



For social ownership of the banks and industry

CHANGE LABOUR TO BEAT TORIES

**Good riddance to
Johnson. Now:**

» **Make unions and
Labour ranks fight
Starmer**

» **Reverse Tory cuts,
pay curbs, attacks
on rights**

» **Back the strikes**



Cartoon, with thanks, from George Newman (@gewman)

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Russia threatens worse to come

Solidarity with Ukraine,
and with Ukraine's
workers

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Rail, mail, and other strikes

Aslef and BT workers
have mandates, Royal
Mail result 19 July

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Trial time for Donald Trump?

The drift to the right
exposed by the J6
hearings continues

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Connolly and the Protestants

Connolly worked for
class unity in Belfast,
but faced barriers

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The ideas that Starmer wants to ban

Change Labour to beat Tories



Johnson is going. The Tories are discredited and at odds with each other. Yet polling data, and mountains of evidence from everyday life, suggest that, while the Tories are reviled, they still have a strong base of right-wing, nationalist support. They also tell us there is little positive enthusiasm for Starmer Labour.

Keir Starmer's leadership is offering little on the huge issues facing workers and society: collapsing living standards, the threat of climate change, and the mess of Brexit. The relatively left-wing pledges Starmer made in the 2020 Labour leadership election have been ditched – and replaced with a void.

Starmer pushed the windfall tax, but only on the calculation that it was "safe" because the Tories would soon do it anyway. Since then, virtually nothing. Starmer's [programme](#) amounts only to claiming Labour will (somehow) bring about greater economic growth, in turn (somehow) automatically raising living standards. That's less left-wing than what Tony Blair's leadership advocated pre-1997. Rather than pointing out that the Tory tax-cut demagogues plan to cut public services, and advocating taxes on the rich to fund services, Starmer has complained of them doing

"magic money tree" politics. Capitalist economic growth does not automatically produce rising living standards! It is a matter of *class struggle*. Growth can come with increased inequality and waste, and capitalists fight to make it that way.

We want to get the Tories out. To do that – to do it at all, probably, and for sure to do it to solid good effect – the unions and the Labour ranks must change Labour. In 1990, after the revolt against the poll tax and the opening up of a substantial Labour lead in opinion polls (usually around 10%, sometimes over 20%), Tory MPs ousted Margaret Thatcher, abandoned the tax, and started trying to mend the NHS a little. With a modest economic recovery and Labour under Neil Kinnock advocating little – though more than Starmer is now! – that was enough for the Tories to win in 1992.

Since 2008, workers have paid the price for the labour movement's failure to use the relatively favourable conditions after the mid-1990s (economic growth, low unemployment, increased public spending and public sector employment) to build up its strength; and then its failure to switch into fighting mode when the crisis hit. The Blair-Brown governments had brought some concessions (minimum wage, tax credits, increased NHS budgets), but weakened rather than helping strengthen the labour movement.

It will now take aggressive labour movement struggle, and the winning of



relatively-speaking radical government policies, to halt and start to reverse the social regression we have lived through – let alone reconstruct society on a more equal, sustainable basis, and let alone socialism.

Socialists must work for the widest possible wave of strikes and protests to defend and raise wages and benefits, and for Labour to back the strikes. Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy has had to apologise publicly for explicitly opposing the BA Heathrow workers' 10% pay demand, and Starmer has had to back down on implied threats to sack Labour front-benchers who have joined rail picket lines: but we need positive support from Labour for workers' disputes! As Labour right-winger Jon Cruddas has rightly written, "Actually, it is why the party was created in the first place".

We need the labour movement to call Starmer and co. to account and de-

mand Labour campaigns for the many left-wing [policies](#) (on inequality, trade union rights, climate change, public ownership, migrants' rights) passed by its conference.

At the same time the Labour leadership has doubled down on ditching left-wing economic policies, it has doubled down on supporting a hard Brexit.

Starmer says he wants to amend Brexit – but only marginally. Starmer presents Brexit as essentially a done deal which can now only be tidied at the edges. Yet a clear majority of the public thinks Brexit has gone badly (54-16%) and that it is "not done" (54-21%). (YouGov, 28 June. Labour supporters think Brexit is not done 65-14%, and oppose Starmer's pledge not to seek to rejoin 55-30%.)

The left should advocating rejoining the EU. We should point out that a Labour leadership that opposes restoring free movement between the UK and EU, and opposes rejoining the Single Market and Customs Union, cannot be serious about sorting out the economic mess and the political mess in Northern Ireland which the Tories have created. □



Corrections

It's 40 million women of childbearing age in abortion-hostile states in the USA, not 58% of 40 million, as per garbling in *Solidarity* 640. □

After Johnson, we breathe more easily

By Martin Thomas

The Tory elite knew Boris Johnson was a dishonest chancer when they gave him the MP nominations to win the July 2019 Tory leadership contest.

They chose him for leader *because* he was a dishonest chancer, not *despite* it. Stymied and baffled over Theresa May's inability to get a parliamentary majority for a Brexit formula, they turned to Johnson because he could "get Brexit done" with his slipperiness, his bluster, his lack of scruple, and his tinpot-autocrat tendencies.

He had no clear scheme for Brexit. He was not even particularly convinced of Brexit. As Mayor of London, he had boasted of being "pro-immi-

grant". In February 2016, before the Brexit referendum, he had drafted an [article](#) backing Remain.

Those who predicted economic damage for British capitalism from new barriers might exaggerate but yet not be "completely wrong". The Single Market? "The membership fee seems rather small for all that access". Brexit would stimulate Scottish separation, and encourage international "swaggering" by Putin.

Days later he announced a decision ("agonisingly difficult", he said) to back Brexit, but (in terms not used then) a "soft" Brexit, in which Britain would still have access to the [Single Market](#).

In July 2018 he went along with Theresa May's relatively

"soft-Brexit" Chequers Plan, before resigning in protest at it a few days later. No wonder Tory MPs saw him as someone who wouldn't mind much what sort of Brexit he could "do", as long as he got credit for it.

No other potential Prime Minister would have tried to suspend Parliament so he could get a Brexit deal through without Parliamentary scrutiny, or signed a deal and then quickly repudiated and gone to war with the EU over the deal's lynchpin, the Northern Ireland Protocol.

No other Prime Minister would have been as blustering over Covid curbs. (March 2020: "Within the next 12 weeks... we can send coronavirus packing"). No other Prime Minister would have laced to-

gether hard-right aggression over the Police Act, the Borders Act, the Rwanda scheme, with erratic essays in economic populism.

"People now breathe more easily and the air seems cleaner", [wrote](#) Rosa Luxemburg when Sergei Romanov, Tsarist chief of the Moscow Military District, was killed in February 1905. Likewise we breathe more easily now that Johnson is leaving office.

Luxemburg knew that the Tsarist hierarchy would replace Romanov by someone equally evil. Her comment criticised the idea of rousing the people against Tsarism by way of assassinating individual officials.

And Johnson's Tory replacement may be more coherently right-wing than Johnson him-

self is. But they will feel more constraint and caution about policies. The Tories have reluctantly learned (for now) a lesson about the limits of what they can get away with.

For the next few weeks, we have a lame-duck Tory government, a weak opponent for strikes and protests.

If the new Tory leader comes to office under pressure, then, however right-wing they are in general, they can be made to grant concessions and shelve policies in their early days, when they can do that with minimal loss of prestige and authority, under pretext of political house-cleaning.

The Tories' difficulty is the labour movement's opportunity. If we mobilise to seize it. □

Putin threatens worse to come

By Dan Katz

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, speaking to Russian parliamentarians on Thursday 7 July, stated: "We haven't started anything yet in earnest... They want to defeat us on the battlefield... Let them try."

This war might well continue for months or years. Workers' Liberty wants to see the war end, of course, but the only democratic ending is that Ukraine should force Putin's army out of its territory. Ukraine's right to self-determination, its democracy, and its labour movement should be defended against Russian imperialism.

Putin's military continues to pound towns across Ukraine with missiles and shells, and its immediate targets are the remaining Ukrainian-controlled areas of Donetsk.

On 3 July the Russian military captured the last Ukraine-held town in Luhansk region, the city of Lysychansk. The Russian military is making slow progress in Eastern Ukraine, but at great human cost, outgunning the Ukrainian military, effectively destroying whole towns with artillery and missile fire, and suffering a great many casualties among its own forces.

The Ukrainian President's office claims that 37,000 Russian soldiers, including ten generals, have been killed since the invasion began on 24 February. They state that 1,605 tanks, 405 planes and helicopters have been destroyed.

Ukraine's current estimate is that \$750bn will be required to rebuild the country. Over one quarter of Ukrainians have been forced out of their homes.

In late June and early July some modern, effective, US artillery systems, HIMARS, have become operational. Ukraine seems to be using them to effectively target Russian control centres and arms depots in Donbas.

The US is to deliver four more HIMARS systems, bringing the total to 12. Ukraine is demanding air defence systems from the West to defend its cities, and more and better artillery. The Western powers should deliver these systems to help Ukraine defend itself from Russian imperialist aggression.

Ukrainian guerrilla action continues in the South, around Melitopol, and on Saturday 9 July a railway bridge was blown up 25km north of the town. The Ukrainian state has asked all Ukrainians to leave the occupied areas of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia and seems to be preparing a counter-offensive against Russian occupation.

On the British left *Socialist Worker* opposes Russian missile attacks on Ukrainian shopping centres, rightly calling these Russian killings of civilians "murder", but only to conclude: "The [Western warmongers of NATO] will likely demand more weapons and a further acceleration of the supply of death-dealing technology to Ukraine."

And *Socialist Worker's* alternative is what? How should Ukraine's workers react? Give in, or fight back?

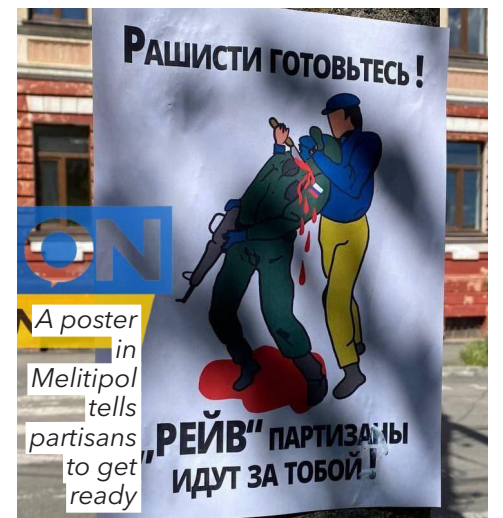
Should Ukraine's workers demand their government refuse western weapons, allowing the Russian military to destroy their towns, smash their labour movements, abolish democracy? Or demand more weapons so they can fight to defend their democracy and workers' rights?

The entire Ukrainian labour movement is for the Ukrainian war to defend Ukraine's right to self-determination. No one on the Ukrainian left supports the *Socialist Worker* position. The Ukrainian trade unionists understand what is at stake. They have seen what type of regimes were set up in Russian-occupied Donbas after Russia occupied parts of Eastern Ukraine after 2014. These areas are run by Moscow-sanctioned warlords and gangsters, who rule using terror.

Exactly the same regimes are being imposed in the south of Ukraine, now. Ukrainian mayors are abducted, oppositionists arrested and tortured, workers are sacked for opposing the new Russian authorities. □

- The Ukrainian labour movement has been campaigning for months against a law gutting workers' and trade union rights, bill 5371. On 10 June, the Rada member sponsoring 5371, Galina Tretyakova, removed the bill from consideration. Vladyslav Starodubtsev of Sotsialnyi Rukh told us the labour movement should assume the withdrawal is more of a "tactical pause" – but still described it as a "huge win".

- Bulgaria looks likely to be heading towards its fourth general election in less than two years. It has been further seriously destabilised by Russia's attack on Ukraine. The government recently lost a no confidence vote. The central grouping in the former ruling coalition, a pro-Western party, We Continue Change (PP), led by Kiril Petkov, continues to cling on. It seems to have doubled-down on its confrontational, anti-Putin stance by expelling 70



Russian embassy officials, accusing them of spying.

- Maria Zakharova, the thuggish spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry, stated on Friday 7 July that "Russia will take harsh measures against Lithuania and the European Union" if the transit of goods through Lithuania to and from Kaliningrad did not resume. Kaliningrad is an exclave of Russia between the Baltic Sea, Poland, and Lithuania. EU sanctions imposed at the start of the Russian invasion are being introduced in phases. Currently rules prevent the transport of iron, steel and metals to Kaliningrad through Lithuania. On 10 July those sanctions will be extended to include alcohol and cement. Lithuania, a strong supporter of Ukraine, has recently come into conflict with the German government. Germany wants to find a compromise with Russia. It wants to avoid direct war with Russia as well as avoid Russia cutting off critical gas supplies to Germany. □

Ideas for Freedom 2022

By Cathy Nugent

Workers' Liberty held its annual festival of socialist discussion from 30 June to 3 July, with a walking tour through the radical-history sites of Clerkenwell (Thursday 30 June), a showing of *The Young Karl Marx* (Friday 1 July), and two days of debates and

talks at Camden School for Girls over the weekend.

It was good to get back to a mainly in-person event this year, although there was limited online access over the weekend, including for a particular highlight on Saturday, a session on workers' solidarity with Ukraine, with speakers from Ukrainian socialist organisation Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement), and Alla Voiskaya, a Russian anti-war activist.

Internationalism was a strong theme, with sessions on: the fight for reproductive freedom worldwide (hearing from feminist activists from Poland and Chile); the struggle for self-determination in Western Sahara; protests in Sri

Lanka with Niyanthini Kadirgamar, Feminist Collective for Economic Justice, and Devaka Gunawardena; the revival of the US labour movement; a socialist history of Israel-Palestine; the history of Hong Kong; and class struggles in China.

Every year (apart from 2020, when we had to cancel IFF) we aim to organise the event as accessible to where socialist activists of any level of experience. We had "beginner" sessions on revolutionary socialist ideas. It's not all political theory and class struggle either. We had discussions on Orwell with Dorian Lynskey, on Joe Strummer with Gregor Gall, and on Shostakovich with John Cunningham.

Most importantly, in contrast to some event organised by other socialist groups, we encourage genuine open debate. We organise debates – this year on the Labour Party and on the "Progressive Alliance". And our chairs do not ignore speakers from the floor likely to disagree with Workers' Liberty or the platform speakers.

If a "liberal", enquiring and open-minded attitude to Marxist analysis sounds good but you didn't attend this year, look out for our events over the next year and IFF 2023 next summer. If you attended and were impressed, work with us and consider joining us. □



Socialist summer camp

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

Summer schedule

Nos. 642-4 will be 27 July, 17 August, 31 August; then back to our usual weekly schedule. □

A “time and place” for Stalin-worship?



By Jim Denham

The Young Communist League (YCL) turned out in some numbers for the TUC’s “cost of living” demo on 18 June, all dressed up in black with oh-so-“militant” red bandanas and flags.

This kind of posing has become standard practice for the YCL, but their chants were new: “One solution, revolution!” and “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh! Che Guevara! Stalin!”

These slogans were obviously intended to (1) promote the YCL’s self-image as ever-so-left-wing r-revolutionaries; (2) annoy the hated “Trots”; (3) direct a metaphorical two fingers at the adult Communist Party of Britain, whose contingent on the demo was

immediately followed by the YCL’s.

In August 2021 the adult CPB issued detailed protocols on how YCL members should conduct themselves on social media, including the need to avoid “adulation of Stalin and support for the substantial abuses of state power which occurred under his leadership”. Such adulation is “not compatible with our party’s judgement of these matters” warned the adults (they also warned against “antisemitic conspiracy theories – including Holocaust denial” having presumably identified this as a further problem within the YCL).

YCL members at the time let it be known that they would defy these instructions.

It will be interesting to see how – and whether – the adult party responds to 18 June, but an indication has been given by Andrew Murray, a leading CPBer for many years before “leaving” to join Labour and become one of Jeremy Corbyn’s advisers in 2016. Murray now has a fortnightly column in the *Morning Star*, and his response (29 June) to the antics of the YCL is worth quoting in full:

Young Communists attending the TUC’s “We Demand Better” demonstration were demanding more than better. Some chanted “Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, Stalin” as they marched. This has upset the people one would anticipate being upset.

The critics are disturbed by the last name in the chant, of course. Ho and Che are still suitable for T-shirts, and



can be invoked in polite company. Stalin, not so much.

In the context of a mass labour movement demonstration, my own view would tend towards John Lennon’s. The Beatle sagely advised that “if you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao, you ain’t going to make it with anyone anyhow.”

So, time and a place. However, if there is to be a debate on the Soviet leader, let’s start with Che: “In the so-called mistakes of Stalin lies the difference between a revolutionary attitude and a revisionist attitude.

“You have to look at Stalin in the historical context in which he moves, you don’t have to look at him as some kind of brute, but in that particular historical context. I have come to communism because of daddy Stalin and nobody must come and tell me that I mustn’t read Stalin.”

As for Ho Chi Minh, when Vietnamese party cadre gathered in a remote region for a conference in 1948, he named their location Mount Stalin. When he later met Stalin he asked for an autograph.

Perhaps all this tells us is that Ho and Che remained young Communists at heart. However, “Ho and Che good, Stalin bad” is not a view they would have remotely understood.

Murray is right that Ho and Che were Stalinists, but the YCL’s addition of “Stalin” to the names celebrated has political significance.

The random young person with a Che Guevara (or even a Ho Chi Minh) t-shirt is celebrating real battles against US imperialism while not thinking critically (or even knowing much) about the shape of the alternative to US imperialism which Guevara (and Ho) fought for. The devotee of Stalin is celebrating what? The Moscow Trials? The Great Terror? The millions of avoidable deaths? The Five-Year Plans? World War 2? And if they celebrate Stalin for that, why not also Churchill?

Murray’s attitude is probably representative of a chunk of the CPB adult leadership: by all means celebrate Stalin, but do so in private: as he says: “So, a time and a place.” The YCL may be irresponsible poseurs – but here at least they’re honest. □



More online

Pablo Velasco on the Stalinist politics of Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh: bit.ly/ho-che-stal

Correct usage is not middle-class



Do you care whether the correct word to use with uncountable nouns (e.g. furniture, milk, money, fun) is “less” or with countable nouns (e.g. books, chairs, melodies) is “fewer”? Well, you should.

The Deputy Labour Party Leader Angela Rayner appears to think not. According to the *Daily Telegraph* Rayner was angry that Hansard (the record of who says what in the House of Commons) wanted to correct her use of “less” to “fewer”. She retorted: “I won’t let Hansard correct my working-class grammar”.

The Hansard scribes were just doing their job. Why not just accept the correction and have done? Rayner’s reference to her “working-class grammar” makes her seem

unaware that there is no such thing as “working-class grammar”. There are, of course, regional accents and usages which tend to be identified as “working-class”, Geordie, Scouse, Yorkshire, Glaswegian etc., but that is an entirely different matter.

The point of language is to communicate and for this to be meaningful there have to be shared rules, standards, and codes. Otherwise it obstructs communication. That isn’t about talking “posh”.

The wider point is possibly most important of all: Rayner is reinforcing the common middle or upper class perception that the working class can’t possibly use correct grammar and syntax because they are thick.

Language has always been used as a weapon in class conflict to put down workers. I’m sure most readers will know of instances. Yet must be noted

that many of the finest class fighters have always had a good command of language. The German working class-born SPD leader August Bebel had a fine command of German; in the USA, the English of Philip Randolph, head of the Sleeping Car Porters’ Union, was so eloquent it was sometimes described as “Shakespearean”; James Connolly’s English was direct, accessible, and flawless; Elizabeth Gurley Flynn likewise.

Here Rayner is not defending the working class but letting us down. She seems to accept that there are certain norms for working-class speech and writing which are sub-standard, but that’s OK. Well, it’s not! We challenge and fight the ruling class at all levels, in all things, including in the field of language. □

Len Glover, Lancashire

Oppose the extradition

By Mohan Sen

On 17 June Priti Patel approved Julian Assange’s extradition to the US on “espionage” charges. Assange is going to appeal the decision and legal struggles could go on for several years.

As we have said many times over many years, Assange is no political hero. That is irrelevant to the extradition issue. Assange faces prosecution under the US’s Espionage Act, and spending the rest of his life in prison there, because of his work, as founder of WikiLeaks, helping to expose the machinations and crimes of powerful states including the US and UK.

The drive to get Assange is part of the trend towards more secretive and authoritarian regimes worldwide, including in bourgeois-liberal states. This is the first time a publisher or journalist has



been charged under the Espionage Act since it was established in 1917.

A month ago the UK government had to reach a settlement with one of Assange lawyers, Jennifer Robinson, after it admitted she was subject to surveillance.

Socialists and labour movement activists should oppose Assange’s extradition to the US and support his right to return home to Australia. We should demand the Labour Party commits to reversing Patel’s decision. □

Royal Mail ballot closes 19 July

By Mohan Sen

The Communication Workers' Union ballot for strikes over pay in Royal Mail closes on 19 July.

CWU general secretary Dave Ward has written to every Labour MP calling on them to support the union's upcoming strikes in mail as well as in telecom. It's very likely the summer will see hundreds of thousands of workers in unions affiliated to the Labour Party on strike (the CWU is Labour's fourth biggest affiliate, with about 200,000 members). The left should do everything it can to win Labour support for these battles, and use them to disrupt the party's current right-wing direction of travel.

On 11 July thousands of workers at Crown Post Offices (larger post of-

fices operated directly by the public-owned Post Office Ltd) struck for the third day in their ongoing fight over pay.

And Royal Mail managers in Unite are already set to take industrial action over pay and job cuts (work to rule 15-19 July, strikes [20-22 July](#)).

Royal Mail workers previously voted for strikes in 2019, when the action was scuppered by a court injunction, and again in 2020, when the CWU leadership retreated because of the pandemic.

Seemingly in response to the ballot, management has just introduced an overtime ban in offices around the country – but curiously not all of them. A postal worker in North London told us he was surprised, as the whole Royal Mail system relies so heavily on over-

time; he wasn't sure yet either what the company has in mind or how it will come to impact workers' attitude to the dispute.

He said that in his office at least, most are keen to strike, but the strikes and strike votes by RMT and other unions are not really generating extra enthusiasm.

The CWU has campaigned much more actively than unions usually do to get a big yes vote, and not just on social media. There have been dozens, probably hundreds, of office gate meetings all over the UK.

Physical gatherings to build solidarity and demonstrate collective strength are good, though it doesn't seem these meetings have yet provided opportunities for discussion. □



Pic: Angela Christofolou

Over 20,000 people are estimated to have marched in London Trans+ Pride, 9 July 2022. It was much more political, left-wing, angry, much more explicitly a protest, than most wider LGBT+ Pride marches in UK today. It had much less institutional backing or media coverage. At a time when the government is pushing against trans rights, it was also much bigger than last year (a few thousand). There was no obvious union presence: we must build this in future. The Bristol Pride march the same day (bit.ly/b-pride) also centred on trans rights. □

Gota goes. What next?

By Sacha Ismail

Images of protesters playing in the swimming pool of Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa have gone around the world. On 9 July, after the storming of Rajapaksa's mansion, the demonstrations that have convulsed Sri Lanka since April achieved their central immediate goal, as he announced he would resign (on 13 July).

In 2019 and 2020 the

national-populist, Sinhalese-chauvinist coalition led by the Rajapaksas (his brother was prime minister when the protests began) won heavy election victories.

Protesters have demanded the abolition of the executive presidency, whose history is bound up with the state's wars against the Tamils and other minorities and which the Rajapaksas had strengthened through a constitutional amendment in 2020.

We must build solidarity with those demanding democratisation and justice for Sri Lanka's minority peoples.

And those demanding left-wing economic policies to turn the crisis in the interests of Sri Lanka's working class and peasantry.

The national unity government in the process of being formed is likely to push for yet more neoliberal economic reforms, as part of loan deals with the In-

ternational Monetary Fund and governments including India and China. □

• One of the Sri Lankan activists who spoke at our Ideas for Freedom event, Niyanthini Kadirgamar, will be speaking to us just after we go to press. See: bit.ly/niyinterview

• Protest at the Sri Lankan High Commission in London – Sunday 17 July, 1pm, 13 Hyde Park Gardens, W2 2LU



By the measure of weekly Covid death-count per million, two of the countries which have done best across the pandemic, Taiwan and New Zealand, are now worst in the world (29 and 21), and Norway, which has done among the best of countries unable to close their borders rigidly, is now among the worst in Europe (14, with Belarus on 15 and Greece on 17. The UK is 7. All lower than before mass vaccination, e.g. UK 127 in early 2021).

That shows that comparisons between countries need to take the long term (e.g. in Europe, by the measure of excess deaths since early 2020, Sweden at 4% has done better so far than say Portugal at 8%, let alone the UK at 9%); and that the pandemic is far from over. In the UK, as in many countries, hospital admissions with Covid have been rising since early June, thanks to the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants. And we don't know what new variants, or other infectious diseases, will spread in the Northern Hemisphere winter. Covid-curb policies are still needed:

- 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 "disabilities" for employment matters
- requisition Big Pharma, especially its patents and technical know-how, to speed vaccine production and delivery world-wide. □

Second hand books

Workers' Liberty is selling hundreds of second hand-books. Visit bit.ly/2h-books to order. □

Uber, capitalism, Lord Peter Mandelson, and GMB

By Sacha Ismail

"Uber broke laws, duped police and secretly lobbied governments, leak reveals". So the *Guardian* [summarises](#) its exposé of platform delivery and transport corporation Uber, based on 124,000 leaked documents.

On 10 and 11 July it published 26 articles as part of its [series](#) on "The Uber files", with more to come on 12

and 13 July. As well as illustrating vividly many things about the nature of the profit system, of capitalism – the *Guardian* reporting covers both the super-exploitation of Uber's drivers and, in more depth, the corporation's wider anti-social activities – the revelations also raise more specific issues for the labour movement.

One of the *Guardian's* [stories](#) reveals the important role played by Peter

Mandelson in Uber's global rise, and in particular its development of connections with pro-Putin "oligarchs". Now the likes of Mandelson are regaining their influence in the Labour Party, with their hypocrisy over Ukraine and Russia, and their colonisation of the labour movement in order to serve their commitment to the interests of capitalism.

As we reported in [Solidarity 639](#), the GMB union, which has recently signed

an sweetheart-type agreement with Uber, invited one of its senior managers, Emma O'Dwyer, to speak at its 2022 congress.

GMB officials took the opportunity to make clear they have no intention of engaging in struggle against Uber, even over their members' immediate interests. The "Uber files" revelations underline just how shameful the GMB's stance is. □

Sixty years after Silent Spring



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

Seven miles beneath the surface of the ocean in the Mariana Trench, the bodies of crustaceans are contaminated with fire retardants, micro plastics and other toxic chemicals. Novel entities – “chemicals and other new types of engineered materials or organisms not previously known to the Earth system” – are increasingly found in the most remote locations on the planet.

It is thought that human activity has generated 350,000 new chemicals since the industrial revolution. They include plastics, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, and heavy metals mobilised by human activity. We have virtually no knowledge of how these novel entities move and degrade through the biosphere, or the harmful effects they may have on humans and other species.

A new study from the Stockholm Resilience Centre concludes that we have breached the planetary boundary for novel entities because we have no idea what we are producing or where the waste products end up. Capitalism society has the technological capacity to collect and process vast amounts of data but no-one is monitoring the production of novel entities nor analysing the impacts on the Earth's ecology.

The regulations that exist are very

light-touch and reactive. The chemical industry strongly resists any efforts to regulate and operates according to a policy of harmless unless proven otherwise. Like their counterparts in Big Oil and Big Tobacco they employ for-hire scientists to run denialist campaigns to keep their toxic products on the market.

Global chemical production has increased 50-fold since 1950 and is expected to triple again by 2050. In 2017 approximately 92 billion tonnes of raw material were extracted to produce novel entities. The UN predicts this will rise to 190 billion tonnes by 2060.

Human labour is producing ever greater quantities of novel entities, rearranging the atoms of the Earth at an ever accelerating rate and scattering the results at accelerating speed across the globe with wanton disregard for the consequences.

The lack of regulation, monitoring, and management mean it is very difficult to understand the range of physical, chemical and biological risks. 30,000 of the 70,000 new chemicals that have been created in the last decade were only registered in countries of the global South where regulatory oversight and workers rights to occupational health and safety are virtually non-existent. Even DDT, which was famously outlawed after Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, is still manufactured and used in agriculture in China, India and North Korea.

This lack of robust chemicals man-

agement means there are many “unknown unknowns” that could threaten vital Earth systems: “novel entities could surprise us, for example, with effects on ocean chemistry affecting sea spray formation, an important component of the climate system, or with the effects of antibiotic-resistant bacteria with global spread.”

These unknown unknowns are especially troubling because many novel entities persist in the environment and accumulate over time. As Rachel Carson described in *Silent Spring*, trace elements of toxins in the environment can reach high concentrations as they pass through the food web. This is a particular problem for marine life.

The highest concentrations of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are found in the surface microlayer of the ocean. This is also where we find the highest concentration of fish eggs, larvae and micro algae which form the foundation of the marine food web. POPs readily bind to fat and accumulate in the fat cells of animals. Through the process of bioaccumulation, the highest concentrations of these fat-loving toxins are found in top predators and particularly in the fetuses and breast milk of large mammals.

Marine biologist Callum Roberts describes how 50% of first-born bottlenose dolphin calves fail to survive their first year after receiving almost a lifetime's accumulated toxic load from their mothers. Roberts concludes: “the thing about marine mammals that dis-

turbs me is that they aren't very different to us.” (Ch.9, *The Ocean of Life*)

The ILO estimates that one million workers die each year from exposure to chemicals at work. Of these two thirds are cancer deaths, highlighting that there can often be a long delay between exposure and effects. The long delay between exposure and effects is not limited to carcinogens but includes endocrine disrupters and mutagens with intergenerational impacts.

Hazards magazine notes: “Long latency periods between exposures and onset of these work-related diseases mean many of today's deaths are the product of the much lower levels of chemical consumption decades ago. Yet we continue to introduce more chemicals, in greater volumes, in more forms and combinations, with the industry's attention focussed on applications rather than risks.” This warning applies as much to today's workers as it does to the broader biosphere.

From the earliest days of industrial capitalism workers safety reps have been at the forefront of campaigns against toxic chemicals. Chemicals that poison the union rank-and-file eventually find their way into the air, soil and waterways. Many labour movement and environmental campaigns are signed up to the [ChemTrust](#) statement calling for a circular economy and precautionary approach to novel entities. Trade unions and environmentalist organisations are natural allies in this battle. □

Putin's new laws crush rights in Russia

By Michael Baker

On 6 July a new law passed the Russian parliament, in theory allowing employers near-complete control over working hours. Employers can now:

- Force workers to work overtime without their consent, with the previous limits on maximum overtime per month removed
- Force workers to work two or more consecutive shifts, and change shift schedules with no prior notice
- Deny workers holiday or weekends for indefinite periods, and recall workers from holiday at will
- Pay workers less than the current legal minimum for overtime

In the words of independ-

ent trade union [Uchitel'](#) (“Teacher”): “In practice this [law] allows public and private businesses to shift financial problems onto the shoulders of the workers. In the explanatory note to the bill we are told that the bill is intended primarily to be used for workers in the defence industry. However, the text of the law in no way prevents similar measures being applied to other areas of the economy.”

The union called for deputies to reconsider the bill, and for workers to unionise as a matter of urgency, to fight for whatever rights they can still protect.

Two new laws have been brought into effect strengthening repressive measures against anti-war activists. One has redefined “foreign agents”

as anyone receiving “any foreign influence in any form”, and prevented all foreign agents from a number of jobs, including anything public-facing, and anything working with individuals under 18. The other restricts the organisation of any public event of any kind in a wide range of places. This includes all train stations, bus stops, ports, airports, playgrounds, schools, police stations and hospitals. In practice, this is a complete ban on any public gathering of any kind.

Moscow Municipal Deputy Aleksei Gorinov has been sentenced to seven years of prison for stating in a meeting with other deputies that the war in Ukraine was a war, rather than a “special military operation”. Gorinov's sentence is the harshest for “spreading

fake news” since the new law was introduced, shortly after the war began.

According to news site The Insider, from March to June 2022 63 cargo trains have derailed. The exact reasons are not specified, but this number is 50% higher than the number of derailed trains in the same period last year. There are signs of at least some co-ordinated obstructions: in the Bryansk Oblast this week an unidentified explosive device was detonated in front of a cargo train, immediately derailling it. The local governor claimed that no damage was done to the tracks, but that specialised services were in place to replace the cargo train.

Workers in both the state-owned United Shipbuilding

Corporation and oligarch Alisher Usmanov's mining and processing combine have been offered army service in place of diminished work. As exports continue to suffer, workers have been invited to meetings with management where they are asked whether they would either like to fight as “voluntary forces”, or sign up for an army contract. In one reported case, of twenty workers asked, not one agreed.

Novosibirsk scientist Dmitry Kolker has died in custody, three days after being taken by police from the hospital while in a critical state. Kolker was suspected of revealing state secrets, specifically by handing over information regarding “hypersound” technologies to the Chinese government. □

Wage rises, price curbs: where to push

By Martin Thomas

"Don't Pay", [launched](#) on 18 June, aims to get one million households to sign up to stop their energy direct-debits from 1 October.

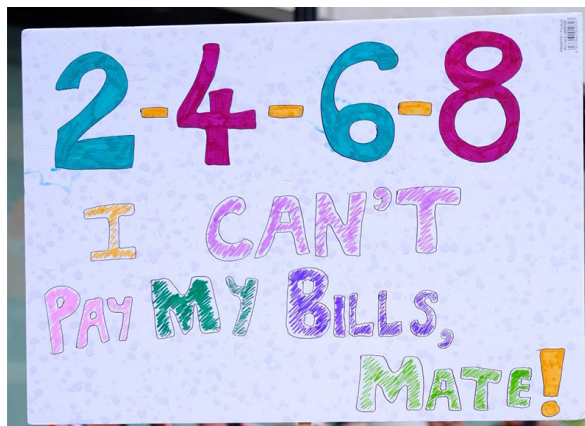
It calls for "a reduction of bills to an affordable level", but says it has no "set list of demands".

Its first activity is via "email lists... Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, Reddit and Twitter" and leafleting. The initiators are anonymous, say they are "not affiliated to any organisation", but hope eventually to move to organisation – "community groups... building this up street by street, estate by estate and city by city".

The domestic energy price cap rose 12% in October 2021 and 54% in April 2022, and is officially predicted to rise 40% or 50% in October 2022, a total rise of about 150%. To stop paying energy direct debits is low-risk because suppliers rarely cut people off.

Since the early 1990s we have become used to low price rises in Britain.

Over 1971-1991 consumer price rises averaged about 10% a year (around the same as the CPI peak predicted for October 2022), sometimes over 20%. The most effective working-class response then (as generally since the rise of trade unions) was to push for wage and benefit rises, sometimes with a "sliding scale" raising wages automatically each



month in line with prices. Workers have concentrated power and often long-established organisation in workplaces.

Public ownership of the energy industry, eliminating its profits, would be good. So would free provision of a basic quota of energy for every household. But, under capitalism, price controls have limited effect. Argentina today, for example, has price controls on hundreds of items, and yet inflation at 60%-70% a year. Even a workers' government (with markets still operating) would have difficulty: the Bolsheviks in Russia had high inflation from 1917 to 1922 (mitigated by free distribution of basics), and curbed it in 1922 only by introducing a new currency linked to gold.

History suggests that available activist energy may be better used in building wage battles than in appeals, especially

vague ones, for the government to control prices.

Rent strikes organised by students in 2020-1, and the poll tax refusal campaign in 1989-90, were successful – but far from anonymous, and built on detail organisation. Also:

- People refused to pay the poll tax more because it was unjust than because it was expensive, and with a clear demand (which was won) that the government repeal it; students refused to pay their rents because they considered them unjust (not just expensive), and for a clear demand (which was often won) for lockdown rent waivers.

- "Don't Pay" aims to build up energy debt arrears of £1.4 billion by the end of winter. Over 2020, households in arrears increased by 600,000, to [2.1 million](#), as in the first lockdowns many lost insecure jobs, were ineligible for furlough, and spent a lot of time at home. Their total arrears must have been way more than £1.4 billion back then. The energy bosses can cope with arrears.

- Mostly to damp the rise in arrears and consequent hassle for energy bosses, the Tory government is now paying hand-outs. These surely will not offset all price rises but, so the usually-sceptical Resolution Foundation [reckons](#), they will cover 93% of increased energy costs for the worst-off 30% of households.

- The authorities had little recourse against poll tax refusers other than bailiffs or jail; universities, little recourse against students not paying rent other than to evict them. Energy suppliers' habitual recourse with non-payers is to put them on pre-payment meters. 4.3 million worse-off households are already on pre-payment, so outside the scope of "don't pay". Energy suppliers can convert smart meters to pre-payment remotely, and most meters are outside the house and can be replaced by pre-payment without need to force entry.

Another "price control" revolt is brewing elsewhere, against increased petrol prices (doubled between early 2021 and now). The demand will be for the government to cut fuel taxes more than the 5p of March 2022: the method, probably, road blocks, as in the gilets jaunes movement in France and anti-vax protests in Canada.

The 2000 fuel tax revolt in Britain won, and the gilets jaunes quickly won on fuel taxes too. The problem is that fossil-fuel tax cuts carry heavy ecological costs (British governments have been scared off increasing fuel taxes ever since 2000), and politically such movements, where small business people and self-employed play a big role, have recruited for the right and far-right rather than the left. □

Yes to Scotland's rights, no to a new border

By Ann Field

In late June Scottish National Party (SNP) First Minister Nicola Sturgeon named 23 October 2023 as the date for another referendum on Scottish independence. This triggered the inevitable response from other political parties.

Tories, Lib Dems, and Labour said that it was the wrong time for a referendum (though a few more thoughtful Tories, such as Phil Johnston writing in the [Telegraph](#), argued that the Tories should back a referendum: "Let her have the referendum and send the separatists packing once and for all" – since spring 2021 polls have generally shown a majority against separation).

According to [Scotland on Sunday](#) (10 July), Keir Starmer is for "blocking a referendum forever". Unless reversed, this stance shows Starmer's personal political bankruptcy, and makes Scottish Labour an anti-democratic irrelevance in Scottish politics.

The Greens declared the promised referendum a great idea. So too, with reservations, did the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party (SP).

The SWP took Sturgeon to task for not launching a mass movement on the streets. A "real push for independence", said the SWP, would "accelerate the unravelling of Johnson's government." Job done already, comrades, even without that "real push for independence".

The SP said similar but is worried by the suggestion only a single pro-independence candidate should stand in each constituency in the next general election, debaring both the SP's TUSC and larger non-SNP pro-independence parties.

A legal referendum cannot be called without the Westminster Parliament's approval (a "Section 30" order). The Tories said that they will block a Section 30 Order. Starmer

quickly fell in behind them.

The Scottish Government will ask the Supreme Court to rule on whether the Scottish Government has the right to call a referendum without a Section 30 Order.

The SNP expects to lose in the Supreme Court, so says will contest the next Westminster general election (possibly not until late 2024) on the single policy of Scottish independence.

However, Sturgeon calling a general election a "de facto referendum" does not make it one. And in a more general sense, Sturgeon already has a mandate. In fact, several mandates. Since the collapse of Scottish Labour after its disastrous alliance with the Tories in the 2014 independence referendum, the SNP has swept the board in all Westminster, Holyrood and local government elections.

The play makes some sense in SNP terms: by insisting the election is on only one issue,

and pressing other pro-separation parties not to stand, the SNP can evade accountability on all other issues.

In Holyrood Labour should abstain on legislation to call a referendum. Abstention would combine hostility in principle to a referendum and independence with a recognition of the mandate which the SNP won in the 2021 Holyrood election to call a referendum.

In Westminster Labour should support a Section 30 Order: Westminster should have no right to veto the Scottish legislature calling a referendum.

Scotland is not an oppressed nation, and the raising of a new border would take us backwards, not forwards; but Scotland has a right to separate if the majority wishes.

Most importantly, the Scottish labour movement must rise above arguments about what should be the pattern on a rain-sodden piece of cloth hanging in front of a Scottish

public building. Unionism and Scottish nationalism are two equally bankrupt ideologies. Trying to put a left gloss on Scottish nationalism, in the manner of the SWP and SP, only makes obscene the contrast between the SWP's and the Socialist Party's enthusiasm for Scottish independence and their indifference to Ukrainian independence in the face of Putin's war.

Labour, the Lib Dems and the Tories are right that the cost-of-living crunch is a more pressing matter than another referendum. But the Tories are causing that crunch by suppressing wages and benefits, and Labour and the Lib Dems have no real alternatives.

The labour movement should get on with class struggle and not be diverted by the flag-waving of mainstream bourgeois politicians, petty bourgeois Poujadists, their leftist bag-carriers, and blood-and-soil nationalists of both persuasions. □

Getting Russia wrong: Beevor's history



Book review

By Paul Vernadsky

Sir Antony Beevor is court historian for the nervous haute bourgeoisie. His commanding prose will no doubt comfort those who fear the wrath of the rabble. For the more discerning, Beevor writes history to warn today's hapless rulers against repeating their predecessors' mistakes.

Beevor is apparently the best-selling historian of our time, hailed for weighty tomes about the Second World War. His new book, *Russia: Revolution and Civil War, 1917-1921*, is perhaps the most miserable account of the Russian revolution published in recent times. It is history-from-above at its worst – the unstated patrician assumptions, the narrative lauding reactionary generals, and the sneering dismissal of those who resisted their oppressors.

Beevor has little time even for the February revolution of 1917. He regards revolution as chaos. The Soviets – workers' councils – are dismissed for holding interminably long, pointless meetings, which might be understood by a more astute historian as participation in democracy. His main criticism of the provisional government is that it did not prosecute the war with sufficient vigour. His sympathies are with the generals, whose hands were tied in the fighting by trifles such as the Soviet Order No.1, the soldiers' committees, commissars and the temerity of soldiers wanting to discuss political questions.

Beevor saves most his venom for Lenin. Apparently Lenin had "dictatorial instincts", "despised notions of false modesty" and "clearly believed himself infallible". Lenin suffered from "monomania", which means madness or partial insanity. Lenin, (like Trotsky) "had no time for democracy". Lenin "wanted civil war to destroy all opponents and rivals" and "welcomed destruction for its own sake". Lenin's mindset from the start was committed to terror. This is cod-psychology, not serious history.

Beevor struggles for coherence. Lenin was "prepared to receive secret funds from the Kaiser's government to fund propaganda". Yet he footnotes that "The Provisional Government's accusations do not amount to hard proof that the Bolsheviks accepted 'German gold', and yet it is hard to see how the Bolsheviks could have afforded all their newspapers without outside help." Later in the book, he quotes British spy Bruce Lockhart, who wrote to foreign secretary Arthur Balfour: "It is obvious today, that even if Lenin took money

from the German government, he used it for his own ends and not for German ends, and... Bolshevism has now gone far beyond the stage of any outside control."

Lenin and Trotsky's real crimes were that they were "pragmatists as well as ideologues". More concretely, they were victorious. They had the temerity to overthrow the unelected provisional government, backed by the most democratic institutions across Russia – the soviets. Beevor ignores almost all the evidence of widespread support for the Bolsheviks, in municipal elections, in soviet elections, trade unions, factory committees and other bodies. October can only be defined as a coup if the provisional government and its backers had any legitimacy. They had none.

Worse, the Bolshevik government actually did what they promised – and what the provisional government failed to do. The Bolshevik stopped the war. They freed the oppressed nationalities. They gave peasant land. They instituted workers' control. They promoted women's rights. They supported education and artistic freedom. This is of course unforgivable for Beevor.

Beevor's sympathy is with the White reactionaries in the civil war. He may criticise their military inadequacies, their politics and even their brutality – but ultimately, he wishes they had defeated the Bolsheviks.

Beevor hails the Volunteer Army, "where anarchic Russia would be saved from itself". General Kornilov had "the bravery of a lion" although "the brains of a sheep". General Denikin was "an honourable and honest man", while General Wrangel "galloped into the centre on a magnificent charger". Admiral Kolchak may have flirted with dictatorship, but was "never lost his temper" under interrogation. General

Mannerheim is praised, despite 40,000 deaths in four months in Finland.

Captain Gaida, leader of the Czech Legion, "proved an able commander but was no democrat, as his post-war admiration for fascism would reveal". The Siberian Cossacks were "reactionary and proud". Beevor's main regret is that Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich were never able to coordinate their operations.

Beevor quotes frequent testimony from Konstantin Globachev, who managed to escape the carnage and write a memoir. But Globachev was no ordinary witness. Globachev was the former head of the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, famed for their cruelty. After the Bolshevik victory in October 1917, he ran the White's intelligence service. As late as May 1920, Wrangel appointed Globachev director of the police department. In retrospect, Globachev recognised that many officers were just as brutal as the Reds, but he is hardly a creditable source about the Bolsheviks.

Beevor highlights the antisemitic mass killings that occurred during the civil war. There were 1,300 antisemitic pogroms in Ukraine alone, while a Soviet report from 1920 estimates 150,000 Jewish people killed and as many again badly injured. The bulk of the examples cited were carried out by the Whites, often with the explicit sanction of their leaders. Beevor at one point appears to suggest both sides carried out these pogroms, conveniently ignoring that the majority of those carried out on the Red side were by temporary allies (who often deserted from and back to the Whites), while the Bolshevik policy was to vigorously oppose antisemitism in word and deed.

Beevor is rightly dismissive of the efforts of the Right Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) to oppose the Bolsheviks. He has similar contempt for the Mensheviks. Beevor notes their immediate armed opposition to the October revolution and their later involvement in many alternative regimes, notably the hopeless Komuch government. Mostly, they collapsed behind the White generals.

Similarly Beevor dismisses the Left SRs, who "sought a spectacular provocation to shatter the Sovnarkom's cooperation with the German imperialists". The Left SRs "could easily have seized the capital. They had secretly assembled a force some 2,000 strong". He has few illusions about Nestor Makhno, whose brutality remained consistent, whichever side he took.

Beevor's only merit is to blurt out some truths about foreign intervention in the Russian civil war that have been downplayed in many recent histories. Captain Francis Cromie of the Royal Navy's intelligence department "was

indeed plotting to overthrow Lenin's government". The Menshevik government in Georgia "received help from the Germans" in 1918 and then turned to the Allies.

Greater Allied intervention was prevented only because the British army during was in "a state of general incipient mutiny", while French officers were nervous about supporting the Whites "because they feared the Bolshevik sympathies of their own troops". The Japanese committed no fewer than 85,000 men to fight in Russia. In May 1919, Wrangel took Tsaritsyn with the help of British Sopwith Camels and six British tanks.

In another moment of candour, Beevor wrote: "Churchill misled the House of Commons time and time again, pretending that the British assistance was limited to providing equipment, weapons and training advisers. The active involvement of in the fighting of British pilots, gunners and tank corps personnel was consistently denied."

Beevor has a rare flash of insight at the end of the book. He concludes that the Whites lost the civil war "largely because of their inflexibility, including their refusal to contemplate land reform until it was far too late or to allow any autonomy to the nationalities of the tsarist empire. Their civil administration was so useless that it barely existed". The Whites suffered a 'moral collapse' – "they behaved as badly as their enemy". All too often "the Whites represented the worst of humanity".

Unfortunately, Beevor lacks the objectivity to comprehend why the Russian working class decided collectively to take power, what the Bolsheviks stood for, and why the workers, peasants and soldiers who followed them were prepared to fight against the old ruling classes to maintain their freedom. □

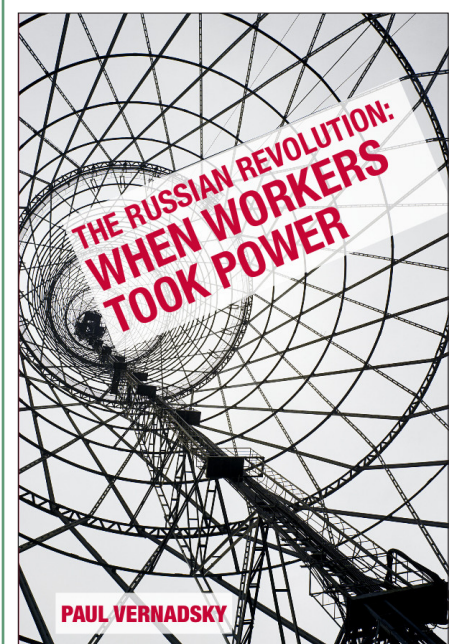
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Trial time for Donald Trump?

By Tom Harrison

This was the thing that nearly had us mastered;

Don't yet rejoice in his defeat, you men!

Although the world stood up and stopped the bastard,

The beast that bore him is in heat again.

- Bertold Brecht

So the 45th President of the USA, the guy with the nuclear codes, had a hissy fit and threw his lunch against the wall when one of his minions said the claim the election was "stolen" from him was bullshit. Perhaps the greasy ketchup stain and gherkin fragments can be preserved under glass for White House tours as evidence of the Trump legacy to enlighten future generations?

That Trump has temper tantrums doesn't surprise, yet the revelation provided light relief in the otherwise damning testimony which White House staffer Cassidy Hutchinson delivered to the committee investigating the January 6th attack on the Capitol. For TV satirists it was a gift – "You always hurt the bun you love" being one particularly good quip.

Hutchinson's evidence was particularly damning when she revealed Trump knew that many the crowd who came to hear him at the Ellipse Green space south of the White House were armed with Glock pistols and AR-15 assault rifles. Despite the country's scandalously lax gun laws this violated the law in DC itself.

Trump wanted the secret service to remove the magnetometers screening people for weapons. He was heard to

say something to the effect: "I don't care if they have weapons, they're not here to hurt me. Take the f***ing mags [magnetometers] away, let my people in." He knew they weren't literally gunning for him, but for members of Congress.

Hollywood will make movies in years to come about Trump's time in office, although classifying them as either comedy or tragedy could prove difficult. An appropriate movie title though would be All The President's Crimes. To date he holds what must be a record, being credibly accused of committing 48 criminal offences whilst President or campaigning for that office. None of these have stuck to Teflon Don yet, but the intention of the J6 Congressional investigation is to gather up enough evidence for some serious prosecutions.

Rabble

That Trump egged on a rabble he knew were armed puts him in greater legal jeopardy, potentially leading to a charge of seditious conspiracy. Added to that could be conspiracy to defraud the United States by deceit, craft or trickery relating to the "fake electors" scheme, the browbeating of Republican officials "to find votes", etc. Ever the grifter, Trump could also go down for wire fraud since he raised \$250 million for a non-existent "election defence fund."

All these potential crimes occurred before the hearings. What can be added since is witness intimidation, with potential witnesses receiving menacing phone calls urging them to

be "team players." One such went "[redacted name] let me know you have a deposition tomorrow. He wants me to let you know that he's thinking about you. He knows you're loyal and you're going to do the right thing when you go in for your deposition."

Bertold Brecht drew an early comparison between the mob boss and the fascist leader in his outstanding play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. Loyalty to the leader is the only consideration. Perjure yourself and you'll be looked after. Betray the leader and you'll be smashed.

Of course the degree to which the move towards right wing authoritarianism can be resisted in this immediate instance depends on whether the January 6 coup perpetrators will be held accountable and face consequences. If Trump and his co-conspirators avoid criminal prosecution because the Department of Justice fears it will provoke large scale civil unrest, the message to him or any of his successors is simply that they can commit crimes with impunity. It's up to Attorney General Merrick Garland to make the call and currently the odds for that are probably fifty/fifty.

The drift to authoritarianism has already made considerable progress. A key part of establishing a right wing dictatorship involves capturing the judiciary. The Supreme Court (SCOTUS) is effectively under the control of the far right – acting as a kind of alternative government to the Biden administration.

Against the elected government's wishes, SCOTUS have torn up reproductive rights by overturning *Roe versus Wade*. They've left Biden's climate policy in tatters by ruling the US government cannot use existing powers to phase out coal-fired power. On gun control they prevented states restricting the carrying of concealed weapons. On voters rights SCOTUS has ruled legal the heavy gerrymandering of electoral districts in Louisiana and elsewhere. And that's only the start of it. If the Republicans win back control of the House in November the reactionary judges will feel even more emboldened. SCOTUS approval ratings amongst the American public are at an historic low, with only 25% saying they have confidence in it. The finding is hardly surprising, since the majority of Americans are against all these recent rulings. They are clearly a harbinger for future one-party minority rule. The takeover of state electoral machines by "believers" in the Trump stolen election myth will cement it.

Standing up and stopping the bastards, be it Trump, Ron DeSantis or any others of that disreputable crew, must not involve placing faith in state agencies bringing them to book. Biden and

co are still wedded to the idea that bipartisan politics is still possible, yet that ship has long sailed. Only mass movements of the working class, women and oppressed minorities are capable of seeing off the rightist drift to dictatorship. □

Solidarity with Verso workers

By Mohan Sen

Verso Books describes itself as a radical publishing house; its "About" page cites a wide range of Marxist writers. In late 2020 its website prominently featured an extract from Len McCluskey's *Why you should be a trade unionist*, extolling the virtues of unions, under the headline "Why you should join a union".

Yet Verso is effectively refusing to recognise its UK workers' union, a section of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ).

The Verso Books Union UK, part of NUJ Book Branch, says that the company announced its workers' unionisation in February 2021, but a year and half on is still dragging its feet over recognition.

They tell the story on Twitter (bit.ly/ve-b) and are asking for retweets.

In 2020 Verso workers in the US won recognition through NUJ's sister union NewsGuild, which since 2019 has taken a more aggressive approach to organising and won significant new ground. □

Doctors protest on pay cuts

By Alexander Herman

The media is full of stories that doctors might go on strike. At the end of June, delegates to the "Annual Representative Meeting" of doctors' union the British Medical Association (BMA) voted to fight for salaries to be restored to the real-terms level of 2008 within five years. The motion called for a serious review of progress every year.

This stance is the result of arguments and organising left-wingers in the BMA have been pursuing for three years. This year 85% of delegates supported the demand, with debate focusing on whether five years was too slow.

Between 2008 and 2021 doctors lost up to 30% in real terms (consultants about 30%, junior doctors 22%, GPs 15%). This while they have seen the health service brought to breaking

point. Delegates who talked about the need for strike action, including praising the example of the RMT, got a good response.

Strikes are not imminent. Junior doctors, one of the worst paid sections of the BMA, are likely to ballot at the start of 2023. The BMA annual meeting voted to campaign against a new contract for GPs that fails to deal with funding and staffing problems, and instead imposes less flexible working hours – "including industrial action if necessary".

However it's not clear how this will unfold. There are discussions about other doctors either striking or taking some forms of industrial action, but it seems some way off. BMA left-wingers have also been trying to promote discussion of lessons from the 2016-17 junior doctors' dispute, and turn frustration over its outcome into motivation for new struggles. □

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Connolly and the Pro

Introduction



Connolly politically unexpurgated

By Sean Matgamna

In March 1972, the London government abolished Protestant Unionist Home Rule in the Six Counties and substituted for it direct rule from Westminster.

The Unionists had held power in the Six Counties for just over 50 years. The London parliament, nominally in charge, had exercised no supervision over the internal affairs of its Irish sub-state. London followed. It did not lead, except in instituting the National Health Service and educational reform (the 1944 Act) in Northern Ireland as throughout the UK.

The Protestant Unionists ran the affairs of Northern Ireland in their own way, including Protestant-Catholic relations there – though it was the Catholic Church that insisted on segregation in education, with Catholic-only schools alongside the non-denominational “controlled” schools.

In 1912 and after the Protestants had won a veto on a united Ireland. March 1972 and after showed that the Catholics and Nationalists of the Six Counties had won a veto over Protestant Home Rule there. British policy continues to grapple with that double veto.

1972 was the second British intervention in Ireland to curb Protestant rulers lording it over the Catholics. The first led to the Act of Union that abolished Protestant Home Rule in all of Ireland.

The Protestant-Catholic division in Ireland has developed with twists and turns.

There had been strong Ard Ri or High Kings in Ireland in the early Middle Ages. For example, Toirdhealbhach, father of the last High King, Ruairí Ó Conchúir, formed commercial and political links with rulers in England and other realms. Ruairí would use his position as liegeman after 1175 of England’s Henry II – head of the Angevin Empire, which stretched onto France – as High King in his turn, though he was weaker.

There remained many small Irish kingdoms. Many of them were most of the time in a condition of civil war between contenders for the kingship and its privileges. Perhaps all that was tending towards some Irish variant of

the feudalism then dominant in much of Western Europe. Connolly’s account of Ireland before the Anglo-Norman conquest as a sort of communism was inaccurate. There was class oppression and slavery in ancient Ireland. More on that in later instalments.

Independent Irish development ceased with the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169. A Pale around Dublin, expanding and shrinking, with its own King, had existed from Danish (Viking) times. It became Anglo-Norman with the new invasion.

Dublin, like all the Irish seaports, had been founded by the Norsemen. And as the regional power of strong and weaker High Kings had fluctuated, so did Norman power. At some times it conquered distant Kerry and Ulster, at others it retreated.

The historian Lecky compared the effects of the Pale in disrupting Irish unity to those of a lance driven into the side of an animal. (Antonio Gramsci saw the existence of the Papal States as having the same effect on the unity of Italy, which was completed only in 1870).

In medieval Ireland there were two Catholic Churches, the official system under the Pope and the English in the Pale around Dublin, and the Irish Church. Matters considered religious by the official Church in Ireland were secular in the Irish Church – marriage for instance. Under the Pope it was “whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder”: no divorce. In the Irish Church there was easy secular, marriage and easy divorce. Their secular and Church enemies accused the Irish, or at least the Irish upper classes, of polyandry and polygamy.

There were Irish protesters at England’s exclusion of the Irish at the time of the “Bruce Invasions” at the start of the 14th century, but that was division and conflict between adherents of Rome and the Pope. The Irish rebel princes were excommunicated.

In the English “Wars of The Roses”, which ended at the battle of Bosworth in 1485 with Lancastrian victory and the inauguration of Tudor rule and absolute monarchy, Ireland was with the losers, the Yorkists. In 1537 “Silken Thomas”, the Earl of Kildare, and other members of the leading Anglo-Norman-Irish Fitzgerald family, were killed in London as rebels by the son of Henry VII, the victor at Bosworth.

The Reformation in England, and Protestant stabilisation there under Elizabeth Tudor, changed the religious lines in Ireland. With help from Rome, the Irish became adherents of Rome in a way they had not been before; and in England Catholics became a minority suspected of allegiance to foreign powers.

A Protestant-Catholic division in semi-modern times first occurred in England’s genocidal war against Munster in the 1580s (in which the future Ulster rebel of the 1590s, Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, fought on the English side).

Many areas of Ireland were at some time in the 16th century “planted” with English settlers. But in the development of the Protestant population of Ireland, those plantations were secondary to the spontaneous movement of peasants between Scotland, England, and Ireland. The main areas Protestant-dominated in recent centuries, Antrim and Down, were never officially planted; Donegal and Monaghan, Laois and Offaly, all in the 26 Counties, were.

Nominal

Despite the High Kings, Ireland was never more than a nominal unit until the final English conquest, around 1600, which also defeated an intervening Spanish army. Symptomatically, when feudalism was formally abolished in Ireland, it was by an English Proclamation, in 1603, directed against Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, a former rebel, who was gobbling up the land of his neighbours.

There followed the Cromwellian conquest of 1649-52 and the Penal Laws after 1691, an era of ascendancy of Anglo-Irish Protestant landlords over mostly Catholic peasants. Catholics were subject to discrimination in England too, suspected of alliance with rival powers like France and Spain.

An Irish Parliament, stretching back to the Middle Ages (and dominated, of course, by the richer classes), had ruled Ireland directly, usually but not always for England or in consonance with it. In 1800 (the Union of Ireland with Britain) as in 1972 (replacement of Protestant-sectarian Home Rule in the Six Counties by direct rule) British intervention against Protestant rule over Irish Catholics was intended to redress the oppression and create a more manageable balance; and in both cases it

failed. The British Prime Minister of 1800, William Pitt the younger, intended the Union to give Irish Catholics full equality within the broader United Kingdom, where they could not be the majority. For that reason Catholics tended to support the Union, and Anglicans to oppose it.

King George III of England said that equality for Catholics was against his coronation oath, and so Catholics had to fight a three-decades campaign for “Catholic Emancipation” (1829).

That campaign changed much in the Catholic-Protestant politics of Ireland, and made the Catholics generally anti-Unionist, the Protestants pro-Unionist. It was followed by the long Catholic battle for Home Rule. The economic effects of Union also tied Belfast and its hinterland closer to England, and generated the growth of an industrial working class centred in the mainly-Protestant North-East.

The 1972 intervention tried to graft secular politics into a Six Counties state designed and gerrymandered to have Protestant rule, while at the same time retaining that artificial state created by Partition in 1920-2, with its built-in artificial Catholic minority.

The Provo IRA war in 1971 and after that disrupted all previous calculations, but it was the long term Protestant opposition that for decades defeated British plans to remodel the Six Counties, most spectacularly with the Orange General Strike of 1974 which destroyed the power-sharing and Council of Ireland introduced by the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 (an earlier variant on the theme of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998).

James Connolly made many efforts to unite Protestant and Catholic workers for class struggle, but in writings like those reprinted here ended up dismissing the Protestants, even the workers, as a revolutionary force. The dismissal depends on definition. The Protestants were not, after the defeat of the 1798 rising led by middle-class city Protestants inspired by the French Revolution, rebels for an independent, anti-British Ireland.

They continued to be rebels against British plans and interests, when that suited them; and sometimes rebels on industrial issues, as in the Belfast engineering strike for a 44-hour week in January-February 1919. □

testant workers (1)



The 12th of July

By James Connolly

As this Saturday is the 12th of July, and as I am supposed to be writing about the North of Ireland in particular, it becomes imperative that I say something about this great and glorious festival.

The Anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne is celebrated in Belfast by what is locally known as an Orange Walk. The brethren turn out and take possession of the principal streets of the city, and for the space of some hours they pass in processional order before the eyes of the citizens, bearing their banners, wearing their regalia, carrying symbols emblematic of the gates of Derry, and to the accompaniment of a great many bands.

Viewing the procession as a mere "Teague" (to use the name the brethren bestow on all of Catholic origin), I must confess that some parts of it are beautiful, some of it ludicrous, and some of it exceedingly disheartening.

The regalia is often beautiful; I have seen representations of the Gates of Derry that were really a pleasure to view as pieces of workmanship; and similar representations erected as Orange arches across dingy side streets that, if we could forget their symbolism,

we would admire as real works of art.

The music (?) is a fearful and wonderful production, seemingly being based upon a desire to produce the maximum of sound in the minimum of space. Every Orange Lodge in the North of Ireland, and many from the South, make it a point to walk, and as each Lodge desires to have a band without any regard to its numbers, the bands are often so near that even the most skilful manipulator cannot prevent a blending of sounds that can scarcely be called harmonious.

I have stood on the sidewalk listening to a band, whose instruments were rendering:

*Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.*

Whilst another one about twenty yards off was splitting the air with:

*Dolly's Brae, O Dolly's Brae,
O, Dolly's Brae no more;
The song we sang was kick the Pope
Right over Dolly's Brae.*

But the discord of sound allied to the discord of sentiment implied in a longing to fly to the bosom of Jesus, and at the same time to kick the Pope, did not appear to strike anyone but myself.

For that matter a sense of humour is not one of the strong points in an Or-

angeman's nature. The dead walls of Belfast are decorated with a mixture of imprecations upon Fenians and the Pope, and invocations of the power and goodness of the Most High, interlarded with quotations from the New Testament. This produces some of the most incongruous results. What would the readers of *Forward* say to seeing written up on the side of a wall off one of the main streets, the attractive legend:

*God is Love,
Hell Roast the Pope.*

Of course, the juxtaposition of such inscriptions on the walls appears absurd, and yet, the juxtaposition of sentiments as dissimilar is common enough in the minds of all of us, I suppose.

To anyone really conversant with the facts bearing upon the relations of the religious in Ireland, and the part played by them in advancing or retarding the principles of civil and religious liberty, the whole celebration appears to be foolish enough.

The belief sedulously cultivated by all the orators, lay and clerical, as well as by all the newspapers is, that the Defence of Derry and the Battle of the Boyne were great vindications of the principles of civil and religious liberty, which were menaced by the Catholics,

and defended by the Protestants of all sects.

The belief we acquire from a more clear study of history in Ireland is somewhat different. Let me tell it briefly. In the reign of James I, the English Government essayed to solve the Irish problem, which then, as now, was their chief trouble, by settling Ireland with planters from Scotland and England. To do this, two million acres were confiscated, i.e., stolen from the Irish owners. Froude, the historian, says:

"Of these, a million and a half, bog-forest and mountain were restored to the Irish. The half a million of fertile acres were settled with families of Scottish and English Protestants."

A friendly speaker, recently describing these planters before a meeting of the Belfast Liberal Association, spoke of them as:

"Hardy pioneers, born of a sturdy race, trained to adversity, when brought face to face with dangers of a new life in a hostile country, soon developed that steady, energetic, and powerful character which has made the name of Ulster respected all over the world."

And a writer in the seventeenth century, the son of one of the ministers

continued on page 12 →

→ from page 11

who came over with the first plantation, Mr. Stewart, is quoted by Lecky in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* as saying:

"From Scotland came many, and from England not a few, yet all of them generally the scum of both nations, who from debt, or breaking the law or fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, come hither, hoping to be without fear of man's justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little as yet, of the fear of God... On all hands Atheism increased, and disregard of God, iniquity abounded, with contentious fighting, murder, adultery."

The reader can take his choice of these descriptions. Probably the truth is that each is a fairly accurate description of a section of the planters, and that neither is accurate as a picture of the whole.

But while the Plantation succeeded from the point of view of the Government in placing in the heart of Ulster a body of people who, whatever their disaffection to that Government, were still bound by fears of their own safety to defend it against the natives, it did not bring either civil or religious liberty to the Presbyterian planters.

The Episcopalians were in power, and all the forces of government were used by them against their fellow-Protestants. The planters were continually harassed to make them adjure their religion, fines were multiplied upon fines, and imprisonment upon imprisonment. In 1640, the Presbyterians of Antrim, Down, and Tyrone, in a petition to the English House of Commons, declared that:

"Principally through the sway of the

prelacy with their factions our souls are starved, our estates are undone, our families impoverished, and many lives among us cut off and destroyed ... Our cruel taskmasters have made us who were once a people to become as it were no people, an astonishment to ourselves, the object of pittance and amazement to others."

What might have been the result of this cruel, systematic persecution of Protestants by Protestants we can only conjecture, since, in the following year, 1641, the great Irish rebellion compelled the persecuting and persecuted Protestants to join hands in defence of their common plunder against the common enemy – the original Irish owners.

In all the demonstrations and meetings which take place in Ulster under Unionist Party auspices, all these persecutions are alluded to as if they had been the work of "Papists," and even in the Presbyterian churches and conventions, the same distortion of the truth is continually practised.

But they are told:

"all this persecution was ended when William of Orange, and our immortal forefathers overthrew the Pope and Popery at the Boyne. Then began the era of civil and religious liberty."

So runs the legend implicitly believed in in Ulster. Yet it is far, very far, from the truth. In 1686 certain continental powers joined together in a league, known in history as the league of Augsburg, for the purpose of curbing the arrogant power of France. These powers were impartially Protestant and Catholic, including the Emperor of Germany, the King of Spain, William, Prince of Orange, and the Pope. The latter had but a small army, but possessed a good treasury and great influence. A few years before a French army had marched upon Rome to avenge a slight insult offered to France, and His Holiness was more than anxious to curb the Catholic power that had dared to violate the centre of Catholicity. Hence his alliance with William, Prince of Orange.

King James II, of England, being insecure upon his throne, sought alliance with the French monarch.

When, therefore, the war took place in Ireland, King William fought, aided by the arms, men, and treasures of his allies in the League of Augsburg, and part of his expenses at the Battle of the Boyne was paid for by His Holiness, the Pope. Moreover, when news of King William's victory reached Rome, a Te Deum was sung in celebration of his victory over the Irish adherents of King James and King Louis.

Therefore, on Saturday the Orangemen of Ulster, led by King Carson, will be celebrating the same victory as the Pope celebrated 223 years ago.

Nor did the victory at the Boyne mean Civil and Religious Liberty. The Catholic Parliament of King James, meeting in Dublin in 1689, had passed a law that all religions were equal, and that each clergyman should be supported by his own congregation only, and that no

tithes should be levied upon any man for the support of a church to which he did not belong. But this sublime conception was far from being entertained by the Williamites who overthrew King James and superseded his Parliament. The Episcopalian Church was immediately re-established, and all other religions put under the ban of the law. I need not refer to the Penal Laws against Catholics, they are well enough known. But sufficient to point out that England and Wales have not yet attained to that degree of religious equality established by Acts XIII and XV of the Catholic Parliament of 1689, and that that date was the last in which Catholics and Protestants sat together in Parliament until the former compelled an Emancipation Act in 1829.

For the Presbyterians the victory at the Boyne simply gave a freer hand to their Episcopalian persecutors. In 1704 Derry was rewarded for its heroic defence by being compelled to submit to a Test Act, which shut out of all offices in the Law, the Army, the Navy, the Customs and Excise, and Municipal employment, all who would not conform to the Episcopalian Church. The alderman and fourteen burgesses are said to have been disfranchised in the Maiden City by this iniquitous Act, which was also enforced all over Ireland. Thus, at one stroke, Presbyterians, Quakers, and all other dissenters were deprived of that which they had imagined they were fighting for at "Derry, Aughrim, and the Boyne." Presbyterians were forbidden to be married by their own clergymen, the Ecclesiastical Courts had power to fine and imprison offenders, and to compel them to appear in the Parish Church, and make public confession of fornication, if so married. At Lisburn and Tullylish, Presbyterians were actually punished for being married by their own ministers. Some years later, in 1712, a number of Presbyterians were arrested for attempting to establish a Presbyterian meeting house in Belturbet.

Marriage

The marriage of a Presbyterian and an Episcopalian was declared illegal, and in fact, the ministers and congregations of the former church were treated as outlaws and rebels, to be fined, imprisoned, and harassed in every possible way. They had to pay tithes for the upkeep of the Episcopalian ministers, were fined for not going to the Episcopalian Church, and had to pay Church cess for buying sacramental bread, ringing the bell, and washing the surplices of the Episcopalian clergymen. All this, remember, in the generation immediately following the Battle of the Boyne.

The reader should remember what is generally slurred over in narrating this part of Irish history, that when we are told that Ulster was planted by Scottish Presbyterians, it does not mean that the land was given to them. On the contrary, the vital fact was, and is, that the land was given to the English noble-

men and to certain London companies of merchants who had lent money to the Crown, and that the Scottish planters were only introduced as tenants of these landlords. The condition of their tenancy virtually was that they should keep Ireland for the English Crown, and till the land of Ireland for the benefit of the English landlord.

That is in essence the demand of the Unionist Party leaders upon their followers today. In the past, as the landlords were generally English and Episcopalian, they all, during the eighteenth century, continually inserted clauses in all their leases, forbidding the erection of Presbyterian meeting houses. As the uprise of democracy has contributed to make this impossible today in Ireland, the landlord and capitalist class now seek an alliance with these Protestants they persecuted for so long in order to prevent a union of the democracy of all religious faiths against their lords and masters.

To accomplish this they seek insidiously to pervert history, and to inflame the spirit of religious fanaticism. The best cure I know of for that evil is a correct understanding of the events they so distort in their speeches and sermons. To this end I have ever striven to contribute my mite, and while I know that the sight of the thousands who, on July 12, will march to proclaim their allegiance to principles of which their order is a negation, will be somewhat disheartening, I also know that even amongst the Orange hosts, the light of truth is penetrating.

In conclusion, the fundamental, historical facts to remember are that:

The Irish Catholic was despoiled by force,

The Irish Protestant toiler was despoiled by fraud,

The spoliation of both continues today under more insidious but more effective forms,

and the only hope lies in the latter combining with the former in overthrowing their common spoilers, and consenting to live in amity together in the common ownership of their common country – the country which the spirit of their ancestors or the devices of their rulers have made – the place of their origin, or the scene of their travail.

I have always held, despite the fanatics on both sides, that the movements of Ireland for freedom could not and cannot be divorced from the world-wide upward movements of the world's democracy. The Irish question is a part of the social question, the desire of the Irish people to control their own destinies is a part of the desire of the workers to forge political weapons for their own enfranchisement as a class.

The Orange fanatic and the Capitalist-minded Home Ruler are alike in denying this truth; ere long, both of them will be but memories, while the army of those who believe in that truth will be marching and battling on its conquering way. □

• Forward, 12 July 1913

Care workers strike against pay cut

By Zack Muddle

Staff at four care homes across the south west are striking against cuts to night and weekend pay, cuts of sick pay entitlement from six to three months, and reducing hours.

The Bristol-based St Monica Trust care company has told staff that if they do not accept they will face "fire and rehire". The charity's most recent finance report describes their financial position as "strong", with net assets of over £300 million, and reserves of almost £40 million.

82% voted in favour of strikes, and workers walked out for 24 hours (starting 7.30am) on 29 June, 2 July, and 5 July, and 48 hours from 7.30am 10 July until 7.30am 12 July.

Many relatives of residents support the strike. The workers' union, Unison, has organised a [schedule](#) of picket line supporters, a [rally](#), and appeals for a [strike fund](#) (bit.ly/sm-sf). □



Preparing for battle



John Moloney

The PCS National Executive (NEC) meets on 13-14 July, and will decide on the tactical nuances for our upcoming ballot over pay and conditions, including the timetable and exact form of the ballot.

There's a clear majority on the NEC for disaggregating the ballot by department, which many feel is the best way to guarantee the maximum number of members being able to take action. Historically I've always favoured singular, aggregated ballots for national pay and conditions disputes, but this is a tactical question rather than a matter of principle.

One message I'm hearing strongly from rank-and-file reps, which I'm sure the NEC will take on board, is that they want the issue of staffing levels and job cuts to be part of the national dispute. The government recently announced a plan to cut 91,000 civil service jobs, and we can't expect that to be ditched by whoever replaces Johnson as prime minister.

A key task ahead of us is persuading members that they do have power. Some civil service workers see pay and conditions almost as meteorological phenomena, something that happens to them and is outside of their control rather than matters in which they have any agency.

The wider context, with other groups of workers such as rail workers, postal workers, and BT workers also involved

in pay fights, helps build confidence, but we need to persuade civil service workers that their action can be directly impactful too.

With a disaggregated ballot, local activity will be especially vital. The national union will run a national campaign, with national communications, but we also need to persuade activists in each department to see themselves as the union in that department, and run with the campaign. I don't want to be prescriptive about what that might involve in each area; I want rank-and-file reps to be coming to the national union and specifying the support and resources they need.

While the national ballot is being prepared, we can't lose focus on other areas of the union not in the UK Civil Service, such as civilian staff in the



Metropolitan Police, the civil service in Scotland, and outsourced workers. They may have to be balloted early given the dynamics their pay round.

If we can ballot our outsourced facilities management members in parallel with the national ballot, that will benefit their own struggles – but it will also amplify the national dispute by allowing us to have directly-employed and outsourced workers in government buildings striking at the same time. □

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

Unison ballots for pay action in HE



By Vicki Morris

Ninety-four Higher Education (HE) branches in the public services union Unison are preparing to [ballot](#) to strike for a 2022-23 pay rise above inflation. The national offer is 3% while RPI is currently 9%.

The ground for the ballot was prepared last year when nine branches struck against a below-inflation pay rise; 38 branches took part in the ballot in 2021-22. Although that was only a handful of branches, it

showed that branches could get over the 50% ballot turnout threshold and it encouraged more branches to try this time.

The ballot opens on 22 July and closes on 19 August in Scotland and 26 August in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The union's HE Service Group Executive (SGE) is riven along the same lines as in Unison nationally.

At the first meeting of the newly elected SGE, on 30 June, the left had a small majority and used it to elect Mobina Begum chair, Andy Beech vice-chair, and left-wing candi-

dates to all other significant roles, including lay reps on the pay negotiating team.

However, the meeting was disrupted by the right who engineered a walkout – or a collective log-off, as all the right had attended the hybrid meeting remotely.

They had sent in a motion which missed the deadline but was permitted onto the agenda anyway. This called for a dedicated place on the pay negotiating team for the devolved nations. The left on the SGE opposed this, arguing that the negotiating team should be made up of the most able people and reps

are also chosen on the basis of a political stance. The left put forward another formulation: "We resolve to add an additional reserve seat to JNCHES [the pay negotiating body]. Where the chair, vice chair or JNCHES rep are not from a devolved nation, a reserve must be from a devolved nation."

The reserve reps take part in the discussions ahead of the negotiating meetings.

Both the right and the left formulations had been discussed as options for addressing the issue of devolution and pay at the HE national conference in January but neither was preferred there.

It was clear that the right had wrong-footed the left at this meeting. Their walkout was prepared in advance and had they not lost the vote on their preferred formulation, it's likely that they had other tricks up their sleeves to disrupt the SGE and paint the left as undemocratic and hostile to the devolved nations - as English chauvinists!

The SGE left must prepare their arguments in advance and publish public statements to explain to the members what is happening and make the case for their positions.

It was noticeable that a couple of delegates who had voted for the right in the SGE elections stayed in the meeting after the walkout – there is a middle ground of activ-

ists who can be won over by good political arguments and demonstrating democratic practice, and the left will need to appeal to them if this year is not to be continually disrupted by the right seeking revenge for being out of office.

Unison members in HE need now to put our efforts into getting a good turnout in the pay ballot and going on to organise effective strikes. □

• Vicki Morris is a member of the Unison HE SGE, writing here in a personal capacity.

Reinstate Freedman and Khiabany!

By Cathy Nugent

Since the beginning of April, the University and College Union (UCU) at Goldsmiths University of London has been engaged in a marking and assessment boycott, continuing an academic-year-long fight to stop the compulsory redundancies of 20 members of staff and a damaging restructure.

In response to the boycott, the Senior Management Team (SMT) introduced Exceptional Academic Regulations (EARs), which removed academic oversight, and the use of incomplete sets of marks to

progress and graduate students on a formal but provisional basis. This move is not in the interests of students.

Recently the Head and Deputy Head of the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies (MCCS) Department, Des Freedman and Gholam Khiabany, were effectively suspended for carrying out their professional responsibility to email students affected by the boycott, to clarify the impact and provide support.

The head of the MCCS's school, Adam Dinham, sent a letter to MCCS staff and students claiming that the Heads of Department had sent the

email "without consultation with all relevant colleagues", thereby alleging wrongdoing before any investigation has taken place.

The move shows SMT are very worried about the boycott. Goldsmiths UCU have launched a campaign to reinstate the MCCS department heads, who are both long-standing GUCU members. A motion in support resolves to "undertake industrial action, up to and including strike action if necessary, if Des Freedman and Gholam Khiabany are not reinstated following a speedy investigation." □

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“What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BT workers vote for strikes

By Ollie Moore

Telecoms workers in the Communication Workers Union (CWU) have voted for industrial action over pay, opening up the possibility of the first BT-wide strike since 1987.

Around 40,000 workers were balloted in three separate ballots, covering centrally-employed BT workers, workers at BT's broadband arm Openreach, and workers at BT-owned mobile provider EE. The BT ballot returned a 91.5% majority for action on a 58.2% turnout, and the Openreach ballot, the largest of the three with nearly 30,000 workers, returned a 95.8% majority on a 74.8% turnout. The EE ballot returned a 95.5% majority for action, but fell just eight votes short of hitting the turnout

threshold of the Tory anti-union laws.

BT has imposed a flat-rate pay increase of £1,500 – in overall pay pot terms, around 4.8%, and after a pay standstill last year.

The CWU says workers have "under great difficulty and often [...] with tremendous personal sacrifice, delivered £1.3 billion profits for the company. Over £700 million was paid out to shareholders. The company's CEO, Philip Jansen, handed himself a £3.5 million pay package – a 32% increase. Over £700 million was paid out to shareholders, and the Chief Financial Officer was handed £2.2 million – a 25% increase."

Any strike could have a significant economic impact, as technical support for homes or businesses using Open-

reach broadband will be unavailable.

On 7 July, the union wrote to members in BT to tell them it had "committed to talks with the company, but only if they are willing to improve their offer..." and "given BT Group until 13 July to respond."

The union has called a forum for BT reps on 13 July to discuss next steps. A BT worker and CWU activist told *Solidarity*: "The ballot was long overdue. Now it's crunch time. Sometimes in the past we've had protracted negotiations, with a deal not being agreed for months. This time the company didn't bother with any of that, it simply imposed its deal. If they're not prepared to improve the offer, we need to call industrial action." □

Reversal in Momentum poll

By Mohan Sen

In 2020, the Forward Momentum grouping won every member-elected seat on the National Coordinating Group of Labour left organisation Momentum. It defeated the Momentum Renewal slate linked to the office faction that destroyed Momentum's democracy in 2017.

In July 2022, Forward-Momentum-rebranding [Your Momentum](http://YourMomentum.org) won 14 seats to 15 for Momentum-Renewal-successor [Momentum Organisers](http://MomentumOrganisers.org). Momentum Organisers got over 50% of first preference votes, to just over 45% for Your Momentum.

[Labour Left Internationalists](http://LabourLeftInternationalists.org) ran three candidates in the London and Eastern region (Abel Harvie-Clark, Maisie Sanders and Andy Warren), who got 74 first-preference votes between them, behind the 111 of the last successful candidate.

The turnout and the score for the left were low because Momentum's numbers and activity have declined, and in part also because of the rushed and undemocratic way the election was run. The LLI candidates raised class-struggle, internationalist socialist ideas and proposals that no other candidates did.

Forward Momentum came to office in 2020 by criticising the conservative, undemocratic and destructively unpleasant politics and culture institutionalised after the office-coup of January 2017. But it operated its own exclusions; Momentum remained office-dominated, and intervened only weakly at the 2021 Labour conference. In this election the Your Momentum candidates gave the impression of not knowing what to advocate.

Momentum Organisers advocated a focus on defending the Socialist

Campaign Group of MPs and leftist councillors. Some better initiatives that Momentum has pursued half-heartedly, like promoting policy for Labour Party conference and deciding to hold a conference of its own, may get downgraded.

Right up to their defeat in 2020, the office-linked faction that later became Momentum Organisers engaged in witch-hunting and slandering of critical-minded leftist opponents, particularly Workers' Liberty. This time they had quite a few new people involved,

and refrained from such behaviour. Nonetheless, it seems unlikely they will make Momentum more open, let alone democratic.

The ideas Labour Left Internationalists promoted in the election, including mobilising the organisation's members and resources in support of strikes and replacing bluster about "community wealth building" with campaigning to stop and reverse council cuts, will only become more important. □

Jean-Louis Trintignant, 1930-2022



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

During Kino Eye's recent brief absence, of one of Europe's great cinema actors, Jean-Louis Trintignant, died.

He made his name in such New Wave films as *Un Homme et une Femme* (*A Man and a Woman*, 1966) directed by Claude Lelouch. His best known appearance, however, is probably his role as Clerici, the confused and hesitant fascist sympathiser in Bernardo Bertolucci's brilliant *Il Conformista* (*The Conformist*).

Drawn into a fascist plot to assassinate the leader of the Italian left, in exile in Paris, once his professor when a student, Clerici is clearly not up to the job; as the film's title suggests he merely wants to be "ordinary". At the end, with Mussolini dead, Clerici



loudly denounces his former collaborators – one of whom is blind – in a particularly cowardly manner.

The film has one major flaw. In a flashback to his childhood, Clerici is raped by the family chauffeur and this is clearly intended to be a (if not the) major reason why in adulthood he becomes a fascist. The idea that a traumatic sexual experience in childhood leads to an embrace of fascist ideology is questionable, to put it mildly. Despite this *Il Conformista* can be highly recommended. □

Aslef votes for action: now coordinate!

By a rail worker

It's great to see drivers in the Aslef union at Chiltern, Great Western Railway, LNER, London Overground, Northern, Southeastern, TransPennine and West Midlands have voted for strikes.

Overall drivers voted for strikes by a 9-1 majority, with turnouts as high as 92.5%. It's a spectacular set of results from a group of workers who, in many cases, haven't had a pay rise since 2019.

Train drivers are well-paid compared with many other workers. But does that mean they should meekly accept their wages being held down?

It's not as if drivers refusing to fight for pay rises means money will be given to nurses or teachers instead. As

in the dispute by the broader rail union RMT, the question of what the union is actually demanding on pay must be clarified.

Aslef drivers on ScotRail have just voted to accept a 5% pay rise. This is clearly well below inflation, and although it represents a significant improvement on the employer's initial offer, it does not in fact amount to a real-terms pay increase. 5% deals cannot be allowed to become the industry standard.

Now that Aslef members have voted for strikes, the union must call them. Calling further strikes on Greater Anglia, where Aslef drivers already struck on 23 June and 2 July, is a good start. Further strikes nationally should be

called in coordination with future RMT action in its ongoing dispute with Network Rail and mainline Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

Unfortunately, the signals from Aslef's leaders aren't encouraging. In an article published before the announcement of the ballot results, Aslef general secretary Mick Whelan all but rules out coordination with RMT, and appears to cite the "Thatcher-era anti-union laws" as a reason for refusing to coordinate. Some Aslef activists and officials have argued that to coordinate strikes would represent "secondary action".

This is straightforwardly mistaken. "Secondary action" involves workers striking outside of a direct dispute with their own employer – either in sup-

port of workers at another employer, or other workers elsewhere in their own company involved in a separate dispute. There is no legal impediment whatsoever to unions, each with their own ballot mandates, calling strikes to take place on the same day. In fact, Aslef has already done it recently, as the 23 June strike on Greater Anglia coincided with the second day of RMT's national strikes.

Perhaps part of Aslef officials' hostility to coordinated strikes is that, if rail workers in different roles to strike and picket together, making their shared interests and common struggles clear, it might be harder to justify the existence of a separate union based on claims of drivers' special interests. □

RMT AGM debates dispute, Belarus, politics

By an RMT activist

The annual general meeting of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers' union (RMT), which was held in Birmingham from 3-7 July, saw delegates debate strategy and perspectives for the union's national dispute with Network Rail and mainline train operating companies.

An emergency motion from RMT East Midlands Central resolving to name further strikes as soon as possible, citing the beginning of the next pay period for many rail workers on 17 July, was heavily defeated. This may suggest some rank-and-file delegates are, for now, unwilling to mount too vigorous a challenge to national officers' stated position that there should be "no rush" to call further strikes, although others may simply have seen the motion as too prescriptive.

Some other emergency motions on the national dispute, including one proposing to set a concrete pay demand of a full RPI increase or a flat-rate £5,000 pay rise, whichever is higher,

rather than the union's current, vague, demand for a "substantial pay rise", were ruled out of order. Those vital debates will nonetheless continue.

The AGM agreed a proposal for RMT branches to organise stalls in city and town centres, as part of an effort to build support for the national dispute and promote trade unionism in general. That is a welcome step in a labour movement in which campaigning is too often "outsourced" by unions to external organisations.

The conference overwhelmingly endorsed a motion committing the union to support the campaign to free the Belarus "Railway 11", railway workers facing decades in jail, or even the death sentence, under Belarus's repressive regime for undertaking non-violent sabotage of railway infrastructure being used to support Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

A debate on the union's political strategy also took place, with conference voting by a large majority to end the RMT's national affiliation with the Trade

Union and Socialist Coalition (Tusc), led by the Socialist Party. That decision is, ultimately, positive: Tusc's electoral results have been dismal, and it has failed to build any permanent organisation between election times. Even as a propaganda effort, it is inadequate, promoting lowest-common-denominator "anti-cuts" politics rather than sharp, class-struggle socialist perspectives.

However, some of the arguments advanced in support of the withdrawal from Tusc show there is still a long way to go on the question of political representation.

Although there is clearly no mood within RMT to reaffiliate to the Labour Party, a proposal to do so under Corbyn's leadership having been narrowly defeated at a special general meeting in 2018, the 2022 AGM did vote for motions which included a commitment to pursuing particular issues within Labour. This included a motion on challenging Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan over his refusal to end the outsourcing of cleaning on Transport for London,

and a motion committing the union to "encourage its members who are in the Labour Party to take motions into their CLP meetings promoting the [strikes] and inviting other LP members and MPs to join us on the picket lines."

The conference also passed a number of motions from the union's equalities committees, including one from the Disabled Members Advisory Committee which commits the union to arguing in workplaces for moving beyond the current language of "awareness" of disability issues, to a more active stance of fighting for liberation and equality. □

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Next steps in Tube dispute



Tubeworker

Reps from the RMT union across London Underground (LU) will meet on 15 July to discuss the next steps in our dispute over jobs, pensions, and conditions. An important first step is calling further action. Any negotiations with LU will be more productive from our point of view if the company is under pressure from looming strikes. Having struck for one day on 21 June, we must

escalate by returning to at least two days of action. Splitting a 48 hour strike across two days, as we did on 1 and 3 March, is an effective tactic.

Striking on a Wednesday and Friday, to run into ongoing action by drivers on Night Tube lines and mobilise Night Tube station staff, who have never previously struck, should be considered. As we escalate action, we also need a serious, branch-by-branch plan to build up hardship funds. We will never be able to pay full strike pay for everyone, or anything like it, but systematic fundraising at branch level, including encouraging higher-paid members to

give regular contributions to the fund, will mean that some funds will be available for lower-paid grades and those in financial hardship.

With class struggle picking up more generally, we can also make plans for political campaigning to draw in other unions and working-class community groups. Although a central London rally on the day of our next strike probably won't be viable, as there'll be no Tube running, RMT branches should coordinate via borough-based Trades Councils for local demos, which will promote solidarity with the strike but also wider demands around TfL funding. □

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Connolly and a history relevant now



Book review

By Malone

James Connolly, who was executed after the 1916 Easter Rising, is, along with James Larkin, Ireland's most famous socialist and union leader. This pamphlet, *Effective Trade Unionism*, contains his writings on industrial unionism, in both Ireland and the USA, and his account of the 1913 Lockout in Dublin.

Connolly is a clear and concise writer and you don't need to know any of the historical background to be able to understand the pamphlet. But read up on the historical background if you can, because this is an epic time in history. The 1913 Lockout in Dublin takes place in a time of high struggle, coming three decades after the Land Wars in Ireland, amidst agitation for Home Rule, and in the middle of huge industrial unrest.

After the formation of general workers' unions in the late 19th century, the early 20th century saw strike action on a massive scale. The formation of general workers' unions is significant because the strikes in this period were the struggles of predominantly what were considered unskilled workers, and the tension between craft and industrial union organising is one of the central themes of the pamphlet.

The wave of industrial action preceding the 1913 Lockout was, significantly, mostly in transport, although there was the first national miners' strike in 1912 leading to the shootings of strikers in Tonypany. The first stoppage in transport was the Belfast dock strike of 1907, led by James Larkin, at that time an organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL). In 1911 the strike wave began in Liverpool with seamen and progressed to dockers and then the railways, leading to the first ever national rail strike. In Liverpool the strike and unrest reached the highest point though there was industrial action all over.

In Ireland the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), set up by Larkin in 1909 after he was expelled from NUDL, and the first mass union based in Ireland rather than Britain, was an industrial union with its initial base in dock workers. Connolly joined the ITGWU when he returned from the USA in 1910. The 1913 Lockout was a dispute caused by employers attempting to force workers to sign undertakings that they would not join or assist the ITGWU. Connolly recounts how the workers were defeated by the iso-

lation of Dublin. The chapters on industrial and craft unions address a still vital question: how do the structures of a trade union enable solidarity in action, and how do they hinder it? Connolly addresses this in detail, drawing on experiences both in the US and in the response of the TUC to the Lockout.

The reaction of workers on the mainland was not stinting. £100,000 was raised for relief, and chartered steamships full of food arrived in Dublin. A plan to send strikers' children to stay with sympathetic families in England, to protect them from hardship, was blocked by the Church.

What Connolly draws out very clearly as the root of the problem is trade union solidarity expressed as relief, in strike funds but not as industrial action. He describes transport strikes where union men unload cargo from ships crewed by scabs. There were sporadic solidarity actions by railway workers in Britain but not the concerted action needed to win the strike.

The question Connolly raises is familiar and relevant to any trade union rep now. What organisational form will help us to maximise solidarity and effectiveness in the class struggle, and how are our current union structures making it more difficult?

The difference between craft and industrial unions asks what trade unions are for – are they organisations to protect the pay and status of a better-off section of the working class, or to raise the condition of the working class as a whole? Industrial unions came into being as instruments of struggle for the unskilled as well as the skilled, and (in the best cases) women as well as men, black as well as white workers. This went against the philosophy of the craft unions, who were as much as anything about preserving their status against what they saw as the grubby masses below them, trying to preserve their better pay and status by keeping barriers to entry into their crafts.

The issue of sympathetic strikes (what we would call secondary action) comes down to another critical question: who can call others out on strike, who has the right to form the uncrossable picket line? As strike action carried for workers the risk of impoverishment and worse, strike funds were rapidly depleted and leaders jailed, care had to be taken not to recklessly get people hurt or burn up resources. At the same time excessive caution and bureaucratic control led many strikes to be defeated.

Solidarity strike action often led to arguments about legitimacy – who had the authority to call

workers out, which picket lines must be respected, at what point was a worker who remained at their post doing so legitimately or not. Perhaps the argument about the best organisational form for a union misses the mark if the argument is about which committee is the authority to call a strike properly invested in.

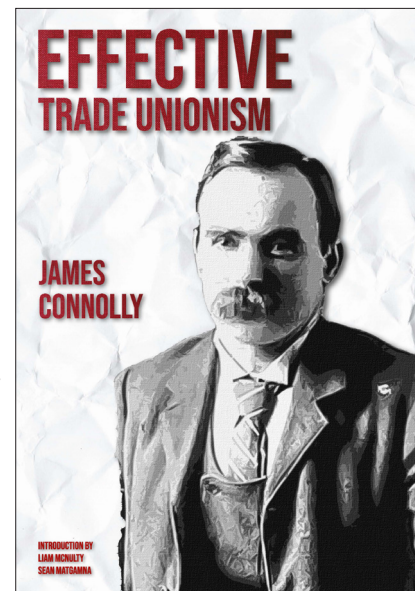
As Connolly addresses in the chapter "Old Wine in New Bottles", structural changes that in theory overcame sectional divisions and brought workers together through amalgamation into larger unions sometimes in practice choked off solidarity action even more than the craft unions they replaced.

Perhaps the best organisational form is whatever gives the most scope and encouragement to the "fighting spirit of comradeship in the rank and file", for it is on this basis that we stand or fall.

My knowledge of Irish history and politics as a child involved no structured education, only music and stories. The first time I remember hearing Connolly's name was in a song I had on a tape, the words of which I carefully copied out in biro, rewinding and rewinding, making many mistakes. I did not know the events in the song as the 1913 Lockout, only that I was attracted to the song because it was both an Irish song and about a strike.

Now I am trying for the first time to learn Irish history properly, this collection of Connolly's writings is an excellent resource. As well as giving a participant's account of the Lockout, his writing on the industrial unions is important and powerfully relevant now, as we go into, hopefully, a wave of worker militancy headed up, again, by the transport workers. □

• Malone is a trade-union activist in London. The tape was an album by People of No Property, from Derry; the song was *The Citizen Army* by Ray Collins



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The quicker the strikes, the better the chance

By Martin Thomas

Aside from asking the Queen to call a snap election through reserve powers last deployed in 1975 to sack Australia's leftish Labor government of the time, Boris Johnson's final move to keep office was to propose tax cuts. Many of the Tory contenders promise similar; Rishi Sunak warns about risks of increasing inflation (and the already-big [trade deficit](#)).

The Tory interregnum, with Johnson half-gone and the succession unclear, gives us possibilities. The "caretaker" government, and a new prime minister, if put under pressure by rapid action, have strong incentives to seek peace and conciliation. Soon the new Tory PM may be able to close that window.

The rail unions are in dispute. BT workers have a strike mandate. The Royal Mail pay action ballot closes 19 July. The civil service union PCS ballots in September. The more those battles can be pursued at speed and brought together, the better our chances of reversing Tory destruction across the board. All the Tory contenders want to keep benefits and public-sector wages way behind inflation – 4 or 5% for NHS workers, 5% for teachers, local councils under pressure to squeeze real wages from an unbudgeted [£1.7 billion](#) increase in their costs due to inflation.

The Tories' ploys for inflation are variants on a managed recession, which will tighten credit and slacken market demand by squeezing wages without, they hope, crashing profits.

Time for the labour movement to push for a wage spiral, for wages and benefits to keep up with prices and for profits and taxes on the rich to bear the brunt of adjustment. The labour movement cannot readily control inflation – even a workers' government would find it difficult – but we can shift costs onto the rich.

Short sharp strikes are usually more effective than action spread in dribs and drabs over months. Even more so now: the quicker the strikes, the better the chance. □



Solidarity

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FIGHTBACK FOR CHOICE



**Women's
Fightback**

By Katy Dollar

The 24 June Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* was the culmination of a long term reactionary campaign to strike down the constitutional right to an abortion in America. This anti-choice movement captured strategic parts of the judiciary, including the Supreme Court, but its roots run far deeper into US communities.

Through churches, lobbying groups, and political organisations, backed by donations from reactionary millionaires, the US right has developed consistent day to day activism over decades.

The left has had explosions of activity with big protests, but little ongoing work or stable organisation. The Democrats dangled the threat of the overturn of *Roe* to suck energy out of feminist activism into bourgeois politicking that doesn't even deliver or defend its own liberal policies.

Immediately before and after the Court ruling there were street mobilisations. There were demonstrations in hundreds of cities across the country, including an estimated ten thousand outside the White House who tied themselves to the gates with green bandanas.

The protestors in Washington had been told by organisers that they should be prepared to risk jail for the action, though police allowed the demonstration passed without arrest.

It is unclear how the protests will continue. Women's March, a liberal feminist NGO, has called a "summer of rage" but so far actions it is calling for are to send an email, write a letter, or become a "digital defender" harnessing the power of social media. Democrats are calling for more donations to fund mid-term elections in November, hoping to ride the wave of anger to more seats in Congress.

One of the issues the movement faces is that immediate fight is now at state level, but the states with the most militant women's movements are not the frontline of the crackdown on choice. Abortion bans have been triggered in Kentucky, Louisiana and South Dakota. In total, more than 20 states appear set to outlaw all or nearly all abortions. That covers about half of the population of the US.

But the areas with the strongest movements to resist this attack are in Blue States and in East and West Coast cities. Building links across the South will be crucial to any kind of victory.

There is certainly political support for abortion rights to sustain a new movement but so far, its infrastructure is largely



based on NGOs and abortion providers. This could limit the potential democracy, militancy and political horizons of post-*Roe* activity.

This pattern is replicated in the UK: there have been lively demonstrations of a few hundred but the most significant step in organisation is the recruitment of a hundred volunteer organisers by Abortion Rights.

Professional pro-choice organisations, including abortion providers, carry out important and in some ways very admirable work, but they are limited as they are dominated by the politics and methods of the liberal wing of the ruling class. A professional lobbying approach will only get so far. To defend reproductive rights in the USA properly the entire political direction needs to shift.

There has to be decisive break from the reactionary obsession with states' rights; the influence of the evangelical Christian right needs to be confronted and smashed; the understanding of the role of abortion rights within the social reproduction of capitalism has to be foregrounded. □