or within the Labour Party on issues where a Labour left organisation could have an important impact, like the demand to repeal anti-union laws.

Momentum has not even deployed its social media and

communications links to generate support for the Just Eat couriers' strikes.

Unelected officials

If the "Momentum Organisers" (MO) slate, which is closer to the pre-2020 Momentum regime and to some of the paid staff, takes over from the current "Your Momentum" (YM) leadership, we expect even less.

Unelected trade union officials are heavily represented among both Your Momentum and Momentum Organisers. LLI's candidates are predominantly young workplace trade union activists.

Candidates have to have their self-nominations "vetted" by the Momentum office before they are put on a web

page. Then – so candidates were told on the evening of Friday 17 June – they have to gather 20 people from their regions willing to wait until the names go up and submit supporting nominations before 11:59pm on 22 June (the day after we go to press). Since few local Momentum groups still exist, and many left-wingers have let their Momentum membership lapse, this last-minute decree is a significant obstacle to candidates outside the YM and MO slates, whose organisers would have known the schedule and the rules well in advance.

Balloting opens on [28 June](#) and closes on 6 July.

For updates, and the LLI platform for the election, check out LLI, bit.ly/mo-int □



Our audio

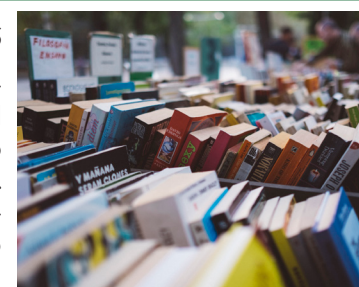
Listen, download or subscribe to Workers' Liberty audio recordings of our paper, other publications, and many meetings. **Playlists include:**

- Solidarity Newspaper
- Environmental pamphlet and meetings
- Solidarność: The workers' movement and the rebirth of Poland in 1980-81
- Public meetings – recordings of introductory speeches on topics from Ukraine to "Geoengineering" to Covid and beyond. Campaigns, history, theory, current affairs, and more.
- Fighting racism: pamphlets and more
- Corbynism: What Went Wrong? – Pamphlet and more
- Many other pamphlets

See workersliberty.org/audio for episodes, and for information on subscribing and using podcasts. All recent episodes can be found through most podcast providers: search "Workers' Liberty" or "Solidarity & More". □

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. □



Connolly on par

Introduction



Connolly politically unexpurgated

By Sean Matgamna

It is very well known that James Connolly and most of the Irish labour movement were bitterly hostile to Partition, and it is also well known that Connolly was telling the truth when he predicted it would “mean a carnival of reaction both North and South”.

Partition created two religious-sectarian states. They were of different types but both were sectarian. In the South the state came to embody the doctrines of the Catholic Church in its laws, beginning in 1925 with a ban on divorce. Both Jewish and Protestant citizens believed in the right to divorce. At independence 10% in the South were non-Catholic. 25% of the citizens of Dublin were Protestant. The State made itself and its laws according to Catholic doctrines.

At the start, 36% of the population in Northern Ireland, the “Protestant State for a Protestant People”, were Catholics, a bigger percentage than the 25% which all the Protestants were in all Ireland.

A large swathe of Northern Ireland, in its south and west, had a Catholic and nationalist majority. The second city, Derry to its Catholic majority, Londonderry to its Protestants, was only two miles from the Donegal border with the South. Of the six counties, two, the majority in both being Catholic, would have chosen to go with the Irish Free State, as it was then called, rather than with the Northern state.

The sectarianism was different in the North. Being in the UK limited the laws the Northern state could pass against its one-third Catholic population. Instead they had sectarian job preferment, electoral gerrymandering, and the physical intimidation of an Orange-sectarian auxiliary police, the B Specials, against the Catholic minority.

The state borders had been set to give it a permanent Protestant-Unionist majority. Within it, the borders for urban and district council wards were set so that for example in Derry City to produce a Unionist council majority despite a big preponderance of Nationalists in the population (Catholics had a massive majority in one subdivision, and Protestant a small but sufficient majority in two). The elections from the Six Counties to Westminster and to the Northern Ireland Parliament, but the treatment of Catholics as second class citizens had a knock-on effect.

Where Catholics had a majority, as in parts of Tyrone, they too would try to take advantage of it, but the effect was marginal. Not at all marginal was the Catholic Church’s insistence in all of Ireland that schools be segregated by religion, and that Catholic schools be

directly under their control. That contributed mightily to Northern Ireland’s system of Catholic-Protestant segregation. So did the Church’s insistence on the prior formal agreement of the Protestant partner in every mixed marriage that children be raised Catholic.

In the South in 1957, in a Co. Wexford village, Fethard-on-Sea, one Protestant woman, Sheila Cloney, reneged on such an agreement and fled with her children – and the entire Protestant population of the town was boycotted. The priests tried to apply the control they had gained in the South to the North where they could.

Protestants and other non-Catholics were 10% of the population of the South at the time of Partition. They were reduced to 4% in 1971, when the Provisional IRA war began in the North, though with immigration the percent-

age has stabilised and perhaps increased a bit in recent decades.

When Protestants had said that “Home Rule will be Rome Rule”, they were not wrong. They might well have been wrong if the Protestants had been part of an all-Ireland state and able to affect what the Catholic Church and its majority did.

Much of what has in recent decades discredited the Catholic Church in Ireland beggars belief when viewed from today. You have to go to old anti-Catholic tracts such as *The Awful Revelations Of Maria Monk* for horrors like the unmarked mass graves of babies, which have been exposed in vicinity of convents in Ireland. At the least, a large Protestant minority in the state would have dragged those horrors into the daylight. It was Protestant missionaries who exposed the anti-semitic pogrom in Limerick of 1904.

Centrally, and many things followed from this, partition created, on top of the Catholic-Protestant division in the island, a second division with the large Catholic minority in the Six Counties.

Fifty years ago Britain began to try to graft other institutions on to the basic sectarian structure of the Northern Ireland state. The Good Friday Agreement is an attempt at intricate bureaucratic regulation of the built-in unviability of the Six Counties as a democratic unit.

A hundred years ago the Protestants won a veto on all-Ireland Home Rule. Fifty years ago the Six County Catholics won a veto on Protestant-only government in Northern Ireland. A quarter century after the Provo war ended, there is instability still.

As a solution to Ireland’s British problem and to Britain’s Irish problem, partition has been an enormous, very costly failure, as Connolly and his cothinkers said it would be. The question we will examine through the texts published in this and coming issues is: what did they have to propose as an alternative to partition? □

• Part of a series on “Connolly: politically unexpurgated”, workersliberty.org/connolly



titition, part one

Labour and the proposed partition of Ireland

By James Connolly

The recent proposals of Messrs. Asquith, Devlin, Redmond and Co. for the settlement of the Home Rule question deserve the earnest attention of the working class democracy of this country. They reveal in a most striking and unmistakeable manner the depths of betrayal to which the so-called Nationalist politicians are willing to sink. For generations the conscience of the civilised world has been shocked by the historical record of the partition of Poland; publicists, poets, humanitarians, patriots, all lovers of their kind and of progress have wept over the unhappy lot of a country torn asunder by the brute force of their alien oppressors, its unity ruthlessly destroyed and its traditions trampled into the dust.

But Poland was disrupted by outside forces, its enemies were the mercenaries of the tyrant kingdoms and empires of Europe; its sons and daughters died in the trenches and on the battlefields by the thousands rather than submit to their beloved country being annihilated as a nation. But Ireland, what of Ireland? It is the trusted leaders of Ireland that in secret conclave with the enemies of Ireland have agreed to see Ireland as a nation disrupted politically and her children divided under separate political governments with warring interests.

Now, what is the position of Labour towards it all? Let us remember that the Orange aristocracy now fighting for its supremacy in Ireland has at all

times been based upon a denial of the common human rights of the Irish people; that the Orange Order was not founded to safeguard religious freedom, but to deny religious freedom, and that it raised this religious question, not for the sake of any religion, but in order to use religious zeal in the interests of the oppressive property rights of rackrenting landlords and sweating capitalists. That the Irish people might be kept asunder and robbed whilst so sundered and divided, the Orange aristocracy went down to the lowest depths and out of the lowest pits of hell brought up the abominations of sectarian feuds to stir the passions of the ignorant mob. No crime was too brutal or cowardly; no lie too base; no slander

too ghastly, as long as they served to keep the democracy asunder.

And now that the progress of democracy elsewhere has somewhat muzzled the dogs of aristocratic power, now that in England as well as in Ireland the forces of labour are stirring and making for freedom and light, this same gang of well-fed plunderers of the people, secure in Union held upon their own dupes, seek by threats of force to arrest the march of idea and stifle the light of civilisation and liberty. And, lo and behold, the trusted guardians of the people, the vaunted saviours of the Irish race, agree in front of the enemy and in face of the world to sacrifice to the bigoted enemy the unity of the nation and along with it the lives, liberties

and hopes of that portion of the nation which in the midst of the most hostile surroundings have fought to keep the faith in things national and progressive.

Such a scheme as that agreed to by Redmond and Devlin, the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish Labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured.

To it Labour should give the bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death, if necessary, as our fathers fought before us.

• *Irish Worker*, 14 March 1914

What partition would mean

By James Connolly

Here in Ireland the proposal of the Government to consent to the partition of Ireland – the exclusion of certain counties in Ulster – is causing a new line of cleavage. No one of the supporters of Home Rule accepts this proposal with anything like equanimity, but rather we are already hearing in Ulster rumours of a determination to resist it by all means. It is felt

that the proposal to leave the Home Rule minority at the mercy of an ignorant majority with the evil record of the Orange party is a proposal that should never have been made, and that the establishment of such a scheme should be resisted with armed force if necessary.

Personally I entirely agree with those who think so; Belfast is bad enough as it is; what it would be under

such rule the wildest imagination cannot conceive. Filled with the belief that they were after defeating the Imperial Government and the Nationalists combined, the Orangemen would have scant regards for the rights of the minority left at their mercy.

Such a scheme would destroy the Labour movement by disrupting it. It would perpetuate in a form aggravated in evil the discords

now prevalent, and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make division more intense and confusion of ideas and parties more confounded. □

• Excerpt from "Industrial Unity and Political Division", *Forward*, 21 March 1914. Previously reprinted as "First Hint of Partition".

The exclusion of Ulster: capitalist Home Rule tricksters

By James Connolly

Socialists and Labour people generally in Great Britain have had good reason to deplore the existence of the Irish question and to realise how disastrous upon the chances of their candidates has been the fact of the existence in the constituencies of a large mass of organised voters whose political activities were not influenced solely or even largely by the domestic issues before the electors. Our British comrades have had long and sore experience of contests in which all the arguments and all the local feeling were on the side of the Socialist or Labour candidate, and yet that local candidate was ignominiously

defeated because there existed in the constituency a large Irish vote – a large mass of voters who supported the Liberal, not because they were opposed to Labour, but because they wanted Ireland to have Home Rule.

Our British comrades have learned that the existence of that Irish vote and the knowledge that it would be cast for the Home Rule official candidate, irrespective of his record on or his stand upon Labour matters, caused hundreds of thousands who otherwise would have voted Labour to vote Liberal in dread that the Irish defection would "let the Tory in." For a generation now the Labour movement in Great Britain has been paralysed politically by this

fear; and all hands have looked forward eagerly to the time when the granting of Home Rule would remove their fear and allow free expression to all the forces that make for a political Labour movement in that country. Even many of the actions and votes of the Labour Party in the House of Commons which have been strenuously complained of have been justified by that Party on the plea that it was necessary to keep in power the government that would get Home Rule out of the way. Now, in view of this experience of the Socialist movement in Great Britain, we can surely not view with any complacency a proposal that will keep that question to the front as a live issue at British elec-

tions for six years longer or rather for a totally indefinite period. We know that this "six years period" so glibly spoken of by politicians has no background of reality to justify the belief that that term can be considered as more than a mere figure of speech.

In the *Daily News and Leader* of 6th April, Mr H W Massingham, writing of the Ulster Limit, says, and the saying is valuable as indicative of the trend of Liberal thought:

"Should we, therefore, make an absolutely dead halt at the six years milestone? Both parties implicitly admit that that is impossible, for one Parliament cannot bind another."

continued on page 12 →

→ from page 11

And in the previous week the Liberal Solicitor General declared in Parliament that if within the six years period "the other side brought in a Bill to exclude Ulster, it would have a royal and triumphant procession to the foot of the throne."

Thus we have it clearly foreshadowed that there is no such thing as a six years' limit which can be binding upon future Parliaments and that therefore the question of Home Rule for the Ulster Counties will be a test question at future elections in Great Britain, and will then play there the same disastrous role for the Labour Movement as the question of Home Rule does now. The political organisation of the Home Rule party will be kept alive in every industrial constituency on the pretext of working for a "United Ireland". And in the same manner the Unionist Party will also keep up its special organisations, Orange Lodges, etc., in order to keep

alive the sectarian appeal to the voters from Ireland who will be asked to "vote against driving Ulster under the heels of the Papish Dublin Parliament."

Labour men in and out of Ireland have often declared that if Home Rule was wanted for no other purpose, it was necessary in order to allow of the solidifying of the Labour vote in Great Britain, and the rescue of the Irish voters in that country from their thralldom to the Liberal caucus. It might not be far from the truth to surmise that the Liberal Party managers have seen the same point as clearly as we did ourselves, and have quietly resolved that such a good weapon as the Nationalist Party sentiment should not be entirely withdrawn from their armoury.

The reader will also see that with a perfectly Mephistophelian subtlety the question of exclusion is not suggested to be voted upon by any large area where the chances for or against might be fairly equal, where exclusion might

be defeated as it might be if all Ulster were the venue of the poll, and all Ulster had to stay out or come in as a result of the verdict of the ballot box. No, the counties to be voted on the question are the counties where the Unionists are in an overwhelming majority, and where therefore the vote is a mere farce – a subterfuge to hide the grossness of the betrayal of the Home Rule electors. Then again each county or borough enters or remains outside according to its own vote, and quite independent of the vote of its neighbours in Ulster. Thus the Home Rule question as far as Ulster is concerned, may be indefinitely prolonged and kept alive as an issue to divide and disrupt the Labour vote in Great Britain.

The effect of such exclusion upon Labour in Ireland will be at least equally, and probably more, disastrous. All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old political battle cries will be shattered, and through

North and South the issue of Home Rule will be still used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class. I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised Labour movement in Ireland when I say that we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out.

Even now we would like to see the Labour Party deliver its ultimatum to Nationalists and Liberals that the whole Bill must go through, and that its vote will be cast against the Bill if any exclusion is attempted,

Will the Labour Party of Great Britain not for this once "take the cue" from the Irish Labour Movement instead of from the capitalist Home Rulers? □

• *Forward*, 11 April 1914. Abridged here, in full at bit.ly/f140411

The partition plans in 1914

Partition was first proposed in Parliament as an amendment to the Home Rule Bill in 1912, by T G Agar-Robartes, a maverick Liberal MP, in the form of an amendment to exclude four counties. Leading Unionists like Edward Carson voted for it as a "wrecking amendment" to stop any form of Home Rule, but the amendment was rejected.

As armed Unionist mobilisation in the north-east burgeoned, the Liberals went for temporary "exclusions" from Home Rule, saying that it was the only way to dampen conflict. The prime minister, H H Asquith, declared the House of Commons (9 March 1914):

"The Unionists, of course, can get rid of the difficulties of exclusion by a simple denial of Home Rule. Home Rulers can get rid of them if they are ready to start Home Rule in an atmosphere of discord and of tumult. But it appears to me that each – Unionist and Home Ruler alike – can find in some

form of provisional exclusion a via media between the surrender of principles and the application of force. Exclusion in any form must be put forward, and can only be put forward, not as a solution, but as an expedient, which may pave the way in time for a final settlement...

"We have come to the conclusion that the best and indeed the only practical way, at any rate, far the simplest and the fairest plan, is to allow the Ulster counties themselves to determine in the first instance whether or not they desire to be excluded...

"The House will observe that I have used the term county, and when I speak of the county I include as separate counties for this purpose the two great county boroughs in Ulster – Belfast and Londonderry. We are speaking of the county, and we have anxiously considered the question whether the county is the best area that could be taken for the

purpose. it is not altogether a satisfactory one, I agree, but any other alternative you can suggest – for instance, districts which are subject to the authority of district councils – would, we believe, be both less convenient in itself and less trustworthy in its results...

"Then arises the question, what ought to be the term for which a county, if it pleases to vote for its own exclusion? We have, after much consideration, thought it ought to be a term of six years, and six years not from the taking of the poll, but six years from the first meeting of the Irish Legislature in Dublin...

"We have taken the term of six years to ensure that before

the period of exclusion comes to an end there shall be, first, ample time – six years – to test by experience the actual working of the Irish Parliament... and in the second place to ensure also that before that period of exclusion comes to an end there shall be a full and certain opportunity for the electors of the whole of the United Kingdom, both Great Britain and Ireland, with that experience, to pronounce whether or not the exclusion shall come to an end." (As reported in *The Times*, 10 March 1914).

Amending bill

A six-year exclusion Amending Bill (to apply to counties where there was a big enough demand for an exclusion vote, and then a majority in the exclusion vote) was introduced in the House of Lords on 23 June 1914. The Tory majority there amended the Bill to exclude all nine counties of Ulster permanently from Home Rule, without need for a vote. The Liberals then dropped the amendment and cast round for other options.

After the start of World War One in August 1914, the un-amended Home Rule Bill was voted into law with the provisos that it would not be implemented until after the end of the war and until after some amendment, unspecified, had been applied for Ulster.

In 1920 the Government of Ireland Act would entirely supersede the unimplemented Home Rule Act. It partitioned Ireland and set up Northern Ireland with its own (Protestant-Unionist) "Home Rule". □



Socialist summer camp

On 25-28 August, join Workers' Liberty for our socialist summer camp near Haslemere in Surrey, for a long weekend of food, drink, swimming, music, camp-fires, and political discussions in a relaxed atmosphere. The camp is child-friendly, with dedicated childcare workers offering a range of activities for visitors of all ages. Pack a tent (or let us know if you need to borrow one), and book online at workersliberty.org/camp

Join Workers' Liberty!

Want to be part of an organised long-haul collective effort to spread the socialist ideas you read in *Solidarity*, and to link together activities in diverse campaigns and conflicts around that consistent socialist thread? Take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell each week, and contact us to discuss joining Workers' Liberty, the group that produces and sustains this paper. Check us out and contact: workersliberty.org/join-awl



Lessons for socialist and left activists 60 pages £4
workersliberty.org/books

Left NEC under attack at conference



By a Unison member

A rocky start for the new left-led National Executive Committee (NEC) elected for a two-year term in 2021 was expected at the national conference of the public services union Unison (14-17 June).

The conference spent lots of time discussing and passing motions of no confidence. It reversed six decisions agreed by the NEC last year. It condemned the NEC for being unrepresentative with its presidential team (three members) and the seven chairs and seven vice-chairs of its sub-committees including no members from the Black workers' self-organised group. (In

fact there is one black member, but it's true: Unison needs to work harder to be inclusive and representative.)

A rule change from the Black Members' committee to ensure in future the balance of committee chairs is more representative was in the end supported by the NEC, but that was yet another debate focused on attacking the new NEC majority.

A rule change, to make the NEC no longer able to allow workers dismissed by employers to remain union members, failed to get the two-thirds majority needed, thanks in part by speeches from Workers' Liberty supporters about victimisations for union activity.

A similar rule change limited to cases where the allegation by the employer is harassment or discrimination was however passed. (By show of hands: a card vote could have been closer).

There were even more emergency motions on the last day, and a motion

condemning the NEC for not inviting Angela Rayner to speak at conference (which was defeated, though very narrowly.)

Why did such attacks dominate conference, rather than inflation and pay battles?

In part, the old leadership group is trying to win back control. If at Unison conference you call them "right wing", people get angry, but they are in line with the union's leadership tradition since it was created by a merger in 1993: a tradition of few national disputes despite big public-service funding cuts and an average 28% real-wages cut since 2010 (on the union's own figures).

The Standing Orders Committee is still aligned with the old leadership group, has wide powers to decide what is discussed and not, and set the agenda for a constant attack on the NEC and the left.

The new left NEC and its presidential team has operated under the shadow of 2021-2 union president Paul Holmes being [sacked](#) in February 2022 by his Labour council, citing allegations by paid office staff for his union branch (where he was re-elected branch secretary later the same month) and by some women members. Unison has failed to investigate the allegations, so there are no publicly available "facts". Unison is supporting Paul in challenging the dismissal, but there were some in Unison happy that myths or misinformation were rife here.

However, speeches from the General Secretary and a small number of critical motions about the poor outcomes on strike ballots in the last year, talked about making the union "strike-ready". Other motions congratulated branches which have brought services in-house via successful strike ballots. □

Post workers set to strike in August

By a postal worker

A postal worker in north London spoke to Solidarity. The Communication Workers' Union (CWU) will ballot its members in Royal Mail, 28 June to 19 July, for industrial action over pay. Royal Mail workers previously voted for industrial action in 2019, when action was scuppered by a court injunction, and again in 2020, when union leaders decided not to call action as the pandemic started.

The CWU rep at our office has been active in preparing members to ballot. He recently gatecrashed a team talk from management to counter company propaganda and explain why the union planned to ballot. He's told us to expect a strike towards the end of July. We haven't yet had a gate meeting at our depot, with regional officials as well as our local rep, which we did have the last time we balloted, but those have been happening elsewhere in the country.

A lot of CWU's material about the dispute has led on the issue of pay, but where I am, people feel more strongly about the issue of workload. Since I've been at my current depot, the company has been pushing more and more work onto us. They've reduced the number of individual walks,

which means those walks get reallocated into other people's workload. We even see some people coming in early, before their official start time, to prep their walks – or, at the other end, people sprinting round to get their walks done as there's simply so much to cover.

Now management is talking about restructuring our hours so we wouldn't be in work on Monday and Tuesday, when the workload tends to be lighter, and having us work Wednesday to Sunday instead. That would obviously wreck work/life balance for many people.

Ballot

All the workmates I've spoken to are up for a ballot and will definitely vote, and vote yes. They'll take action if and when it's called, too. What's missing at the moment is a real sense of confidence that we can actually win. People want to strike because they're angry at what the company is doing, but currently many see the dispute as an important, but ultimately symbolic, show of resistance, rather than something they necessarily expect to force meaningful concessions from the company. Confidence that we can win is something the union needs to build up.

Another interesting dynamic is the fact that Royal Mail is

also in dispute with its managerial grades, who are unionised in Unite. These aren't the top bosses, but they are the managers at local level, so they're the people enforcing company discipline on a day-

to-day basis. Royal Mail wants to restructure those grades and screw down their conditions, so there's a lot of hostility to the company at the moment amongst those managers.

In any dispute between CWU

and Royal Mail, all the structural pressure on those managers is for them to side with the company, but having their own dispute ongoing might make some of them rethink. □

GMB: still a way to travel

By Dale Street

A cut in branch commission – the proportion of members' dues paid to branches – from 10% to 7.5% was the main item of controversy at this year's GMB union Congress, 13-16 June.

The cut had been approved by the union's Central Executive Council (CEC) last October, with the backing of the newly elected General Secretary Gary Smith.

Nearly 20 motions denounced the decision and the decision-makers. Technically, the motions had a point. Branch commission is fixed in the GMB Rulebook, and only GMB rule-change congresses can make a rule change.

But with membership falling for nearly a decade and no rule-change congress until 2023, delay would have proved costly. And the undercurrent of motions criticising the cut was its impact on the payment of "honoraria" to branch officers.

The payment of large amounts of money in the form of "honoraria" suggests an unhealthy culture at branch level, and in the event, congress heavily defeated the anti-cut motions.

Congress backed green hydrogen, nuclear power, and Small Modular Reactors... and continued gas-burning.

"There is no solar power at night." And on one day out of six there is no wind. And on 24

January this year there was allegedly no wind "from the Iberian Peninsula to Russia." (Compare Wind Europe's figures: bit.ly/24-jan)

"Clearly, there are climate change issues," one motion conceded. It then went on to argue that "UK emissions are a tiny fraction of total global emissions", and any claim that the UK had a particular duty to reach net-zero by 2050 "should be rejected."

"Decisions to phase out natural gas" should not be taken until more "pathfinding" (i.e. research) has been done and "a UK supply chain has been set up across the country to support the changes."

Unfortunately, there was no discussion about a statement on Ukraine from the Executive and no address to conference by a Ukrainian trade unionist. Congress ended a half-day early after the union's President and Vice-President tested positive for Covid.

This was the first in-person GMB congress since publication of the damning Monaghan Report, which revealed a union riddled with bureaucratic abuse, bullying and misogyny. It marked progress compared with previous congresses (described by Monaghan in these terms: "congress is a site of poor behaviour, including of serious sexual harassment... Congress is a boozy affair"), but it also demonstrated how far the GMB still has to travel. □

“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

The loudmouths and the rattled



Diary of a Tubeworker

By Jay Dawkey

The weeks leading up to a strike, like our Tube strike on 21 June, tend to bring out the most sceptical voices the loudest. There is a general consensus in my depot that you strike, you don't scab, and whatever misgivings you have are not aired in loud debate in the mess room.

Those that speak up tend to be the minority, those that want to justify coming in,

often raising old grievances against this or that union stance or some often long forgotten rep.

"I don't give a fuck about..." O starts all his sentences like this when he's making a point, usually about why he's no time for a strike. "It isn't job cuts, no one is losing a job, you telling me you'll lose pay to strike about people who haven't started?" "Yes. Exactly that... and why shouldn't we give a fuck about the station jobs? What about when you need someone to detain, or if we need assisted dispatch, help with an incident. I want to keep those jobs, but even out of our own self-interest

there's a clear case."

"Look I was on stations during Covid, and if station staff gave a fuck then they wouldn't have let themselves get away with doing nothing and four hour shifts. The company saw the place ran OK like that. It's chickens coming home to roost"

"Come on, O, during the worst of the pandemic it was right to protect people from as much exposure as possible. Yes, the stations can definitely run with fewer staff if there's barely anyone travelling. Not the case now, is it?"

Someone has printed the section of Aslef's rulebook which says it's common

practice to respect picket lines. I see Aslef drivers scan it in the run-up to the strike. We know some are feeling the pressure.

A scab is now worried about how he's viewed. Wants to know if "he's good" with people. Some people have stopped speaking to him, others have told him exactly what they think. I'm fortunate we don't work together much. The more rattled and isolated they are now, the better chance we have at stopping others crossing in the future. □

Kino Eye is taking a break for a couple of weeks.

Dispute could be central at RMT AGM

By an RMT member

The National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers (RMT) will hold its Annual General Meeting on 3-8 July in Birmingham. RMT's AGM is proportionally smaller than most union conferences, but in some ways relatively more open and democratic: debates on motions continue until everyone who wants to speak has done.

As well as debating resolutions from branches and other union committees, the AGM often has to make decisions on industrial disputes. If an offer from an employer is received during an AGM, it is up to AGM delegates to debate and decide on whether that offer is accepted, rejected, put to a referendum, etc. The AGM also has the power to call, or call off, industrial action. Given the high stakes in RMT's current disputes on the mainline railway and London Underground, debates and decisions about disputes could be the AGM's most significant business this year.

Last year's AGM saw sharply-posed political debates over issues including China, climate change, and the union's political strategy. The motions submitted for this year suggest fewer debates of that sort, although that may change depending on what emergency motions have been submitted. The union's Bakerloo branch has submitted an emergency motion aiming to commit the union to support the campaign to free the Belarus "Railway 11", railway workers who undertook acts of sabotage to stop Belarus's railways from being used to aid Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

The union's only formal statement on Ukraine, from March, was a simple statement of opposition to the invasion, but the 2015 AGM backed a motion

supporting the breakaway, pro-Russia "republics" in Ukraine's Donbas region, so there could be further debate at this year's AGM.

There will be debates on various organisational issues, with a proposal for structural reform written by the general secretary undoubtedly in the back of some delegates' minds. Workers' Liberty supporters active in RMT share the proposal's stated aim – to reorganise RMT more along industrial lines – but disagree with many of the practical proposals.

Although the proposals won't be directly debated at the AGM, they will provide the context for the discussion on some of the motions. (More: bit.ly/rmt-i)

A motion from the union's Disabled Members Advisory Committee seeks to commit the union to arguing in workplaces for moving beyond the current language of "awareness" of disability issues, to a more active stance of fighting for equality and liberation for disabled people.

The AGM will also hear a motion that implicitly seeks to admonish the union for issuing an instruction that protests outside Unity House, its head office against the sacking of a staff mem-

ber, should cease. Discussion around the same issue led to the 2021 AGM breaking up after a staff walkout – not in solidarity with their dismissed colleague, but in protest that the AGM had narrowly backed a motion supportive of that colleague. When the AGM was reconvened earlier this year, it passed a motion from the union's National Executive opposing the protests outside Unity House, and supporting the position of union staff.

Since then, the Unity House protests have lost whatever focus they had on winning redress for the sacked worker, and have become an exercise in pointless self-indulgence and poisonous abuse. Although there have been instances of aggression from some Unity House staff towards protesters, there have also been numerous instances of abuse towards staff, including on social media.

Reopening the 2021 debate at this year's AGM can only be a divisive distraction, at a time when the union faces some of its most significant disputes for a generation. □

Contact us

020 7394 8923

solidarity@workersliberty.org

Write to: 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

Production team: Martin Thomas (editor), Sara Lee, Sacha Ismail, Simon Nelson, Zack Muddle □



Get Solidarity every week

Trial sub (6 issues) £7; Six months (22 issues) £22 waged, £11 unwaged, €30 European rate.

Visit workersliberty.org/sub

Or, email awl@workersliberty.org with your name and address, or phone 020 7394 8923. Standing order £5 a month: more to support our work. Forms online. □

An uptick in struggle



John Moloney

I visited the picket line of our members at the British Council, who struck for three days from 15-17 June, in a dispute over job cuts. The employer wants to restructure the organisation; the demands of the dispute are for transparency in the restructure process, no compulsory redundancies, and no outsourcing or privatisation of jobs.

The strikers have been boosted by the support they've received via social media, and from several MPs.

I've also been meeting recently with officials from the Government Property Agency, a body which is responsible for overseeing government buildings. It will soon be re-tendering contracts for facilities and building management contracts. We've met with them to demand minimum standards in those contracts around issues like sick pay, as well as increased wages.

Our longer-term aim is for that work to be taken in house and for those workers – cleaners, porters, security staff, and others – to be employed directly on civil service terms and conditions. The union is also preparing a legal action around this issue, looking at whether the practise of outsourcing represents a form of indirect racial and gender discrimination.

I've also had meetings with campaigners from Cleaners United, a new coalition launched by a progressive NGO with the support of various unions. They want to launch a national campaign to improve the legislation around sick pay, which is a huge issue for outsourced cleaners. We're looking forward to carrying on our work together.

As we start to see an up-tick in industrial struggle after years of very low levels of strikes, it's vital the whole labour movement gets behind all workers in dispute, and especially the RMT strikes on national rail and the Tube, given the media onslaught they're facing and the threat of new anti-strike laws. The outcome of the RMT's disputes will have a significant impact on whether the revival in struggle deepens and spreads, or is set back. □

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



RMT rail picket line, Sheffield, 21 June. The banner pays tribute to Rob Dawber, former branch secretary, and a member of Workers' Liberty. Asbestos exposure on his job as a trackworker killed him at age 45, in 2001 bit.ly/rd-2001

Strike shows railworkers have power



Off The Rails

Barely a train ran on 21 June, as up to fifty thousand railworkers struck to defend our jobs and conditions. London Underground workers also struck against attacks on jobs, agreements and pensions, while up and down the country, probably thousands of people joined picket lines to enforce the strike for a decent pay rise and against attacks on jobs and conditions.

Pickets report getting strong support from passers-by and visitors from other unions, campaigns and political groups. Bosses and government ministers are sounding increasingly downbeat and/or desperate in the media as their attempts to turn other workers against us are making little impact. In a strike, you have to take sides. Are you with the rich bosses and Tories who protect themselves from any impact on their standard of living, or with workers fighting back? Millions of other workers know that if we win, they have a better chance of winning too.

Railworkers will be at it again on 23 and 25 June, and must be ready for more strike dates if the employers have not backed down by then. While union leaders rightly warn that this could be a long struggle, it would be better if it were a short, sharp win – which can be achieved if we step up the action after this week. As that will hit us hard in the pockets, we also need a drive to raise funds to help out strikers. It is good to see that RMT is now publicising its dispute fund and asking for donations. □

Starmer to lurch on tuition fees and Europe

By Alexander Herman

"Support the abolition of tuition fees" was part of one of Keir Starmer's "Ten pledges" in the 2020 leadership election. Back then Starmer said: "Labour must stand by its commitment to end the national scandal of spiralling student debt and abolish tuition fees. We lost the election, but we did not lose our values or determination to tackle the injustice facing young people going to university."

Now the *Financial Times* reports the "desire to sound more fiscally responsible is also likely to lead to Labour dropping one of its signature policies from the 2019 general election – the scrapping of tuition fees for undergraduate students – although the details are not yet finalised..." *The Times* claims also that Starmer will soon announce he opposes free movement, or ever rewinding Brexit.

As always, there is no suggestion that Labour members can have any role in determining party policy.

My prediction is that a move on tuition fees will be "justified" as a matter of spending money on society's poorest and not on students. This is ironic – since as the *Financial Times* report discusses, Starmer's leadership is not promising much of anything for anyone (other than, to capitalists, to be "pro-business"), to the dismay of even some of his allies.

The FT suggests that Starmer and co. don't even want to talk about the billions in climate spending they announced at Labour conference last September!

The left should organise student and Young Labour activists, party members and trade unionists to insist that the policy of scrapping fees is retained. □

Arriva strike: could it spread?

By Cy Grove

No buses have left depots in Leeds or Wakefield since the Arriva Yorkshire bus workers' strike over pay began on 6 June.

In some areas a few buses have started to run again, but mainly only to transport students to school for exams. Tracey Brabin, the Labour mayor of West Yorkshire, has put on a free shuttle bus to take people from Wakefield to Pinderfields hospital. Workers on the picket lines are angry about her undermining the strike.

Pickets outside the depots remain as big as ever. Talks were held between Arriva and the Unite union in the week beginning 13 June, but ended with no agreement. Arriva is still refusing a pay rise in line with inflation.

Workers are hopeful that the strike could spread to other areas where Arriva have the contract for buses. They say that Arriva is trying to starve them back to work, but they are determined to continue the action for as long as is necessary. □



IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

WEEKEND OF SOCIALIST DEBATE AND DISCUSSION

The world's political life is dominated by governments pledged to keep the **wealthy comfortable** and the **working class** in its place. For many, life is often **difficult** and **miserable**. And **unnecessarily** so.

Workers' Liberty fights for a world based on solidarity and democratic working-class control over economics and politics. We organise **Ideas for Freedom** each year to **discuss, debate**, think and listen to ideas to transform the world. **Join us!**

Book tickets now! **£9 unwaged, £25 low-waged, £43 waged**. bit.ly/ideas-22

Crash **accommodation**, free **creche** (register by Friday 23 June) and cheap **food** will be provided.

Thursday 30 June – Radical Clerkenwell **Walking Tour**

Friday – Film, *Young Karl Marx*

SATURDAY 2 JULY

11:30 – The punk rock politics of **Joe Strummer**, with Gregor Gall • The legacy of **George Orwell**, with author Dorian Lynskey • A socialist history of **race and racism**, with Camila Bassi • Renewing our **unions**, with John Moloney, PCS; Jocelyn Cruywagen, Lambeth Unison; and John Leach, RMT (all p.c.) • The struggle for **reproductive freedom** worldwide

2pm – Workers' solidarity with **Ukraine**, with speakers from the Ukrainian left and labour movement

3:55 – The **Covid-19** pandemic, with Professor George Davey-Smith • The **history of Ukraine**, with Chris Ford (Ukraine Solidarity Campaign) • **Couriers** vs gig economy bosses, with speakers from the JustEat couriers' strike • Why the **working class**? with Kelly Rogers • Defending the **right to protest and strike**, with Rhian Keyse, UCU; Sarah Wolley, BFAWU; and Janine Booth, RMT (all p.c.)

5:35 – Capitalism, **disability**, and socialism, with Janine Booth, author Ellen Clifford, and Richard Rieser (World of Inclusion) • The legacy of **James Connolly**, with Paul Richards • The **left in disarray on Ukraine** • What is a **revolutionary party** and why do we need one? with Jill Mountford

7:15 – Informal **social** at a nearby pub

SUNDAY 3 JULY

10am – The Cammell Laird **shipyard occupation** and the fight for justice, with Eddie Marnell, former occupier, and John Cunningham • **Class struggle in India**, with Sacha Ismail • The significance of the **Russian revolution** • Is a united **Ireland** in prospect? • **Monarchy, republicanism**, and socialism

12:40 – Should socialists back a **"progressive alliance"**? Joan Trevor debates Michael Chessum • **Climate change** as class war, with author Matt Huber • **Sheffield's** early socialists, with E.M. Johns • The history of **Hong Kong**, with HK socialist Chen Ying • What is **imperialism**? with Cathy Nugent

2:45 – Should socialists be active in the Labour Party? Ruth Cashman debates Paul Davies • Revival in the US labour movement? with Lisa Xu, UAW for Democracy (pc) • Soviet composer Dimitriy **Shostakovich** and Stalinism • Class struggle in **China**, with Chinese socialist Chris • The climate movement in **Australia**, with Janet Burstall

4:05 – Closing plenary



By Mohan Sen

New polling suggests that, despite sinking living standards, economic chaos and Tory scandals, fewer people favour Keir Starmer as prime minister than favour Boris Johnson. What's going on?

Since the start of the year, Boris Johnson has been more unpopular than his party. The *Opinium-Observer* poll published on 11 June had his "favourability" rating at minus 27. But the same poll found 28% thought Johnson was the best potential prime minister, versus 26% for Starmer.

Unlike Starmer, Labour is ahead in the polls. But the average of the last six polls has the party only 6.6% ahead. About the same amount of time after the 2010 election, under Ed Miliband, Labour's lead was more like 12%, yet the Tories went on to win in 2015.

Both the figures and wider impressions suggest that Tory support has declined, but not collapsed – and support for Labour is still weak and full of distrust.

Some of the mainstream coverage about why Labour isn't doing better focuses essentially on Starmer's lack of personal charisma. But the large fluctuations in Labour support under Jeremy Corbyn were not caused by fluctuations in Corbyn's personal charisma. They were produced by political conditions and struggles.

During the 2017 election, at least, and to some extent throughout the Corbyn years, there was widespread awareness of and support for Labour's (relatively) left-wing policies. Only, in the absence of sustained argument and campaign-

ing for those policies outside election periods, and in the context of the evasions over Brexit and antisemitism, that was not enough to consolidate trust and support.

The problem now is that it's hard to say what Labour stands for, what it will do different from the Tories. The Labour leadership has adopted a strategy of not proposing much of anything, unless they believe the Tories are about to do it anyway; and limiting its criticisms of Tory policies almost exclusively to competence and practicability. Even people in the centre and right of the Labour Party are saying that this is a problem.

One major pollster reports that the words most commonly associated with Starmer by "the public" are "boring", "bland" and "weak". Polling suggested that Corbyn also came to be seen as "weak", because of his vacillations on Brexit. He was not seen as bland or boring.

Why does Starmer come across as uninspiring and evasive? Probably because his politics are uninspiring and evasive. Evasive on social demands. And on Brexit too.

Starmer breaks his general silence over Brexit periodically, but always to oppose any substantial modification to the government's policy (most recently to oppose the restoration of free movement between the UK and EU).

The slogan "get the Tories out" – implying working-class mobilisation on a scale where the Tories find it "ungovernable" and go for an early election, as in 1973-4 – is gaining grip. To give it force and depth, unions and local Labour Parties must fight to make Labour campaign for clear, inspiring pro-working class demands. □

2-3 July • **Camden School for Girls**, London • Tickets: bit.ly/ideas-22



Solidarity

For a workers' government

AFTER 18 JUNE

By Sacha Ismail

On 18 June, for the first time since 2018, a trade union demonstration filled the streets of London. Perhaps 50,000 joined the TUC march.

The return of the labour movement to the streets was a reminder of its size and potential power. We need to make it the start of a great wave of protests and strikes, and a drive for clear policies to redistribute wealth and power to the working class.

The "Demand Better" protest was smaller than the huge demonstrations in 2011, before that year's public sector pensions struggle was sabotaged and demobilised by the union leaders: but bigger than any labour movement demonstration since.

The organised labour movement largely stood aside from the anti-Police-Bill protests last year, the Black Lives Matter demos in 2020 and the big anti-Brexit demos of 2019. And even before Covid and the 2019 election defeat, during the Corbyn years demonstrations and protests on issues like the NHS and cuts declined.

On the streets and on picket lines workers can start to feel themselves a power again.

On 18 June, the giant unions Unite and Unison, and the CWU communication workers and



NEU school workers, had large contingents. Many contingents from smaller unions, including the FBU firefighters and RMT transport workers, were also lively and impressive. "Social movements" such as Extinction Rebellion and housing campaign Acorn joined the protest. Some groups of workers who have been on strike, for instance the Churchill rail cleaners, organised contingents.

Workers' struggles were not mentioned in the TUC publicity. But the growing number of disputes, and in particular the mass action by RMT members on the railways, meant strikes were very much in marchers' consciousness and discussions.

Repeatedly during promising mobilisations over a decade or more, union leaders have declared the start of a fightback, only to lead not mounting struggle but retreat into inaction. If that happens again, after so many retreats and defeats, workers will pay an even heavier price.

Most union leaders cannot be relied on in the coming battles. Socialist trade union activists need to find ways to step up rank-and-file organisation within and across the unions. We need to develop discussion of lessons from past struggles, including those that were unnecessarily defeated.

18 June lacked clear demands and slogans. There were few placards. The woolly demands on the TUC website were not featured in publicity and materials and media statements for the day. Most speeches at the end were also vague. Labour movement activists need to argue and campaign for clear pro-working class policies – including wage and benefit increases above inflation, a higher minimum wage, decent sick pay, expanded public ownership and repealing the anti-strike laws. We need to make such demands widely discussed, developed, understood and popular in the labour movement, workplaces and working-class communities. We need to mobilise our unions and Labour Party members to assert our demands politically, and to force Labour's leadership to back us up.

Workers' Liberty is organising to push forward all these struggles. Get in touch to help us. □

• More on the strikes: p.3