

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

GET THE TORIES OUT



» **Back the strikes**

» **Commit Labour to working-class policies**

» **Mobilise unions and ranks against Starmer**

See page 2

Rail strikes: the next steps

Call reps' assemblies, set the next strike dates after 21-23-25 June

Pages 8-9

Ukraine runs short of arms supplies

Guerrilla resistance grows in Russian-occupied areas

Page 3

Roe v Wade: the fight back

A broad battle for democratic rights needed in the USA

Page 5

Stop the Rwanda scheme

Tories double up with their "Bill of Rights" to deflect ECHR

Page 7

The ideas that Starmer wants to ban

Get the Tories out!



Editorial

Boris Johnson's personal downfall, within months, is now predicted by many Tory MPs and journalists. It would obviously be gratifying, but replacing him with another, less blatantly discredited but viciously right-wing Tory leader will be no victory for working-class interests.

This government has done damage to the working class and to society; it will do more – though how much depends on working-class struggle – as long as it remains in power. We need to get rid of it as a whole, not just Johnson.

How? And to replace the Tories with what?

There is a definite quarter-idea in some socialist commentary that a rising tide of strikes will simply drive the Tories from office. "The trade union demonstration on 18 June", says the *The Socialist*, "should be a launch pad for coordinated strike action to fight for RPI inflation-proofed pay rises for all and to get the Tories out".

More strikes, more broadly more working-class self-organisation and self-assertion, are very likely to weaken the Tories. Unions should absolutely use the opportunity of rising class con-

flict to assert the need to remove the Tory government. But in conditions of a relatively stable parliamentary system, numerous strike-restricting laws, and a labour movement for now still depleted, strikes will not directly drive out the government. Even the 1970-4 Tory government survived many worker victories in strikes before the conjunction of an oil crisis and a new miners' strike drove it to seek to redress its authority by a gamble on an early general election (which it lost).

To pretend that just another push on industrial action will get us near to 1974 levels of making the Tories unable to govern will not help strengthen or spread working-class action.

Victories

To strengthen, win victories and spread, strikes need not the vague thought that they will quickly oust the Tories, but more specific, more concrete demands on wages and conditions – more specific and concrete, for example, than the RMT's current demand for "a substantial increase".

The stronger working-class struggles, the more victories we win against employers and their government, the more likely – on balance – the Tories will call an election before they absolutely have to legally (2024). And the more likely they will lose.

In an election, the only plausible gov-

ernmental alternative to the Tories is the Labour Party. So the counterpart of any coherent agitation to "get the Tories out" must be attention to what the labour movement can force in and through the Labour Party.

The Starmer leadership's policies, and its stance on workers' struggles, are wretched. Gavin Barwell, Theresa May's chief of staff and now a Tory peer, argues plausibly that, while many on both sides would hotly deny it, "there isn't a huge difference" between what the Johnson government is doing and a Starmer government would do.

Movement

If, that is, the labour movement remains passive – never a given, and certainly not one in the context of rising trade union struggles.

The Labour Party is still not just heavily funded by but organisationally based on the unions. We should vote for it and support it forming a government (a minority government, if necessary, but not a coalition with the Lib Dems) – and at the same time build organisation and struggles to tie it to clear pro-working class demands. The reality is that, at present, Labour's political trajectory is little challenged by the unions.

Under new general secretary Sharon Graham Unite, Labour's largest affiliate, has been more willing to criticise Labour over its failure to support

workers. But criticising (and threats to reduce funding) are as far as it goes. Unite and other unions do not use their strong positions in the party structures to call Starmer and co. to account, and to insist on the positive [pro-working class policies](#) agreed by union and Labour conferences. Such a fight would allow much broader political agitation and debate about working-class interests and the policies of the next government.

Even assuming Starmer's Labour can win an early general election, replacing the Tories with a Blair government mark 2, after a decade of anti-working class social vandalism, would be no great victory either. The fight to develop workers' industrial struggle against employers and the government should go hand-in-hand with one to organise the unions and Labour membership against Starmer to demand clear working-class policies. □



Summer schedule

Nos. 641-4 will be 13 July, 27 July, 17 August, 31 August; then back to our usual weekly schedule. □

Labour: demand a debate on Brexit!

By Martin Thomas

On 23 June David Lammy, shadow foreign secretary, made up a new Labour [policy](#) on the EU at a "Changing Europe" conference

"The questions that divided us for half a decade have been settled. We will not re-join the Single Market or the Customs Union..."

He proposed some tweaks on the margins of of Boris Johnson's Brexit deal, but only to "seek to improve the deal. Not by re-opening it, or re-negotiating it".

None of those tweaks are about restoring worker and social protections "inherited" from the EU which the Tories plan to scrap over the coming years.

It is not true that Brexit is "done" and settled forever. The Tories plan to scrap



worker and social protections "inherited" from the EU over the coming years, but mostly haven't dared yet.

They have not yet introduced checks on imports from the EU. Even the Tories do not see Northern Ireland arrangements as "fixed".

None of the detail of Johnson's Brexit deal was voted on in the 2016 referendum. Then, Leave campaigners like Nigel Farage were proposing to stay in the Single Market.

In any case, a narrow major-

ity in one vote (taken without allowing 16-17 year olds, or EU-27 citizens settled here, their say) cannot bind a population six years later which now knows what Brexit really means.

Unions and Labour activists should demand a democratic debate on Labour's EU policy. We want Labour to commit to restoring EU-inherited worker and social protections scrapped by the Tories, restoring free movement, and re-entering the Single Market and Customs Union. All those could be done quickly and easily, and would resolve the Northern Ireland complications in passing.

Beyond that, we argue for a comprehensive reversal of Brexit. Lower borders facilitate workers' unity and social leveling-up across countries. □



Activist Agenda

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement conference on 16 July, at Birkbeck in London, will have workshops including "How to Stop Deportations", "Workers' Action Against Borders" and "Winning Global Free Movement".

Speakers include grassroots trade unionists, Nadia Whittome MP, activist and journalist Ben Smoke, Polish Migrants Organise, the Free Osime Brown Campaign and Focus on Labour Exploitation.

There will be elections to the campaign's steering committee, and discussion and voting on renewing the campaign's platform and plans.

Many local Labour Parties CLPs are voting on motions

#LABOUR PURGE

for Labour Party conference in July (the deadline is 15 September).

Motions promoted by Labour Left Internationalists on free movement, public ownership of energy, and the police have also been adopted as "policy priorities" by Momentum.

A motion protesting at the 29 March 2022 Labour National Executive ban on Workers' Liberty has been ruled in order in London, and will be useful in local Labour Parties outside London too. □

• Suggested wordings for motions, links, info, etc. at workersliberty.org/agenda

Back Ukraine's call for arms supplies

By Dan Katz

Russia continues to pound and destroy Ukrainian towns and villages, concentrating its artillery in Eastern Ukraine where Russian troops are steadily gaining ground. At the centre of the fighting has been the town of Severodonetsk, formerly an industrial centre and home to over 100,000 people. It is now in ruins. The regional governor of Eastern Luhansk, Serhiy Hayday, stated: "all infrastructure is completely destroyed"; 90% of all buildings in the town have been bombed out.

Russia is firing 60,000 shells per day, ten times as many as the Ukrainians according to Hanna Malyar, Ukraine's deputy defence minister. On 14 June Malyar stated that Ukraine had received just 10% of the military assistance it had requested. The Western powers are giving help, but too little and too late.

Ukraine's artillery dates back to the Soviet era, relying on 122mm and 152mm rounds. In recent weeks the Ukrainians have been close to running out of stocks. Russia has been threatening arms dealers in Eastern Europe, warning them not to sell munitions to Ukraine. Russia also appears to have had a long-term plan to deny Ukraine access to ammunition.

According to the Czech government in 2014 a Russian military intelligence unit 29155 sabotaged weapons in storage in the Czech Republic. The next year they used a nerve agent to assassinate a Bulgarian weapons executive.

Seemingly Russian sabotage was responsible for four explosions at Bulgarian arms stores between 2011 and 2020, denying weapons to Georgia and Ukraine. In 2017 explosions at two Ukrainian arms depots destroyed

221 tonnes of ammunition. In 2018 another massive explosion took place at a Ukrainian arms dump in the Chernihiv region.

The US has provided 126 howitzers and 260,000 NATO-standard 155mm artillery rounds (a similar amount to that used by Russia in five days). Spain sent 200 tonnes of military equipment in April but according to Ukraine's ambassador in Madrid, the ammunition would last for two hours of fighting.

Relatively small amounts of hi-tech Western artillery are now in Ukraine. This week Ukraine received a shipment of four US-made vehicle-mounted HIMARS rocket systems. The GMLRS rockets fired by HIMARS can, apparently, hit a moving vehicle 70km away with a 91kg warhead. But four new rocket launchers are a lot less than Ukraine needs to fend off Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron has now agreed to send six more advanced CAESAR artillery units in addition to the dozen already in Ukraine.

Ukraine has asked for 1,000 howitzer cannons, 500 tanks and 1,000 drones. The disparity between what Ukraine needs and what the West is providing Ukraine seems to have been lost on those sections of the British left which maintain that this war is being driven by NATO making proxy war against Russia. Inconvenient facts of the real war being fought by Russian imperialism to subjugate Ukraine are ignored.

In occupied areas of southern Ukraine overrun at the start of the Russian invasion, where large Ukrainian majorities remain, partisan actions are becoming more common. On 24 June a well-known local collaborator in Kherson, Dmytro Savluchenko, was blown up and died on the spot. On 18 June Yevhen Sobolev, head of the local prison service, was hospitalised after a bomb attached to a tree exploded near his Audi. Posters have gone up round Kherson with a picture of Volodymyr Saldo, head of the Russian-appointed occupation administration, with text which reads: "Are you sleeping well?" □

Political ripples from the war

By Dan Katz

On 17 June Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev discussed world politics with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg. Tokayev repeated his refusal to recognise the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in eastern Ukraine, formally recognised by Russia two days before the invasion on Ukraine on 24 February.

In January Russian troops had helped Tokayev snuff out a crisis in Kazakhstan. But Kazakhstan has a long border with Russia and a large ethnic Russian minority in its northern areas.

Russian MPs then threatened Kazakhstan. Konstantin Zatulin said, "Regions with a predominantly Russian population have had a weak relationship with what has been called Kazakhstan... if we have friendship, cooperation and partnership, then no territorial questions are raised. But if that does not exist, everything is possible. As in the case of Ukraine."

- The Russian enclave of Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea (created after the centuries-old German population was expelled in the 1940s) is some 600km distant from the main body of Russia, and sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania. About one million people

live there. In March the EU imposed sanctions on Russia, and set a three month lead-in period before they were implemented.

On 25-26 June Lithuania's national railway said that in order to comply with these sanctions, it would no longer permit the transit of some goods across the country's territory between Russia-allied Belarus and Kaliningrad, including coal, metals, advanced technology and building materials.

A senior Russian official, Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of Russia's Security Council, threatened Lithuania, saying the imposition of sanctions, "will have a serious negative impact on the population of Lithuania."

Apparently without irony, he complained that Lithuania was breaking international law by imposing sanctions, which Russian media began referring to as a "blockade". One option Russia now has is to turn off Lithuania's electricity supply (which Lithuania would deal with by joining the Polish grid.)

- Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia all submitted applications for EU membership. On 23 June EU states decided to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova.

- In Bulgaria the Russian war on

Ukraine is destabilising. Last year Bulgaria had three general elections. Following the November vote a pro-Western government under Kiril Petkov was formed. Petkov has taken a sharply pro-Ukraine position on the war.

On 22 June the government lost a no confidence vote 123-116.

Bulgaria is heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas and had supplies cut. Inflation is rising very rapidly and is now over 15%.

- On 29-30 June representatives from Sweden and Finland will attend NATO's meeting in Madrid. These two states, scared by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have applied for NATO membership.

Traditionally the populations of these states have opposed joining NATO, but sharp swings of public opinion towards joining NATO took place in the weeks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Given that one of Vladimir Putin's stated aims in invading Ukraine was to stop NATO expansion this is a serious failure for Russia.

The Islamist Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, says he will block Sweden and Finland's attempt to join unless they move against Kurdish PKK exiles based in Scandinavia. □

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, too.

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 □



Steve Sweeney, Ukraine, and Russia

By Martin Thomas

Steve Sweeney, international editor of the *Morning Star*, has written to us: "An article written by Jim Denham in the 15/6/2022 issue of *Solidarity*... states that I have 'publicly backed the Russian invasion'. I would be grateful if you could point to where I have done so..."

As *Solidarity* has said, this based itself on Sweeney being a platform speaker (in a personal capacity) at the "Victory Day" meeting held in May by George Galloway's Workers' Party of Britain (WPB), at the Venezuelan Embassy's meeting hall.

Sweeney didn't say "I back the Russian invasion" at that meeting, so we withdraw those words. We invite readers to study what Sweeney did say and the meeting he spoke at. It's on You-

Tube. In opening it, the chair said: "That very fascism which we here are gathered to celebrate being vanquished [in World War Two] has not disappeared from the earth. It lives on in the imperialist forces, and they have very much nurtured those forces and using them to wage a proxy war in Ukraine. We'll hear more about that from Steve..."

"We have extended an invitation to the Russian Embassy. We have just heard that sadly they will not be able to join us, but they send their greetings... To them, this is not just an event to be marked in the past... because of their ongoing struggle with those same forces of fascism which they vanquished in 1945".

In introducing the last speaker of the meeting, Harpal Brar, to whom Sweeney gave a standing ovation, the chair again stressed "so many paral-

els between this conflict and the Great Patriotic War, the great anti-fascist war, that we are here to celebrate".

Brar's newsletter *Lalkar* described the Russian invasion as "heartily welcome". "The Russian intervention in Ukraine... the military challenge to this long erosion of Russian security has been a long time coming and is heartily welcome".

Galloway and the Workers' Party have avoided such exact words, but Galloway's comment was: "Russia has a point... The Ukraine is being turned into an armed Potemkin state by the United States and by NATO, and no Russian leader could possibly allow that development go unchecked..."

The WPB: "As Sergey Lavrov [Russia's foreign minister] asked rhetorically, did Kiev expect to carry on for another eight years of sabotaging Minsk and attacking the DPR and LPR unchallenged?"

Sweeney's 45-minute speech was mostly claims of the prevalence of Nazism, fascism, and far-right repression in Ukraine. His comments included:

"If I were in London tomorrow, I would get the biggest red flag I could find, I would make it to the Russian Embassy, and I would wave it in honour of the 27 million people [USSR people dead in WW2] whose graves these people [today's left-wing supporters of Ukraine] are trampling over".

He talked of "memorials where the tanks, the first tanks that rolled into Berlin in 1945, have been draped with the flag of Ukraine: the very forces that those tanks defeated in 1945".

"The West... is using Azov as its proxy force, as we've seen in Syria and elsewhere... as an imperialist battering ram against Russia. But also, behind Russia is China, and that's really what this war is about..."

"We shouldn't be under any illusion that this is a proxy war between NATO and Russia. Anyone who tries to tell you otherwise is lying to you". Some on the left, like *Socialist Worker*, call it a "proxy war" but also explicitly condemn Russia's war-making. Sweeney made no such condemnation.

"Russia has shown great restraint and has largely left the transport infrastructure... intact".

Sweeney made a point of recounting conversations with a woman from near Mariupol whom he met after she fled to Lviv.

She told him (he claimed) that she was not frightened of the Russian forces, who were treating people well, but of Ukrainian forces who "had terrorised that region... for the last eight years".

Eliciting applause, Sweeney said: "Russia is achieving all of its objectives in Ukraine, and that is very clear".

He wound up: "We must campaign for an end to the ban on the Communist Party of Ukraine... Unity to defeat fascism... I'll finish with the words of Josef Stalin on the Great Patriotic War: Ours is a just cause. Victory will be ours".

We offer Steve Sweeney space in this paper equivalent to this article to reply if he thinks we misrepresent his views. □

The CPB on 18 June

The Communist Party of Britain put effort into their contingent on the 18 June TUC march, the first sizeable CPB contingent on a big demonstration for years, even if it was only about 100.

A big banner, apparently fresh-made, said: "Stop the War. Britain out of NATO". (Note: not, Russia out of Ukraine). A telling comment on the recent exchanges in *Solidarity* about whether the CPB fails to back Ukraine's rights.

The Young Communist League sub-contingent, maybe two or three dozen, were all dressed in black, with red facemasks. Chants: "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh! Che Guevara! Stalin!", and "One solution, revolution". They were abusive to other protesters who were (or they thought to be) with Workers' Liberty.

The daily paper of this operation, the *Morning Star*, is heavily financed by the unions, especially Unite. The unions should reconsider. □

Trade unionist's pre-trial arrest extended

By Michael Baker

Kirill Ukrantsev, leader of the "Courier" trade union, has had his pre-trial arrest extended until 25 July. Ukrantsev was arrested as his trade union announced a couriers' strike, and his arrest (supposedly over a social media post) is a naked attempt to stem the tide of labour disputes that the economic and political impacts of the war have bolstered. "Courier" trade union, and other independent trade unions and left-wing groups, have renewed calls for Ukrantsev's release. The union's dispute with food company Delivery Club is ongoing, as is the solidarity boycott from the wider public.

Doctors and paramedics in Smolensk have announced a strike over pay and work-

ing conditions. Wages reach a maximum of 25,000 rubles (£378) per month, which striking workers state is not enough to support a family or take time off work. There were also complaints of problems with both rat infestations and mould in the hospitals, a danger to both the doctors and their patients.

Workers at a compressor plant in Yekaterinburg have been asked by management to work without pay. With foreign trade in ruins, the plant claims it lacks the money to pay workers, but needs them to continue their shifts. In doing so, the plant's general director made a comparison to the Second World War, as if it is the responsibility of the workers to "help the motherland" by foregoing their basic necessities to accommodate an imperialist war by the gov-

ernment that they did not ask for.

Yuliya Tsvetkova, a Russian feminist activist who was arrested in November 2019 for "spreading pornography", is now facing trial. Tsvetkova's case concerns a series of stickers supporting women's confidence in their body-image, some of which included cartoon vulvas, which she drew and uploaded to a body-positivity page on social media. The case was a very early sign of matters in Russia taking a more repressive turn, as well as being a complete farce from start to finish. The prosecutor has requested a prison sentence of three years and two months.

Mikhail Lobanov, an academic and former elected KPRF deputy famous for supporting the independent trade



union movement, has been put in pre-trial detention for 15 days. Officially his case regards a series of social media posts denouncing the invasion of Ukraine, but Lobanov claims that he is being arrested to obstruct the website he set up, organising support for independent opposition candidates in the upcoming municipal elections. Lobanov has pleaded not guilty.

I am very happy to be proven

wrong regarding my article in *Solidarity* 638 on the proposed bill to expand the terms of the "Gay Propaganda" law. The State Duma has rejected and returned the proposal to the Sevastopol Legislative Assembly, stating that it "does not correspond to the regulations of the State Duma". Whether the bill returns in revised form remains to be seen. □

USA rolls back women's rights



**Women's
Fightback**

By Carrie Evans

On Friday 23 June the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade: the first time in history the Supreme Court has overturned one of its own rulings in order to roll back the rights of citizens.

Roe v Wade was a 1973 ruling that established federal protection for abortion rights on the grounds that abortion is ultimately a private decision between a patient and healthcare providers. The right to privacy is widely recognised as being implied by the liberty clause in the 14th amendment of the US constitution, so the right to abortion must also be protected at the federal level.

The 1973 court ruled that women should have the autonomy to terminate a pregnancy without "undue burden from the state" up until the point the foetus is viable (usually interpreted as around 22-24 weeks).

Now a conservative-majority Supreme Court has ruled in favour of the state of Mississippi and its state law banning abortion after 15 weeks. In the process it has overruled Roe v Wade and said states can set their own abortion laws.

This decision will hurt millions of American women, especially women of colour and those living below the poverty line.

Thirteen states had trigger laws in

place to be enacted the moment Roe was overturned. Some states will ban abortions completely; others will outlaw it after six or fifteen weeks.

In Texas, it will take 30 days for a near-total ban to come into effect. In eleven states there is no exemption for rape or incest. Louisiana is even considering a bill to allow women who have an abortion to be charged with homicide.

58% of the 40 million women of child bearing age live in abortion-hostile states. 26 of 50 states will ban abortions immediately, and a further six are likely to follow soon, making it virtually impossible to access an abortion in Southern and Midwestern states.

This shift has been decades in the making. Conservatives have realised they could galvanise Catholic and Evangelical minorities around anti-choice politics. The percentage in the USA reporting no religion has increased from 7% in Reagan's 1980 to 21% in 2021; of Catholics, decreased from 28% to 22%; and Evangelical white Protestants declined from 21% in 2003 to 13% in 2017. Yet political efforts have welded a formidable voter bloc, supercharging the conservative Christian right as a political force. Anti-choice policies have been central to US conservatism for decades. More recently it has gone for gerrymandering the legislatures and packing the judiciary.

The tactic was by no means the brainchild of Donald Trump, but his administration was the most successful at it. Mitch McConnell, Senate majority leader for Trump, did it with the

single minded focus of a bureaucratic terminator, only, instead of coming from the future, he seems to have been sent directly from 1692, aiming "to do everything we can, for as long as we can, to transform the federal judiciary, because everything else we do is transitory."

There are a total of 816 active federal judges in the Supreme Court, the 13 appellate courts, and 91 district courts. In just one term Trump was able to appoint 28% of those judges. He appointed 33% of America's nine supreme court justices, and 30% of the courts-of-appeal judges.

Of the 47 appeal-court judges he appointed in four years, six were in their 30s and twenty were under 45. There is no limit on how long a judge can sit for, so they are there for decades. Obama appointed 55 in eight years, only six of them below the age of 45.

The judiciary and legislators are way to the right of the population on this issue. In 2020 opinion polls showed 70% approval for Roe v Wade. More recent polling shows 85% support some kind of safe and legal abortion for women. The complete abolition of abortion is very much a minority agenda, but one pursued extremely successfully.

In the short term the overturning of Roe v Wade will usher in waves of grassroots solidarity across the US. People will donate money, time, transport, and their homes to assist women who need to cross state lines to obtain an abortion. We may even see pro-choice states directing funds towards helping



women cross the border. Yet for millions, arranging the travel and the procedures will become very difficult.

There will be large waves of protest, too, and feminists internationally should offer as much practical solidarity to our American sisters as possible.

The best short-term hope Americans have of undoing the ruling is via a federal law. However, there aren't the pro-choice numbers in the Senate to stop a federal statute being blocked by Republicans.

The Democrats are using the overturning of Roe v Wade as a campaign point for the midterm elections on 8 November, but even if they win, which looks unlikely, Democrats are apt to become mealy-mouthed on abortion rights when they find themselves in office.

In the longer term I hope this sparks a struggle for genuine democratic reform in the United States, starting with the introduction of term limits for judges, the end of filibusters, and wide-ranging electoral reform. □

A system of minority rule

By Tom Harrison

Although past propaganda painted the USA as "the greatest democracy in the world", that claim was always highly questionable. And more so now. After the Supreme Court ruling on Roe v Wade, the availability of contraception is also on the hit-list. The 1967 Supreme Court ruling which banned laws against inter-racial marriage could even be reversed. Even that extreme can't be ruled out given the present climate.

And what exactly is that climate? People have actually asked on Google whether *The Handmaid's Tale* is a true story. It's beginning to look like becoming one. Testimony before the committee investigating

the 6 January 2021 Capitol riot has painted a picture of political intimidation resembling that of Weimar Germany.

Hearings found that Republicans in Georgia and Arizona faced a barrage of verbal abuse, death threats and intimidation for refusing to overturn their state's election results.

There was particularly sad testimony from Wandrea Moss, an election worker who is black. She and her mother were singled out by Trump, who falsely accused them of "election fraud". Death threats to them were liberally peppered with race-hate.

A fake "electors" plot has been discovered. That scam would involve replacing members of the electoral college

who'd been put there by the popular vote, with Trump cronies who would then force Pence to reject Biden and maintain Trump in power.

Layer upon layer of evidence has been built up by the hearings against Trump's illegal actions to overturn the election.

The hearing intends to gather enough for charges to be brought against him by the Department of Justice. Unfortunately there is little to suggest that nettle will be grasped.

The majority of Americans are effectively living under a system of minority rule. 70% plus want to keep abortion rights and a similar number want tighter gun control. Those desires are being sty-

mied by an 18th-century constitution which gives power, in the Senate in particular, to states which represent only 30% of the population.

In Republican eyes, ramping up the "culture wars" is the best way to retain power for many years to come. It appeals to those sections of the US ruling class who want to keep working people divided so there is no challenge to their economic interests and no income or wealth redistribution. The strategy is designed to appeal to the white population, and racism forms a large part of it.

Joe Biden and others in the Democrat leadership have offered very little in response to these attacks on people's

rights. All they say, essentially, is "vote for us". They are still wedded to a belief that bipartisan politics is still possible, but that train left the station a long time ago.

Mass movements of Americans fighting for a better society are developing, however.

March for our Lives is demanding gun control and the Sunrise Movement campaigns on climate change. Mass protests will continue against the Supreme Court abortion ruling until it gets reversed. US socialists will look to movements like that, and the growing flurry of union organisation in workplaces like Starbucks, rather than placing any confidence in the Democrats. □

The North York Moors and extinction



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

After a two-year delay, the UN has announced that the COP15 summit on Biological Diversity will take place in Canada in December this year. The meeting was originally scheduled in China in 2020 and has been postponed four times due to Covid.

Nearly 100 countries, including the UK, have formed the "High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People" (HAC N&P) with the stated aim of protecting 30% of the Earth's land and 30% of the Earth's oceans from human interference by 2030.

"30 by 30" is conceived as a stepping stone to the Half-Earth policy proposed by biologist E O Wilson. As habitat destruction and overfishing are two major drivers of the current mass extinction, some version of a half-Earth policy is necessary. Wilson argued that 85% of

currently existing species could survive if half the Earth was afforded protection from human interference. But the "high ambition" efforts to enact that policy are running up against capitalist priorities.

Entomologist Dave Goulson notes that the COP process on biodiversity has been as ineffectual as the COP process on climate change: "The [1992] Rio Convention [on Biological Diversity] promised to halt the loss of global biodiversity by 2020. In reality, the period 1992 to 2020 has seen the greatest loss of global biodiversity for at least 65 million years." (*Silent Earth*, p.172)

Since the "Rio process" started the world has designated 16% of land and 7.4% of marine habitats as "protected areas" or similar, and 35% of the UK land mass has some kind of "protected" status. Yet the UK is one of the most degraded ecosystems in the world, ranking 189th out of 218 for "Biodiversity Intactness".

The "protected area" of the North York Moors, for example, is intensively

managed for a monoculture of red grouse. The grouse serve no purpose except to provide easy targets for the guns of the British ruling class. To maximise the number of red grouse, the moors are regularly set on fire, the wetlands are drained, large predators are culled, and any invertebrates that survive the fires exist in a landscape contaminated by antibiotics and lead shot.

The North York Moors will also soon host a major potash mine, and Ineos are hoping to gain approval for a fracking operation. The protections afforded to living beings in these areas go only so far as does not impinge upon the rights the rich to enclose and commodify, extract and poison. An effective half-Earth policy can only be achieved by much more aggressive restrictions on the rights of private landlords. Ultimately large-scale ecological restoration is incompatible with private ownership of the land.

Alongside their limited scope, conservation efforts have also suffered for lack of scale and ambition. We know from island biogeography that larger

habitats sustain higher levels of biodiversity and reduce the risk of extinction from chance events. Half-Earth advocates seek to develop wildlife corridors linking whole areas of land unencumbered by human interference and make a specific focus on areas of the most biodiversity.

In *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin notes the complex relationship between domestic cats and red clover. Clover is pollinated largely by bumble bees, which in turn are prey to field mice. More cats means fewer mice, more bees and hence more clover. These co-dependent relationships are found between all living beings, and exist on a planetary scale in the way the biosphere regulates Earth systems.

The complexity of these relationships makes it difficult to predict the impacts of mass extinction. The UN is confident that mass extinction increases "flooding, climate change, disease emergence and ill health, clean water shortages, loss of crop pollination, decline in productivity, and numerous other risks." □

"Kick the Tories out" and socialist politics



Eye on the Left

By Colin Foster

Many on the left have started pushing slogans like "Kick the Tories out". And us too: see this week's front page.

The unions, we argue, must mobilise industrially, and also unite with the Labour rank and file to tie Labour to scrapping anti-union laws, taxing the rich, restoring public services and benefits, and public ownership (including of energy, to decarbonise).

The Socialist had "Kick the Tories out" as its front-page headline on 18 June; *Socialist Appeal* had "Time to sweep them out!"; *Socialist Worker* had placards, "Kick the Tories out!", and for months now has had headlines like "Finish him [Johnson] off", "Bring down filthy Tories", "Tory liars must go", etc.

Yet *The Socialist*, on previous record, wouldn't even recommend a Labour vote in an early election. An editorial says that holds even if Starmer is replaced as Labour leader.

Kicking the Tories out is good enough to be a headline slogan, but not good enough to be worth a tick on a ballot paper?

Another front-page slogan, "Build a new workers' party", is probably supposed to square the circle. The editorial (16 June) explains that they want a conference of trade unions to found that new workers' party.

But if unions and Labour's rank and file were to form a new party of some consequence, that could happen only after a fight in which those unions use their strength on Labour's National Executive and in its annual conference to try to call Starmer to account and replace the leadership. First that fight. When unions quit Labour without a political fight, as the (small) Bakers' Union has done recently, no new politics results.

On previous record SW would recommend a Labour vote in a general election. But its emphasis is that "instead of parliamentary games we need socialist politics that are based on the strength of strikes and protests". In practice SW proposes "strikes and protests" as a political alternative in and of themselves.

Socialist Appeal has habitu-

ally insisted - in fact, in far too mechanical, simplistic, and unilateral terms - that in times of high struggle workers will "inevitably" first turn to "the traditional organisations of the working class" like the Labour Party.

Yet *Socialist Appeal* of 16 June looks to "coordinated action across the movement, to galvanise workers, bring down this criminal government, and overthrow the bosses' system". Removing the Tories equals revolution.

That is not just a matter of enthusiasm overcoming a hurried writer's thought. An editorial asserts that "a revolutionary situation" as defined by Lenin "is approaching sooner rather than later".

A feature on the 1848 revolution in France tells us that the current situation across Europe is "comparable to the last days of the July monarchy" (the regime that revolution overthrew). "The volcano of revolution threatens to erupt". Only this time, the workers are stronger, and "victory is assured" by a revolutionary leadership.

There is pretty much no mention of the Labour Party in that issue of *Socialist Appeal*. The front cover has an

image of Lenin (with an RMT cap) sweeping away the Tories (Johnson, Sunak, Patel). *Socialist Appeal*, of course, identify themselves with Lenin. So they think they already lead the labour movement?

Bombast is the word for it, whether in the variety of *The Socialist*, *Socialist Worker*, or *Socialist Appeal*. In an election, the only plausible government alternative to the Tories is the Labour Party. Not *Socialist Appeal*'s "revolutionary leader-

ship", and not *The Socialist*'s speculative new workers' party. We need clear-cut, well-organised Marxist organisation - oriented to transforming the mass labour movement, not to imagining it can bypass it by proclamation.

The political battle about Labour politics cannot be evaded. "Get the Tories out" agitation which assumes that battle can be bypassed, whether just by strikes or some other way, is bombast. □



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Stop the Rwanda scheme, oppose new Tory Bill

By Mohan Sen

The government is not actually proposing to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of Human Rights that arbitrates it; but it is proposing to seriously curb the UK's commitment to these institutions.

This is yet another front of the accelerated push, from 2019, to shift the UK in the direction of an authoritarian

nationalist regime. The labour movement must fight to stop it, and develop clear proposals to reverse it if it goes through.

The Rwanda deportation policy, greenlighted by UK courts but shredded by determined campaigning before it was blocked by the European Court, is due to go to a full-scale UK judicial review in July. We need a new wave of protests and this time mobilisation by the labour movement, including mobilisation of civil service workers to hinder the policy.

In their 2019 manifesto the Tories promised only to "update the Human Rights Act". But last year aggressive right-winger [Dominic Raab](#) took over as Secretary of State for Justice. Now the Tories are eager to show themselves in conflict with European institutions (though the European Court of Human Rights is not part of the EU) and draw "culture war" contrasts with Labour. The Court's intervention against the Tories' plan to send asylum-seekers to Rwanda seems to have given a final push.

Tory bluster about their "[Bill of Rights](#)" enshrining the right to trial by jury, and other bits and pieces, is irrelevant. Whether or not such wording will have any impact, it could have been done without attacking the ECHR.

The government's proposed changes include:

Telling courts they must not have regard to any interim measure issued by the European Court of Human Rights.

Making it harder to assert that public bodies have a "positive obligation" to protect individuals' rights. This was the provision allowed the families of those who died in the Hillsborough disaster and the victims of rapist John Worboys, mistreated by the police, to achieve some justice.

A new "permission stage" requiring claimants to show they have suffered "significant disadvantage", potentially allowing the blocking of numerous cases and significantly lessening the

cartoon by @gewman



state's likelihood and fear of being challenged over abuses.

New rules instructing courts to consider a claimant's past record before awarding damages for breaches of human rights.

A higher bar to use claims of the right to family life to avoid being deported.

The director of civil liberties organisation Liberty pointed out that, for all the Tories' "parliamentary sovereignty"

rhetoric, the proposals actually involve "sidelining judicial and parliamentary scrutiny in favour of the executive being allowed to do what they want" with reduced fear of legal challenge.

Although the UK will still be subject to the European Court of Human Rights, and on paper committed to the ECHR, the proposals increase the Tories' for loopholes and exemptions. □

Action on Covid-19

Covid hospital admissions have been rising since 3 June, and are now back to mid-December-2021 levels, as BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants spread. For now, relatively few are severe cases. That may well change with autumn and winter and possible new variants. Yet the Tories continue to run down Covid-control infrastructure: for example, from 1 July the official "Covid-19 Dashboard" will be updated only weekly, not daily. We campaign for:

- 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
- bringing 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. □

Police break up Istanbul Pride

By Pete Boggs

The Istanbul Pride march, 26 June, was broken up by police, and 373 activists were detained, including 30 minors. The Pride march has been banned since 2015.

Chants included "Kurdistan exists, queer people exist," "Trans murders are political,"

and "The world would shake if faggots and queers were free." At a student LGBTI+ protest at Istanbul University, counter-protesters threatened violence and chanted "Takbir, Allahu Akbar."

In 2016 it was reported that Turkey has the highest transgender murder rate in Europe. Last year Turkey withdrew from

the Istanbul Convention meant to combat violence against women, and there have been a number of high-profile cases of femicide.

Although anti-LGBTI+ sentiment is not as central to right-wing populism in Turkey as it is in Hungary or Poland, it is still an important touchstone for the religious right. For in-

stance, during the anti-government protests at Boğaziçi University, a university art show displaying an artwork with Mecca surrounded by LGBTI+ flags resulted in students being arrested and a government minister condemning them online as "four LGBT pervers."

Many LGBTI+ organisations

in Turkey have taken great care to show solidarity with other struggles. Kurdish and sex-worker LGBTI+ groups were involved in organising the pride parades, and the joint statement released by the Pride organisers showed solidarity with the plight of refugees and opposed the war in Kurdistan. □

A public service railway!

By Simon Nelson

Mick Lynch, general secretary of the RMT rail union, on Peston on ITV, responded to Tory MP Robert Jenrick about how to increase demand for the railways:

"The worst way you could do it is by insisting the fares go up by RPI ripping off the commuters, but you won't give the workers RPI... Last year, profits were made by the train operators – £500m out of that subsidy you gave went to those companies. First Group and Go Ahead, whom we're negotiating with, are both subject to takeovers from private equity companies.

"They're going to be worth billions because they know you're going to keep siphoning money from the public purse into private sector operators. Just as you're doing health, education and care".

When Southeastern had its franchise taken from it in October 2021, *Tube-*

worker said "Yet again a private rail franchise... has been shown to have its hands in the till, as 'errors' meant that £25 million of public money was not returned to the government... seven years after it was due. As a result of this 'serious breach' of the franchise agreement, the government has handed the franchise back to the state-owned 'operator of last resort'. This is the first time a franchise has been stripped for unashamedly trying to rip us off".

The rail strikes have brought profiteering and running-down of the railway back under public scrutiny. Beyond the demands of the strike the labour movement should have a plan for the railways as a publicly owned, funded, and subsidised part of an integrated transport network: a network run by transport workers themselves with the input and oversight of elected bodies and the passengers.

The rail network – like the NHS, water, electricity, the post – is a socially necessary and useful public service. A green and publicly run transport system is essential to efforts to limit climate change. When public transport is reliable and affordable, private car use goes down.

Around 75% support railway renationalisation in polls. The Labour Party is, on paper, committed to public ownership of the railway but Labour leaders make clear they support only taking franchises back into public ownership on a franchise-by-franchise basis when the contracts expire, not renationalising the whole lot all at once. Labour Mayors like Sadiq Khan continue to refuse to take outsourced workers like Transport for London cleaners back in-house. Maintenance and other services are often outsourced too.

Years of railway privatisation have seen billions roll in for shareholders and fat cat bosses while services, safety, jobs, and conditions are under constant attack. They have also led to totally illogical competition and the wasteful and unnecessary split between infrastructure and operations.

That benefits only private contractors and their shareholders but moves the transport network further away from a fully-integrated system.

The current system sees franchises compete with each other for services, routes, and revenues from ever-increasing ticket prices, but railway workers can offer an alternative. A wholly publicly-owned system could deliver a cheaper, greener, and integrated transport system: a system that puts service, and the conditions and safety of its workers and passengers, at the forefront, rather than profit, a system where workers and passengers help to run the railway together. A workers' and passengers' plan could transform the railway, extending and expanding it so it serves more communities, better.

Public ownership should be not the "operator of last resort", but the first resort.

Nationalisation or public ownership is not a panacea by itself: the most destructive cuts to the network, the Beeching cuts of the 1960s, were made in response to wider car ownership and to improve capitalist state finances, long before the Tories began to propose rail privatisation. The Tory government decision to abandon rail electrification, so that the UK has a rail network that still relies on diesel locomotives and the damage to the environment they bring, has been a government rather than a private-operator decision.

And while London Underground remains a publicly-owned railway, there is plenty of privatisation under Transport for London. London Overground, the Docklands Light Railway, the buses, plus cleaning, catering, security, and track protection, are all run by private companies. And the running-down of TfL services, including the wave of bus cuts, could serve to soften them up for further privatisation.

When the labour movement talks about public ownership, we must also make the arguments for workers' control of the industry, democratic plan-



ning, and accountability to elected representatives of the labour movement. Without the democratic planning needed to run a system on the basis of actual human need rather than profit, a publicly-owned system could well lead to the same inefficiencies and poor service.

If the plan for HS2 saw it nationalised tomorrow, it would still fail to solve much of the decay of local commuter services in the north of England, or the atrocious connectivity of Bradford, which has now been excluded from the Northern Powerhouse Rail project.

All the rail unions are united in favour of a nationalised rail network. That must mean more than a press release each time a major failing gets media attention. It has to mean an ongoing, active campaign, not just occasional leafleting and petitioning outside train stations. Britain's restrictive anti-union laws prohibit explicitly political strikes, but we must discuss ways of challenging the logic of privatisation via industrial action.

If workers and passengers are to run an integrated transport system, then we need to campaign now with the transport unions, passenger groups and climate activists, coming together to make this policy a reality. Network Rail and transport bosses are shameless in their profiteering and will not be embarrassed into ceding control. They can only be forced. □

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- The Occupation of the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead 1984
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Make Labour back the pickets

By Sacha Ismail

Dozens of Labour MPs – fifty according to *The Times* – [attended](#) RMT picket lines between 21 and 25 June. The very right-wing leader of the Scottish Labour Party, Anas Sarwar, also joined a picket line. Westminster Labour right-winger Jon Cruddas has [written](#) that Labour must support the rail workers. "There is no

way of hiding from this, no tactical dodge. Actually, it is why the party was created in the first place".

The power of the rail workers' action has clearly inspired chunks of the Parliamentary Labour Party, as it has inspired hundreds of thousands of trade union activists and significant layers of workers far beyond. This is still a party with

dense links to the unions, even on its right wing.

However, the *Times* also says that when parliament voted to condemn the rail strikes, only 13 Labour MPs defied the official line of abstaining.

It remains to be seen whether Keir Starmer will follow through on the threat to discipline members of the shadow front bench who ig-

nored his instruction not to join picket lines.

Meanwhile shadow foreign secretary David Lammy has doubled-down on Starmer's wretched politics by telling the media he doesn't support strikes because they "hurt working people" and attacking British Airways workers for demanding a 10% rise.

The best way to push back

the leadership and win more solidarity from Labour Party leaders and structures is to do what is necessary anyway: organise and mobilise Labour members and local Labour Parties in active support of the RMT and other strikes.

- Momentum has an online tool to pressure Labour MPs to back the rail strikes: bit.ly/m-rmt □

What should our pay demand be?



Off The Rails

This article was written by an RMT activist as a contribution to discussion, and represents their personal view. We welcome additional and alternative views.

When it comes to the pay element of our national dispute, we know what we're against: we're against an ongoing pay freeze. But what, are we for?

There's been discussion – in the national media, but more importantly in workplaces and on picket lines – about exactly what RMT's pay demand in the dispute is. Union talks about busting the pay freeze, and sometimes talks about pay rises in line with rising living costs. One figure that's been circulated is 7%, with [some media articles](#) talking categorically about this as the number the RMT is demanding.

But senior union officials have denied that this our demand (for example, see this interview with Assistant General Secretary Eddie Dempsey, where Dempsey says, explicitly, "[we haven't said 7%](#)"). It seems to originate in a comment General Secretary Mick Lynch made some weeks ago when asked about the issue, when he mentioned that RPI in December, the point of the Network Rail pay anniversary, was 7%. But he did not explicitly say that this was RMT's demand.

Other union officers have mentioned other figures. Mick Hogg, one of our Regional Organisers in Scotland,

suggested the ScotRail deal, which involved a 5% pay increase and a five-year no-compulsory-redundancies guarantee, should be a [model for the national dispute](#).

The issue needs clarifying. Any industrial dispute is significantly strengthened by having clear demands. If everyone involved knows what they're fighting for, it gives the dispute a positive, assertive focus, rather than simply being reactive. And a concrete demand provides a yardstick against which to measure any offers from the employer.

Cleaners in the RMT employed by Churchill on various Train Operating Companies in the south east are currently fighting an [inspiring battle](#) for improved pay and conditions. They have a clear, pay demand: £15 per hour. That has helped galvanise and focus the dispute. A clear pay demand could do the same in the national dispute.

So what should the pay demand be? At the time of writing, RPI was 11.7%. Any pay increase below that level means pay falls behind the cost of living, and represents a real terms pay cut. So that should definitively rule out demanding 7% or 5%. But merely demanding 11.7% (or 12%, if we're rounding up) is limited too. This would drag the current rate of pay up to meet the cost of living, but after three years of a pay freeze, that rate is already behind where it should be. Demanding any percentage increase at all is problematic as an approach, as it does not address differentials between higher and lower-paid grades.

RMT should therefore demand a flat-rate pay increase, which would be

worth more to lower-paid workers and benefit those who need it most. Working out exactly what the figure should be should be a matter for discussion within the union; researchers at Unity House can help by providing data on what the levels of inflation were at the point when all TOCs and Network Rail should have had pay anniversaries, but didn't give pay increases due to the pay freeze.

But as a spur to discussion and initial proposal, I suggest: a £5,000 flat-rate pay increase for all full-time staff, and the pro-rata equivalent for part-timers, or a full RPI increase, whichever is higher (with "full RPI" in this context meaning the rise in the Retail Price Index since the last time the workers in question had a pay rise).

Why £5,000? RMT's figure that the median salary for its rail worker members is £31,000. 11.7% (the current RPI rate) of £31,000 is £3,627. Rounding up to £5,000 represents some recompense for three years of frozen pay, and ensures workers who are above the median also get an increase. And with the "£5k or a full RPI increase" formulation, it could lead to some workers getting even more if it was won.

For the union to campaigning publicly for a £5,000 pay increase (suggested slogan: "Five grand in the hand!") would undoubtedly unleash howls of outrage from the usual suspects. But that is only because such a demand would continue to puncture the orthodoxy that, whilst high salaries and pay increases are alright for bosses, front line workers must always tighten their belts and accept our lot.



Mick Lynch and other officials have done a good job confronting that orthodoxy so far throughout our dispute; clarifying our pay demand, and going for a figure that would represent a meaningful improvement to workers' lives (rather than just keeping our heads above water), will continue that confrontation, and can only strengthen the dispute.

And beyond this specific demand, and as other workers – such as airport staff, postal workers, telecoms workers, civil servants, barristers, and teachers – move into battle over pay, isn't it time for the whole labour movement to move past the short-term logic of individual pay demands and instead fight for a "sliding scale of wages" - statutory linkages between wages and inflation, ensuring pay automatically increases as the cost of living rises? □

Maintain momentum after magnificent week!



Off The Rails

It's been a magnificent week. Our strikes on Network Rail, TOCs, and London Underground effectively shut down the job, representing the most impactful workers' action in our industry for a generation.

Picket lines across the country were invariably enthusiastic, empowering affairs, with excellent support from the wider movement. Mass strike rallies were held in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Sheffield, Wakefield, and elsewhere. A protest was organised at short notice in Grant Shapps' constituency of Welwyn Hatfield.

On the London protest, RMT

strikers were joined by a large delegation of striking outsourced hospital workers from south London, in the GMB union. We should look to forge these links wherever possible to build solidarity for a summer of strikes.

To maintain the momentum, we want to see further dates called as soon as possible. However, that shouldn't be done with an opportunity for rank-and-file reps to input into the direction of the dispute, so the union should call reps' assemblies - physically if possible, but online if necessary - to review the strikes and give the National Executive a steer on the next steps.

But we don't have to wait until the next round of strikes to continue campaigning. It'd

be great to see RMT branches running public stalls in cities and towns, distributing material about the dispute, collecting for the strike fund, and linking up with local Trades Councils to promote

trade unionism in general. The TUC's union finder website has experienced an 800% increase in traffic since the rail strikes began, and town centre stalls could contribute to an ongoing revival of the

labour movement. We'll be taking proposals to our union branches to initiate this kind of campaigning locally - we encourage readers to do likewise! □

Left MPs speak out

"What the RMT is doing, what your members are doing, is giving hope to millions. That is exactly what the Tories are terrified of. They're telling lies on behalf of a tiny elite of super-rich liars, who want us to believe we're better off if we beg on our knees than if we bargain on our feet... You are paving the way for other workers.

You are providing leverage to millions of others around the country. Whether the RMT wins will set the tone for wage levels, for working-class confidence and for politics in this country for years to come." – **Nadia Whittome MP**

"I think people increasingly understand that your fight is their fight. Terms and con-

ditions and public services have been slashed over years of austerity. It's time people did something to stand up for themselves, stand up to the millionaires and billionaires, the big bosses who like to award themselves pay rises but not workers." Solidarity with the RMT, and with other workers preparing for industrial action." – **Clive Lewis MP**

Connolly on par

Address to the Irish TUC



**Unexpurgated
Connolly**

By James Connolly

No body of workers that ever met in Ireland have ever had before them a more important and delicate function to fulfil than you have. You are meeting in the capital city of Ireland in a year that the millions of the Irish race the world over have been looking eagerly forward to as the year of the political resurrection of the Irish Nation. And you are also meeting in a year whose opening months saw the close of the greatest general engagement between the forces of Capital and Labour that Ireland ever witnessed.

To the thoughtful delegate both these considerations will operate to make him or her approach the Irish Trade Union Congress of 1914 with feelings of disappointment. There must be disappointment upon the political field because not only is the political Ireland of our hopes but miserably caricatured in the Ireland offered to us in the Home Rule Bill, but even that Bill lies under the menace of still further dismemberment and emasculation. Still over our head hangs the threat that the political charlatans who control our national destinies will commit the unparalleled outrage of dismembering this country in order to please the unnatural hatred of their own country which a section of Irishmen and women have had instilled into them by the foul brood of aristocracy which for so long fattened upon the vitals and drank the life-blood of Ireland.

The Exclusion of Ulster, or any part of Ulster, is the fearful price we are asked to pay for our weakness as a nation – a price so dishonourable that rather than consent to submit such a question to the arbitrament of a vote all patriotic Irish men and women had better far consent to accept the destiny of being rebel slaves of England in an undivided Ireland, as preferable to contented accomplices of English statesmen in the partition of Ireland.

That there are in Ireland to-day ac-

cepted leaders of the Irish Race who feel that they can receive from an English minister a proposal to dismember their country without being compelled to instantly avenge that insult by throwing such a minister out of office is bad enough, but that such leaders can come back to Ireland and still secure the confidence and be sure of the plaudits of the Irish people is worse, as greater proof of the degeneracy of national life in Ireland.

Disappointed as we may well be at the fact that such a suggested abandonment of the high national ideals of the past could be met in the sordid huckstering spirit we see around us on this question, so also must we feel disappointed that the Labour Movement in Ireland did not emerge from its recent ordeal with more substantial spoils of success.

Heroism

But in this case our disappointment is tempered by the reflection that never did men and women better deserve success than did the heroes and heroines of the Dublin Labour Struggle of 1913-1914. As the souls of the politicians descended to the mire of national betrayal the souls of the workers ascended to greater heights of comradeship and solidarity. By all that makes for the greatness of a people, by heroic refusal to surrender principle, by comprehension of all the true essentials of liberty, by devotion to the common cause, by undaunted facing of all the powers of government and by scorn of its batonings and its jailings, by its patient martyrdom of hunger and its blood atonement of deaths by violence by uniformed bullies, the working class of Dublin have redeemed the honour of their race in an age saturated by the spirit of the huckster and the worshippers of mammon.

Never did Ireland in her most heroic moments rise to higher altitudes in the estimation of all lovers of progress than she was raised to by the fact that her working class – although surrounded by the most unclean pack of wolves that ever yelped at the heels of honour, and threatened by the most unscrupulous coalition of tyrants known to industrial and political history – by their

own strength had forced forward to the front the question of the moral responsibility of all for the sufferings and degradations of each. That responsibility which the teachers and rulers of all the ages have been engaged in evading or denying was at last raised by the Dublin Working Class into its true position, and forced upon the consciousness of an unwilling public compelled by the events of a great dramatic industrial war to consider its portent. To the Dublin Working Class belongs the honour of making the sentiment of an injury to one is the concern of all one that all Labour Organisations and all political parties must henceforth be measured by.

That the Irish people as a whole did not realise the great moral issues involved in this struggle was to be expected and deplored. We are cursed in this country with the most unscrupulous, and where not unscrupulous the most evil minded set of journalists that ever consented to prostitute their talents in the service of a purchaser, and when a naturally open minded people have to depend upon a Press served by such creatures it is but natural that the interpretation of public events which that people receive should be of the distorted and filthy nature such a Press must furnish. It was not so reasonable to expect that even a small section of the Labour world should fail to rise to the same height as the Labour Movement of Dublin as a whole did rise. But a stream cannot rise higher than its source, and when Trade Unionists take their inspiration from the columns of the Capitalist Press, and accept the praises of that press as evidences of wisdom instead of regarding such praises as proofs of foolishness or worse, then it is but natural that their Trade Unions will fail their brothers in the hour of trial.

Underlying cause

We are not mentioning these disappointments in order to carp at or belittle your and our Congress and the movement it represents. Rather do we mention them in order to stimulate you to still further exertions by pointing out the real underlying causes of our present unsatisfactory position, socially and politically.

That underlying cause is to be found in the industrial divisions amongst the Working Class. We have too many unions in Ireland, too many Executives with separate Balance Sheets to nurse; too much temptation to nurse these separate Balance Sheets at the expense of Solidarity. We need to set our face resolutely towards the task of joining all the workers of each industry into one Industrial Union; all General Workers into one General Workers' Union; all such Unions into One Big Union, able to launch the powers of all in the instant service of each. We need to realise that the Master Class has definitely decided to make war upon the Working Class; that for the purposes of that war they have co-ordinated and disciplined all their forces, and hold them ready to use at a moment's notice whenever the further subjection of Labour seems possible of achievement. We need to feel in every fibre of our consciousness that all the offices and positions through which civilization performs its every function are manned, equipped and sentinelled by alert and implacable enemies of our class, and so feeling we must labour to create a public opinion of our own – a Working Class public opinion that shall eventually supersede and destroy the public opinion of the master class as the standard by which our patriotism and the value and efficiency of our institutions are to be judged. At present the slave spirit is, so to speak, dominant in our souls, and as a result we unconsciously and instinctively accept inferior position and inferior treatment in all things as being right and proper for our class.

Hence as we are subjected socially we are ignored politically, and forced to be content with the merest of husks educationally. This slave spirit arises from the fact that the disorganised, or badly organised, position of our class renders us impotent upon the industrial field, and any industrial impotence finds its accompaniment in our political outlawry and national helplessness in this hour of our national danger.

From all this the moral is plain. The true path of salvation for our class is along the line of a closer organisation of our forces: let us regard the indus-

titition, part two

tries of this country as our own; let us organise our Trade Unions as we would organise them were it our purpose to conduct industry and to have the operatives regimented and brigaded for the task.

Let us in short proceed upon the principle that if the employer needs a man or woman in an industry we need him or her in the Union of that industry.

As we reach the completion of that task we will feel the result in the increasing self-respect of the worker, and in the increasing determination to

exert upon the political field that working class independence such unity will give upon the industrial. Political power must wait upon economic or industrial power; you must be strong on the dock, ship, railway or workshop before you can be strong in the halls of legislation.

But if political power will only come as the ripened fruit of economic power, political agitation need not wait. Nor yet need wait political organisation. Let them march abreast – the army of organised Labour the director of the campaign on both fields.

Had we such an organisation of Labour to-day there would be no fear of the Exclusion of Ulster, nor any other betrayal of our national hopes.

The Ulster Volunteers may be able to frighten a Liberal Government willing to be frightened, but were a Labour Movement able to call out the Textile Operatives of Belfast, or even its spinners, and to keep them out until Ulster threw in her lot with Ireland, the paralysis of industry and loss of profit to Belfast capitalists would frighten the guns out of the hands of the Carsonite army

without the shedding of a single drop of blood. In conclusion we say to our fellow delegates with all solemnity that we believe that there are no real Nationalists in Ireland outside of the Irish Labour movement. All others merely reject one part or another of the British Conquest, the Labour movement alone rejects it in its entirety, and sets itself the Re-conquest of Ireland as its aim.

Let that be the end and aim of all our deliberations. □

• *Irish Worker*, 30 May 1914

Motion to the Irish TUC

Mr Connolly moved: "That in the opinion of this Congress any attempt to exclude any portion of Ireland from the provisions of the Home Rule Bill is undesirable; that this Congress heartily endorses the Manifesto issued by our Parliamentary Committee, and directs the various Trades Councils in Ireland to press the matter on the Parliamentary representatives of their districts."

He referred to Mr. Whitley's statement that a certain section would not have Home Rule. An attempt was being made to conciliate a certain bigoted section by mutilating Ireland. This was unprecedented. They were to do voluntarily what was considered a crime when done by outsiders in the case of Poland. This had been manoeuvred without any attempt to consult the people. It was false to say that Nationalists would accept it. Every attempt had been made to prevent the Nationalist opinion of Ulster from expressing itself. Every coterie that would declare for tentative acceptance had its resolution spread all over the Press. This ought to be opposed from every standpoint, but particularly from the Labour standpoint.

He regarded the Home Rule Bill with contempt as an emasculation of the Irish Na-

tional demand. But he wished it passed because bigotry had been used to weaken the working class. The Orange capitalist class had stirred up the fiercest fires of religious bigotry to prevent the work-

ing class from uniting for its emancipation. Ulster wanted this union of the working class most of all.

He referred to the demarcation of different religious districts in Belfast streets. Till

recently York Street had been barred. For eighteen years no band but an Orange band could go down it, till the Irish Transport Workers' Union came. They had no spirit of hostility, but they stood for Ireland united on another basis. They wished to blend North and South, Protestant and Catholic, in one holy bond.

They were now told that exclusion would only be for six years. But the English Solicitor-General had said that there would be two general elections in that period and that, it would be a miracle if the Tories were not returned, when they would make exclusion permanent.

The workers, therefore, would not be allowed to unite on labour issues. They would be told that they must unite with their employers on the question of inclusion or permanent exclusion.

The position would be a thousand times worse in the North than now. They in the North would resist to the death the attempt to exclude them. It was the admission for the first time in history that the English conquest had succeeded and that they had the right to divide Ireland and treat it as a province. They would be doing a good turn to Ulster by opposing exclusion. They valued Ulster too much to let if

be cut off; it was in Ireland now and they meant it to grow part of Ireland. The frontiers of Ireland were fixed by Nature not by the bigotry, malevolence, or class-creed of any party. □

• Report of the Irish TUC, 1-3 June 1914

Connolly and partition

These texts are from the Irish Trade Union Congress of 1-3 June 1914. They followed on Connolly's first articles (see [Solidarity 639](#)) responding to the British Liberal government's statement on 9 March 1914 that it would amend the Irish Home Rule Bill so that counties in north-east Ireland (or the "county boroughs" of Belfast and Derry cities) which voted for it would be excluded from Home Rule for six years. They came before the Liberal government introduced an Amending Bill on those lines in the House of Lords on 23 June 1914. That Bill was amended by the Tory majority in the House of Lords to exclude all nine counties of Ulster from Home Rule permanently, and then abandoned by the Liberal government. An unsuccessful scramble for compromises followed. After the start of World War One in August

1914, the unamended 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, after a Sinn Fein majority among the Irish MPs elected in Westminster general election of December 1918 had declared independence for Ireland, and a war of independence had broken out, the Government of Ireland Act would supersede the unimplemented Home Rule Act. It partitioned Ireland and set up Northern Ireland with its own (Protestant-Unionist) "Home Rule". The "general engagement between the forces of Capital and Labour" referred to by Connolly in his address to the congress was the Dublin Labour War of August 1913 to early 1914: see [Solidarity 633-5](#). □

The motion was passed by 84 votes to two. The Irish TUC statement, 17 March 1914, read: That this Committee, representing the Trade Union and Labour Movement of all Ireland, views with dismay and anger the attempt to divide Ulster from the rest of Ireland under the proposed amendments to the Home Rule Bill. We declare our belief that the suggested exclusion of Ulster (or any part thereof) will intensify the divisions at present existing and destroy all our hopes of uniting the workers of Ulster with those of Munster, Leinster and Connaught on the basis of their industrial and economic interests. We call upon all those who profess to have the well-being of the workers of Ireland at heart to vigorously oppose any form of "exclusion", either temporary or permanent, and to insist that whatever measures may be enacted concerning Ireland's political future must apply to the country as a whole. □

• *Irish Worker*, 21 March 1914

NHS: organise now to win on pay

By Alice Hazel

The official NHS Pay Review Body (PRB) will recommend a 4-5% pay increase (so the *Guardian* reports), for workers coming under the Agenda for Change pay scales (most workers other than doctors and the contracted-out).

The government's submission to the PRB called for only 3%. Under the pressure of the rail strikes, the government may budge, and it is possible that it could meet the PRB recommendation.

But the PRB process is widely discredited. With inflation rising, an award of 4 or 5% would still represent a big pay cut, unacceptable to health workers.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) submitted a claim of 14%, and other unions have called for an inflation-busting award. Christine McAnea, general secretary of Unison (the public services union which is the largest union in the NHS), has said the government is risking a dispute and called on branches to

be ballot ready for strike ballots.

The Scottish government has offered 5%, and both RCN and Unison are recommending rejection.

Activists and some union branches are starting to organise, lifting themselves from the disappointment of last year's non-campaign. There are undoubtedly more positive signals coming from the biggest health unions this year.

Activists should make the best of this, ensure we are talking with workers, circulating materials explaining the possibilities for action, and mobilising branches to start campaigning.

However, the road to strikes which could win a good pay rise is far from clear. The pay award was due on 1 April. As last year, and with the background of the rail strikes, the government are likely to delay announcing the PRB figure for as long as possible. (It was 22

July in 2021). Even if Unison and the RCN leaders oppose the award, they are likely to delay further by holding consultations of members prior to any formal ballots.

The health unions' lack of organisation, their dismal record on confronting employers, and daily work pressures, have left many health workers feeling impotent in the face of savage attacks and worsening conditions. In addition the health unions have, yet again, failed to put forward clear demands.

Their joint strategy includes references to pay with no specific figure, unpaid overtime, re-banding, changes to the pay structure, and workforce planning. There is no catchy slogan to mobilise around, and the vagueness allows the leaderships to fudge accountability.

With this background, the Trade Union Act 2016's requirement for a

50% turnout for a strike ballot to be valid acts as a real barrier.

Activists must take a lead in speaking to health workers about pay. We need to bring the enthusiasm for and of the rail strikers into our workplaces. We need to take motions to our union branches setting out actions for how to run a campaign. If our branches won't act, we need to bring together workers who are prepared to take a lead. We need to discuss the barriers to action now and prepare to challenge our unions where needed.

Advocating clear demands, demanding access to membership lists for organising consultation and ballot responses, calling formal ballots while other unions are taking action, coordinating action with other disputes, and generating elected campaign and strike committees should all be to the fore. □



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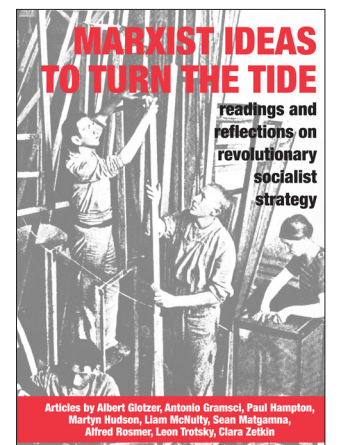
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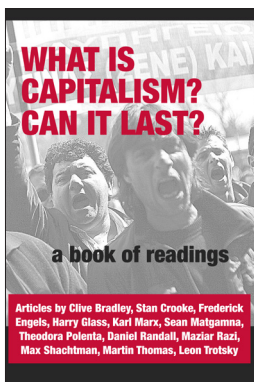
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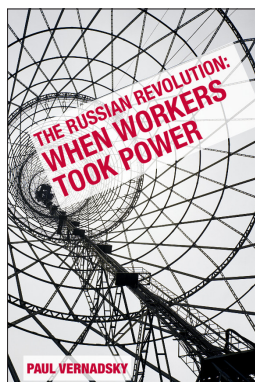
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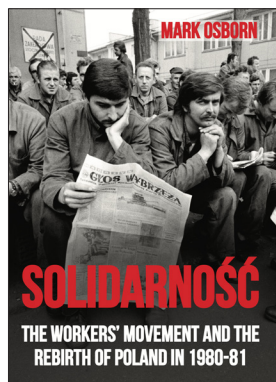
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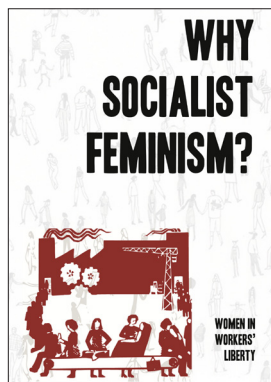
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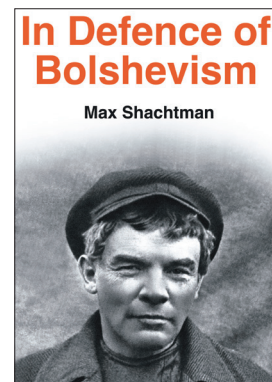
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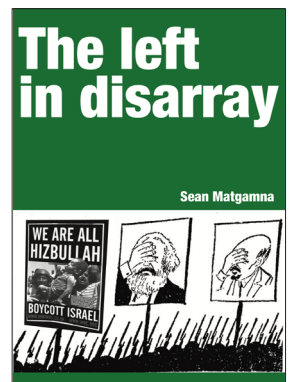
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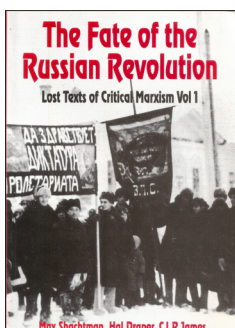
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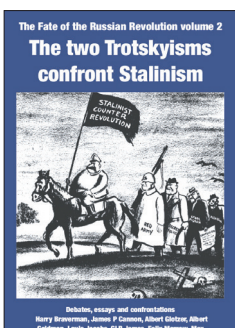
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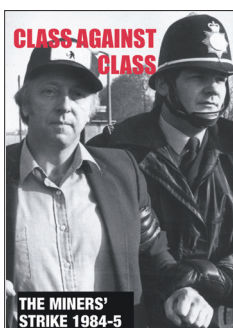
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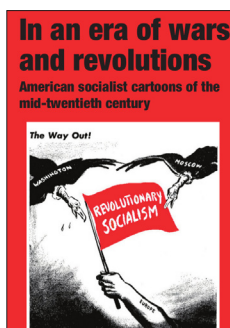
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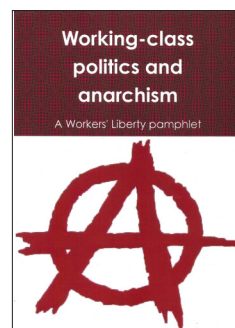
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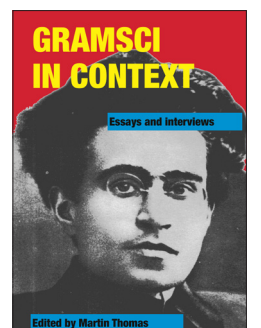
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How to make Unison “strike-ready”



By a Unison member

The National Delegate Conference (NDC) of the public services union Unison (14-17 June) was, as we [reported](#), dominated by attacks on the new left majority of the National Executive Committee (NEC).

Yet both the NDC and Unison’s local government sector conference (12-13 June) also passed some useful – if sometimes vague – policies, which should given work for the left to organise around. There was also a mood or theme which (perhaps superficially) united all wings of Unison: the union must become “strike ready”.

We are understandably cautious when a general secretary who has part of the union’s senior bureaucracy for many years claims a desire to be strike ready.

In fact, it’s almost become annual routine for Unison general secretar-

ies to attack the Tories and claim we are ready to fight, then deliver little or blame members for not voting in large enough numbers.

The TUC’s 18 June national demonstration, however, and the three days of rail strikes (21, 23, 25 June) mean the “strike-ready” talk can be used in branches to bring change.

The new left NEC has already doubled strike pay and made it payable from day one not day three, meaning that many of our lowest paid members could strike without the normal significant hardship. The NEC is reviewing making it easier for branches to call industrial action. At present, action often needs approval by the union at regional level, and that can take months.

Both NDC and the local government conference passed a number of motions on balloting, campaigning, and redirecting resources to make Unison really strike-ready and to learn the lessons of the low turnout in the December-January local government ballot for action on pay. Local government conference motions reinforced Unison’s pay claim there of £2,000 or

RPI, whichever is greater. A number of branches, for instance Sandwell, had successfully balloted and brought services in-house by striking.

The left NEC would be wise to follow up by documenting cases as model ways of working and by reviewing Unison’s structure, to open up systems, to make it easier for reps to contact all our members, to use text-messaging and social media better, and to work now to contact all members to get records up to date

The left-majority NEC need to work with left-majority Service Group Executives (SGE) to plan how to transform the union to win pay action ballots and pay disputes. That applies especially in local government and in higher education, where we believe the left also has an SGE majority, though perhaps a narrow one. □

- Unison has never discussed proportional representation. Some of the other big Labour affiliates like Unite and CWU have recently supported PR, but we risked having another conference where this didn’t

make the agenda. Yet delegates voted to re-prioritise the agenda on the last day to debate PR. There were very few speeches against, and it passed overwhelmingly, maybe nine to one. Many in Unison’s Labour Link structure who are loyal to Starmer quietly oppose PR; will they make Labour Link say the NDC vote isn’t binding on Unison’s delegation to Labour conference? □

More online

Royal Mail set to strike in August

Pay ballot 28 June to 19 July:
bit.ly/cwu-b

UCU debates how to turn round

Plans for new uni year: bit.ly/c-ucu

Barristers on strike

After years of legal-aid cuts:
bit.ly/barr-s □

School workers’ pay: a long road yet

By Patrick Murphy

At the 18 June TUC demonstration Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union announced that the union would be balloting for industrial action on pay in the autumn term. Coming after the first RMT strikes and reports that postal workers, health workers, and civil servants were also planning ballots, this created a sense of positive momentum in the labour movement (and agitation in the right-wing press about a “return to the 70s”).

In fact, the NEU ballot plan had been agreed at the Union’s conference in April and confirmed at subsequent Executive meetings – though only made public on 18 June.

Sadly, the prospect of strike action is realistically still some way off. The union plans to hold an indicative ballot from 1 October before moving, if the outcome is good enough, to a formal ballot. On that schedule it could be January 2023 before we see pay strikes in schools.

This reflects a long-standing passivity in the NEU response

to persistent real terms pay cuts. Faced with a 0% award for 2021-2 there was no sense of urgency when the Executive met in September and no action plan to consider. Even the October Executive initially had no proposal to consider on our response to a pay freeze officially confirmed weeks earlier.

Only after a detailed paper was submitted by supporters of the Education Solidarity Network (ESN, a left-wing group in the union) was a counter proposal tabled. This borrowed much of the ESN paper but, as always, softened those sections which talked about moving to prepare members for indicative and formal ballots. Nevertheless, we did at last have some practical plans for raising the profile of the campaign and starting the work.

Within a very short time, however, it seemed that the commitment to this strategy was superficial. It wasn’t until January that information about the union’s pay campaign got to members in schools. Nearly five months after the announcement of a 0% pay award a systematic survey of members was run to gauge their response.

There were many encouraging results from the survey. Opposition to the pay freeze and support for the Union’s position and claim were close to unanimous. Over 70% of respondents were willing to strike on the issue. The number of members responding was, however, well below what would be required to win a legal strike ballot.

Where there was engagement, the response was very supportive, but there was a lot of work to do to motivate wider layers of the membership. Old lessons were reaffirmed. Where there were active trained reps and large membership density we could deliver; where these factors were missing, it was much harder.

The February Executive rejected the idea that we should have any specific timetable for building an indicative ballot. By conference in April the cost-of-living crisis was starting to hit home. Now delegates voted to work to an indicative ballot in autumn, and the date of 1 October was set.

The campaign since April has been heavily-shaped by the lessons drawn from the

member pay survey, which included turnout and voting figures for each of the 20,000-plus workplaces. By far the most important factors in determining the best turnouts were the presence of a trained rep, the attendance of the rep at a branch pay briefing, and the holding of a members’ meeting in the workplace. As a result, there is a drive to ensure that every branch organises a pay briefing before and immediately after summer and targets schools in its area without reps but with large memberships to get in and do workplace meetings.

If it was possible to turn the 1 October ballot into a formal ballot that could speed up the arrival of the NEU on to the pay battlefield. The existing schedule was agreed before the RMT strikes and the increasing evidence of the sheer scale of the cost-of-living crunch. There is every chance that other pay battles will have been fought and won or lost before January.

However, the prospects of changing the union’s plans are very slim. The NEU action procedures insist on an indicative ballot before a formal legal

ballot, and the timetable was democratically agreed (though in the conditions described above). No force in the union argued for an earlier timetable at Conference. Any chance of forcing the adoption of a more urgent timetable would have to depend on clear evidence that the mood of members has dramatically changed, that they were chomping at the bit and impatient for action. There’s no evidence that this is the case. A campaign of workplace meetings is proving absolutely necessary preparation.

It is also a problem that the NEU ballot will involve only teachers and exclude our sizeable support staff membership. The rationale for this is that the union doesn’t bargain for support staff pay and the award is set on a different timetable. It is not easy, however, to explain either to teachers or to support staff why the union is preparing for action to win a pay rise for our better-paid members only. It is likely that, if Unison and GMB ballot their school-based members, the NEU will call a similar ballot and co-ordinate action with them. If... □

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- Open borders
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- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
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If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! □

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Back to the flying pickets?



Diary of a trackworker

By Matt Shaw

Well, it's been an interesting week and no mistake. Our picket lines have been well attended, with "spare" pickets going off and setting up lines we thought we wouldn't be able to staff. Going back to the old days of flying pickets!

At least in this area we don't have a serious scab problem. But a lot of us are worrying about what comes next. The three days of strike [21, 23, 25 June] have had a massive impact, and now the union leadership seems to be dithering as to what, when, and where, the next series of actions will be.

Also, there seems to be a serious reluctance on our leadership to tell us what's taking place in the meetings with the bosses. We have heard more from

management, in the shape of propaganda regarding the union's methods.

A daily online strike bulletin should not be impossible in this day and age. It could pick up on disinformation from the Tories and include, but not be limited to, updates on negotiations, access to help for those that need it, and briefings on taking annual leave during disputes and a hundred and one other things that crop up in any dispute.

Meanwhile, our problems with vans has come back to haunt us. It's a typical result of outsourcing. We had four vans in dock with problems which should be routine, but which, due to our leasing agreement, have taken an age and a large number of phone calls to get sorted out, or at least sorted out for two of them.

Instead of us dealing with the garage directly, the leasing company needs to sanction everything before any work can be done. For instance, we had a tyre that had a screw in it. In the past we would have taken it along to our agreed local firm, then they would do



the work and invoice Network Rail. They get paid, and our van is back on the road.

Now we first have to contact the leasing company. They then contact the tyre repair service to arrange a date and get back to us with the date and where the van needs to be. This process often results in huge delays and missed appointments: we are a response team, doing repairs, with no guarantee that something won't drag us away at the last minute and leave us with no access to the affected vehicle. Add in the vagaries of the tyre company's attitude to what constitutes urgent, and what was a simple job can drag on for weeks.

Thank the gods of your choice that you don't need to go through this rigmarole with your own car. □

• Matt Shaw is a railway trackworker

Momentum calls its election

By Mohan Sen

Labour left organisation Momentum is holding elections for its National Coordinating Group, the first since 2020, with the ballot running 28 June-6 July (bit.ly/m-ncg). People can join Momentum to vote until 3 July.

The election is being run by Single Transferable Vote. In the London and Eastern region *Solidarity* prefers the candidates put forward by Labour Left Internationalists (LLI): Maisie Sanders, Abel Harvie-Clark and Andy Warren. (It may be best to make those 1, 2, 3, so LLI doesn't lose out by votes being dispersed).

LLI calls for transfers to the "Your Momentum" (YM) candidates, and voting YM in regions where LLI has no candidates (partly, so LLI tell me, because the nominations process was rushed and included many unnecessary obstacles).

In 2020, the leadership that in 2017 carried out a "coup" dissolving all Momentum's previous structures and replacing them, de facto, by office rule, was replaced by a new one under the banner "Forward Momentum" (FM). That new leadership has introduced some democratic reforms, but has largely failed to make Momentum a visible force boosting battles like the

food couriers' strikes and pushing hard on policies (not just elections) in the Labour Party.

In this election, FM are re-standing as "Your Momentum". The pre-2020 leadership faction, with some new people involved, is standing as "Momentum Organisers". (More: bit.ly/mo-ym)

LLI candidate Andy Warren is a firefighter and Fire Brigades Union activist in London. The LLI website quotes him:

"With the huge class fight that is starting now, in terms of prices and wages and the wider social crisis, we all know the Labour Party is doing an awful job of supporting workers. That's something Momentum could make a huge difference with – through its own campaigning, and through pushing Labour – but it has to reorient to do it.

"In the fire service we face a potentially very serious struggle in the not too distant future to defend our right to collective bargaining, which the Tories have made it very clear they want to demolish. We'll need support from an engaged and mobilised Labour left.

"I also want to emphasise the question of internationalism. Ukraine has sort of fallen out the media window, and Labour is quite happy to let Johnson dominate the agenda on it. By failing to back Ukraine, sections of the

left are contributing to this. We need a left that is absolutely clear that when a small country is harried by a much bigger imperial bully, we stand against that.

"LLI can't be more than a small minority on the Momentum NCG, but there are many issues we can work with a range of people on, despite disagreeing on other issues. It will take us being there to raise many issues and struggles that are crucial." □

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Getting ready for September



John Moloney

Several PCS branches are reporting increases in membership since the RMT announced its strikes. Having a major national strike taking place and being spoken about, in the media but also in workplaces and communities, makes the labour movement visible and reminds people what unions are fundamentally for.

We want to take advantage of that atmosphere to build for our strike ballot in September.

On 6 July, lay reps and officials will meet with full-time officials to agree a plan for a series of campaign meetings. Those meetings will help organise the effort to mobilise the vote in the ballot, but they'll also be about the substantive issues in the campaign, around the cost of living.

The ballot we'll launch in September will be of workers directly employed by the civil service, but we're also continuing campaigning and organising efforts amongst outsourced workers. I'm supporting a new drive for union recognition with the outsourcing company Engie, who employ cleaners and other outsourced workers in the Metropolitan Police, where PCS also organises directly-employed civilian staff. We'll be targeting the mayor's office as part of that campaign. There, too, a back-drop of outsourced workers' strikes, such as the GMB strike of Mitie hospital cleaners and RMT's cleaners' strikes on Churchill and Atalian Servest, will help our campaigning.

I've also been coordinating efforts to put continued pressure on the Government Property Agency, which I've discussed in previous columns. Even short of bringing all outsourced work in house, we want the GPA to commit to minimum standards for outsourced contracts on the government estates it manages, including full contractual sick pay.

On Friday 24 June, I held a meeting with our reps for Department of Education staff, who've faced some of the most draconian "back-to-the-office" pressure of any government department. We want to retain maximum flexibility for workers to work from home, and I'll be supporting our reps in organising campaigning and action against the enforced "back-to-the-office" drive. □

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

Preparing to renew courier pay fight

By Michael Elms

For six months, from December 2021 to May 2022, delivery couriers across the UK waged the most sustained campaign of strikes ever in the gig economy. These strikes have now been suspended over the summer, a quiet time where low volumes of business make it hard to create disruption by striking. During the summer lull in business, workers and the union are preparing to re-start a campaign of industrial action and lobbying and activism by supporters for a pay rise, when the weather changes.

Drivers had previously planned a day of action for 1 August. That has now been postponed to a later date, as couriers in several towns asked for more time to prepare.

Meetings and visits by IWGB union staff and volunteer organisers have been held in Oldham, several towns in the North East, and in Exeter. Conversations are ongoing in the old strike centres like Sheffield as workers rest after an exceptionally intense, lengthy campaign.

For the next round of the struggle to succeed, several things need to be in place. Firstly, a well-supplied strike fund needs to be prepared well in advance. The need to build the strike fund at the same time as undertaking action



earlier this year put undue strain on the strike organisation. Secondly, the IWGB needs to be prepared to increase the amount of staff resources it puts into the campaign. Although a small and under-resourced union, it has the ability to commit more staff to the next round of this battle, and should.

Thirdly, a large national mobilisation of supporters needs to be prepared well in advance. The battle will require repeated direct actions, online email campaigns, and political pressure. All

of this will rely on the efforts of socialists in the UK, and some activists should be found who would be prepared to dedicate a substantial amount of time to working on the campaign.

Thus far, Momentum has failed to mobilise more than the limpest national-level support for this historic gig-economy revolt. The incoming Momentum leadership should be pressed to do better. □

UCU congress dodges Ukraine

By a Cambridge UCU member

The worst aspect of the University and College Union (UCU) congress, 1-3 June, was the arrangement of motions that led to any discussion of the invasion of Ukraine falling off the agenda (along with all motions on "International and European work") – despite two separate branches and the NEC submitting motions on Ukraine and a series of other branches submitting amendments.

The Russian imperialist invasion of Ukraine is perhaps the most significant event in Europe in the last three decades. It is also the subject of much internal debate in the UCU.

To add further embarrassment, the Congress was sent greetings from the President of Ukraine's Education and Science Workers Union, and the greetings were then not read out.

In advance of Congress, Denis Pilash (political scientist at Kyiv National University and activist in Ukrainian social-

ist organisation Sotsialniy Rukh, Social Movement), and Rhian Keyse (Birkbeck UCU and now UCU NEC member) had launched an [open letter](#) to delegates, calling for a strong stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and its labour movement.

Activists in the UCU should initiate a fresh drive to build solidarity with Ukrainian comrades fighting for their right to self-determination and Russian comrades fighting for the withdrawal of Russian troops, and to build links with the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. UCU members missed a crucial opportunity at Congress to push back against the perspective of the "Stop the War Coalition", and develop one in keeping with socialist internationalism.

Activists and supporters of Workers' Liberty in HE will be producing a model motion to promote our perspective soon. Watch this space. □

• More on UCU congress: bit.ly/c-ucu

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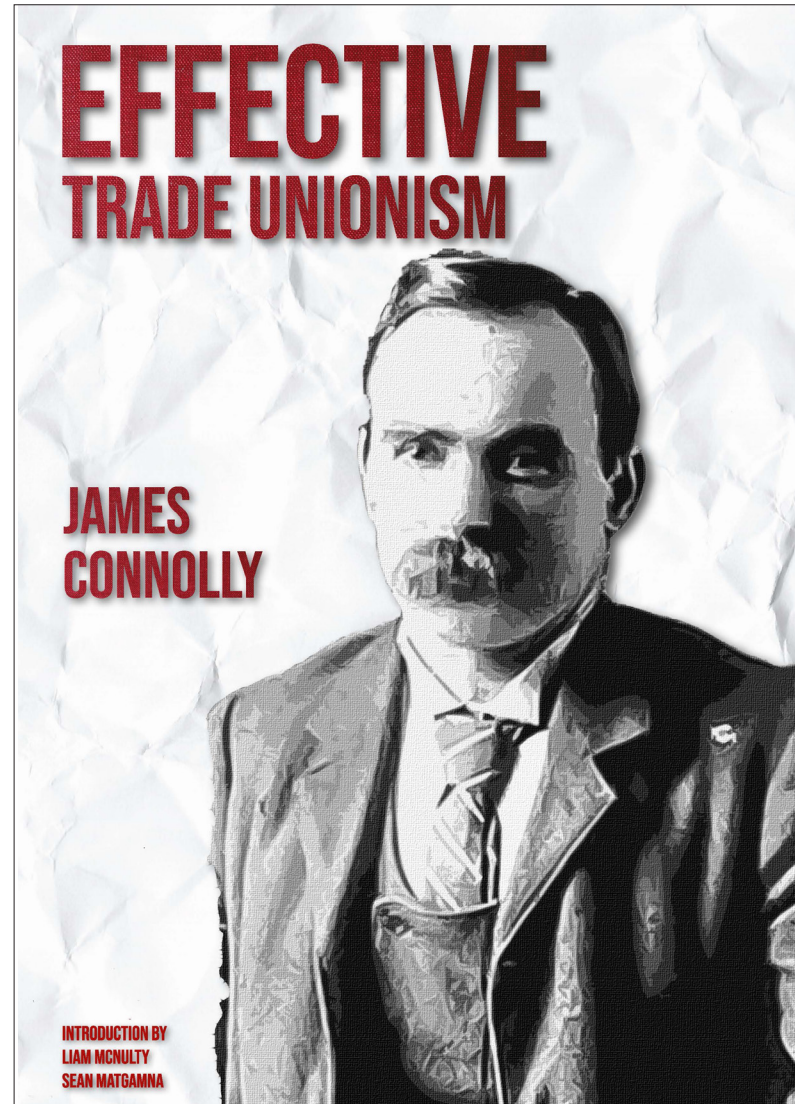


James Connolly on trade unionism

"The natural law of our evolution into class consciousness leads us as individuals to unite in our craft, as crafts to unite in our industry, as industries in our class, and the finished expression of that evolution is, we believe, the appearance of our class upon the political battle-ground with all the economic power behind it to enforce its mandates. Before that day dawns our political parties of the working class are but propagandist agencies, John the Baptists of the New Redemption, but when that day dawns our political party will be armed with all the might of our class; will be revolutionary in fact as well as in thought".

James Connolly wrote about the connections between day-to-day class struggle and socialism aims with a vigour of investigation and experience paralleled only by the Russian Marxists who set themselves to understand how workers' councils ("soviets"), in conditions where stable and legal trade-union organisation was impossible, could develop out of strike and factory committees and into a means of working-class rule of society. As strikes begin to revive, and socialists come to realise that reliance on an individual left-winger slipping through safeguards to be elected leader of the Labour Party could never be a short-cut to socialism, Connolly's investigations are newly relevant.

His texts on the question are collected together for the first time, and some of them reprinted, or reprinted in full, for the first time since they appeared in scattered small left-wing papers and magazines. Out now: £5, or five copies for £18, ten copies for £32. Order online at workersliberty.org/connolly-unions □



Mick Lynch on Connolly

Asked on Peston on TV who his political hero is, RMT rail union leader Mick Lynch [replied](#): James Connolly.

"An Irish, socialist republican... He educated himself and he started non-sectarian trade unionism in Ireland, and he was a hero of the Irish revolution".

Wakefield does not vindicate Starmer

By Mohan Sen

The Tories' 23 June by-election defeats in two very different parts of the country – Wakefield in West Yorkshire, and Tiverton and Honiton in Devon – are evidence the government is in serious trouble. They are far from vindicating current Labour leadership tactics as Keir Starmer claims they do.

In Wakefield, Labour recovered the seat it lost in 2019, but increased its share only eight points. Labour actually got 24% fewer votes than in 2019, winning only because the Tories lost 61% of their 2019 turnout. (Their previous MP had to resign after being convicted of sexually abusing a minor. The Lib Dems lost votes in Wakefield, but they had only 4% there in 2019).

Possibly things will shift after the by-election results, but the latest national opinion poll (22-24 June) has Labour ahead of the Tories by only three points, and the last five polls, by an average of just over five. That is poor for an opposition party, mid-term, against a government immersed in scandals, disarray, and economic troubles.

Turnout

In Tiverton and Honiton turnout was down but still 52%, and the Lib-Dems won with two and a half times as many votes as they did in 2019. Labour came second to the Tories in 2019, with 19.5% of the vote; in 2017 it got 27% to the Liberal Democrats' 8%. In the by-election it fell to less than 4%. There was a strong element of tactical voting to oust the Tories, though in national opinion polls the Lib-Dems are still only around 10% (they got 12% in the December 2019 general election).

The media is full of reports, reinforced by activists who

campaigning in Wakefield, of people with a range of views saying they don't know what Labour stands for. That is perfectly logical, since under Starmer it is advocating almost nothing positive.

Wakefield shows no reliable strategy to win a general election. The way to generate positive enthusiasm for Labour, resist the Tories effectively now, maximise our chances of ousting them early, and ensure a Labour government actually helps change things for the better is a labour movement fight for clear pro-working class policies.

In any case, we need those policies to direct resistance for the time between now and the next general election – which, unless we step up mobilisation enough to make the Tories unable to govern, will be in 2024. □

How do the constituencies compare?

■ Wakefield ■ Tiverton and Honiton --- National average

Rate of people claiming unemployment benefit



Average weekly pay for full-time employees



Percentage of population aged 65 or over



Average house price



Source: House of Commons Library constituency dashboard

BBC

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Solidarity

For a workers' government

MAKE WAGES SPIRAL!

By Martin Thomas

A wage-price spiral would be better than the poverty spiral we face now. Prices are rising about 10%. If wages catch up by rising 10%, workers still lose out, but only temporarily, in the catch-up time.

If prices rise 10% and wages rise three or four per cent, then workers are six or seven per cent worse off, and not just for a year. Even if price rises slow down in 2023, we have a worse starting-point for the whole future.

But, the Tories reply, if workers win 10% rises, then companies will "have to" raise prices by even more than 10%. They don't "have to" at all. If everything goes up 10%, then the bosses' profits go up 10% too. They do ok. If they increase prices by more than 10%, it's to raise profits.

They may be able to grab that extra. Bosses usually can't raise prices at will. If they could, they'd always raise prices steeply to raise profits, whatever wages were. Generally, a real-wage rise squeezes profits until bosses have found ways, maybe through new technologies, to compensate.

But if easy credit allows demand to spiral further – more investment, more new projects, more luxury spending – then prices can indeed be pushed up more than 10%. That's

what happens in "inflationary booms".

Up to a point, price inflation helps capitalism. It encourages demand for products (buy now, it'll be more expensive tomorrow). It benefits firms which pay suppliers in arrears over workers who must pay hard cash or incur big credit costs. It slims down debts.

Capitalists worry, however, about high and unpredictable inflation. They can't plan; late payers become dead losses; lenders become cautious because they don't know what repayments will be worth. Financial reserves evaporate. Countries' funds flow abroad. Many middle-class people, the capitalists' social and political sub-stratum, are ruined.

Thus capitalist adherence for so long to the gold standard, and thus neoliberal capitalism's adherence to modest "inflation targets", 2% or 4%.

Top CEOs' pay rose 34% in 2021. Private-sector capitalists are often paying sizeable wage rises now, because they're short of staff.

Governments look at it differently. The Tories know that cutting public-sector real wages will mean a decline in demand for the products those wages would otherwise have bought, and a recession, small or large. They also know that recession (high interest rates, tight credit) is an unreliable and slow in-

strument to tame inflation. The engineered Thatcher and (in the USA) "Volcker shock" recessions after 1979-80 took three or four years to get inflation down to 3 or 4%.

Yet the Tories hope to calibrate policy to have real wages plunge overall and profits rise, with a mild recession, to settle back prices.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced a 10% increase in state pensions next April. He claims that's ok because state pensions don't enter as a cost into marketed products. The real reason is that the Tories depend heavily on pensioner votes.

Overall, Sunak wants to reduce the public-service wages and costs which do *not* feed through to marketed products in order to avoid raising *taxes on the rich*.

He paid out billions in lockdown-relief and pandemic contracts to private business, and so far has managed mainly by raising taxes on the worse-off and middling. He wants to plan tax cuts for the well-off, and wants public-service workers to pay the cost.

But a spiral of increased wages for workers – best, "escalator clauses" which raise wages monthly in line with prices - and increased taxes for the rich would be better than what we face now. □