



For social ownership of the banks and industry

Truss pushes up inequality



Aviation: near disaster point

Aviation workers and cutting carbon emissions

Page 7

Why secularism matters

A call for solidarity with victims of religious oppression

Pages 8-9

Connolly debates partition

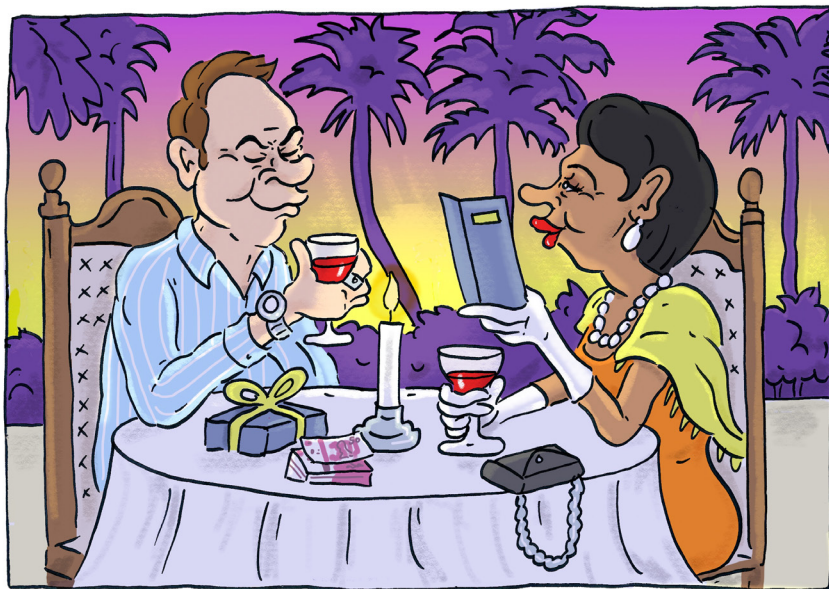
His exchange with George Barnes of the ILP in 1914

Pages 10-12

19 strike days set in Royal Mail

New schedule ups the tempo of the pay battle

Page 13



STRIKE WHILE TORIES ARE WOBBLY!

See pages 2-3

Cartoon by George Newman @GewMan



Putin threatens nuclear war



Editorial

Joe Biden, president of the USA, warns of nuclear “armageddon” if Russian President Vladimir Putin uses nuclear weapons against Ukraine. Biden believes that the world is closer now to nuclear war than at any point since the Cuban missile crisis, 60 years ago.

Biden’s assessment is right.

The US is increasingly alarmed about Putin’s violent anti-Western rhetoric and nuclear threats. Joe Biden’s spokesperson says, “Russia’s talk of using nuclear weapons is irresponsible, and there’s no way to use to use them without unintended consequences.”

That is partly a statement of fact, and partly a warning. The US has also directly spoken of “catastrophic consequences” for Russia if Putin uses nuclear weapons.

Former CIA director and retired US general, David Petraeus, has argued in favour of a massive conventional weapons response to any Russian use of nuclear weapons.

Workers’ Liberty remains opposed to any direct US involvement in the Ukraine war, including in response to a Russian nuclear attack on Ukraine. Retaliatory attacks by the US and other

Western powers against Russia would almost certainly lead to an immediate, catastrophic, widening of the war in Ukraine.

A rational reply to a nuclear attack – yet another war crime, but one of enormous proportions – committed by Putin’s Russia, is not to trigger a Third World War in which many millions of civilians would become the victims of nuclear terror.

Our policy is to help the Russian working class replace Putin with a government which will end the Ukraine war and withdraw Russian troops from Ukraine.

Ultimately the only way forward is for the international working-class to fight for a socialist world without nuclear weapons. But clearly that’s not an immediate solution. The fact is that there is no adequate, immediate answer to a Russian nuclear strike.

Workers’ Liberty is being consistent. During the Cold War stand-off between the USSR Bloc and the West we argued for unilateral nuclear disarmament. We opposed the policy of destroying Russian cities, killing tens of millions of working class people in the process, in retaliation to a nuclear strike on the West.

Even if London and Glasgow were destroyed, the answer would not be to incinerate Moscow and Minsk. The response to a terrible war crime is not another terrible war crime.

How did we get here?

As Vladimir Putin’s Russian army invaded Ukraine on 24 February Putin appeared to threaten Western powers with nuclear war: “Whoever tries to hinder us [i.e. attempt to stop the invasion] should know that Russia’s response will be immediate and will lead you to consequences that you have never faced in your history.”

On 21 September, as Russia lost some conquered territory in Ukraine, Putin stated, “The citizens of Russia can rest assured that the territorial integrity of our Motherland, our independence and freedom will be defended, I repeat, by all the systems available to us... This is not a bluff.” His focus on defending Russia’s “territorial integrity” was a shift from Russia’s previous nuclear weapons protocol which only allowed nuclear weapons use if Russia faced an “existential threat”.

Responding to Russian losses, Vladimir Putin is now attempting to mobilise at least 300,000 more troops to fight in Ukraine. He has formally annexed four Ukrainian regions following blatantly rigged referenda.

Back in February Putin justified his war in Ukraine by the need to rid Ukraine of Nazis. He expected a quick victory. Now he is obliged to shift his strategy. He has cut gas supplies to Europe to pressure the EU states, especially Germany. And he attempted to alarm the US and European powers enough to

force them to stop providing Ukraine with weapons and to press Ukraine to sign a lousy peace deal favourable to Russia.

A US government official recently commented: “Putin has tried to rattle his sabre, tried to scare us off, tried to make us think twice about our strategy. He has not succeeded.”

Now Putin is attempting to reframe his story. The war, says Putin, is now about Russia’s survival. Putin claims, ridiculously, that “the West wants to destroy our country.”

As Workers’ Liberty has warned repeatedly, recently, Ukrainian battlefield victories are simultaneously a liberation but also usher in a period of increasing and serious danger. Putin reasonably believes that a Russian defeat in Ukraine may mean his downfall in Russia. And he is not willing to be defeated at home.

Putin may lash out. Nuclear war is possible. We must fight to prevent it. □



Corrections

The words in a Labour conference composite on public ownership of utilities came from CWU, not Unite as in *Solidarity* 647. In *Solidarity* 647 we should have listed “[NHS: the ‘uplift’ dwindles](#)” as “More Online”. □

Socialism vs Trussonomics



Socialism vs Capitalism

By Martin Thomas

Liz Truss’s rant about “growth” and “aspiration” rings hollow as British capitalism wallows in turmoil. Even at best, it only reproduces in crass form an old story of the capitalist class, which tells workers to turn to cooperation with the bosses to expand the whole “cake” of capitalist production. The benefits from that “growth” will trickle down to us, and we’ll end up better than if we quarrel with the bosses about the size of our “slice”, or indulge in “envy” of their riches.

For capitalists, indeed, “growth” is the ultimate:

sheer accumulation. As Marx put it: “Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!... Accumulation for accumulation’s sake, production for production’s sake: by this formula classical economy expressed the historical mission of the bourgeoisie... the proletarian [worker] is but a machine for the production of surplus-value”.

To be sure, capitalist boom gives us (if we are organised and active) better chances for gains of a limited sort than slump. Under rapid expansion with given technologies our “relation of dependence upon capital takes on a form endurable or... ‘easy and liberal’... [we] can extend the circle of [our] enjoyments; can make some additions to [our] consumption-fund of clothes, furniture, etc., and can lay by small reserve funds of money.

“But just as little as better clothing, food, and treatment, and a larger peculium, do away with the exploitation of the slave, so little do they set aside that of the wage worker. A rise in the price of labour, as a consequence of accumulation of capital, only means, in fact, that the length and weight of the golden chain the wage workers have already forged for themselves, allow of a relaxation of the tension of it”.

The relaxation of the chain is always insecure: it is tightened again by the next sharpening of capitalist competition, the next slump. And the chains remain chains, however gilded.

Marx and socialists of his day already pointed out that capitalist growth often meant destruction: the crowding of workers into smoke-filled, insanitary cities, and the exhaustion of the soil by capitalist

agriculture, would augment “growth” as measured by profit or (in modern terms) GDP. Indeed, as Marx irately pointed out to socialists who wrote that “useful labour is possible only in and through society”, “only in society can useless and even socially harmful labor become a branch of gainful occupation”.

Now we know that the environmental destructiveness of the relentless chaining of human energies to “production for production’s sake” can range further, with global warming and species extinctions.

We value the technologies developed by capitalism. “Capital – quite unintentionally – reduces human labour, expenditure of energy, to a minimum. This will redound to the benefit of emancipated labour, and is the condition

of its emancipation”. Our aim is emancipation, not unqualified, undifferentiated “growth”. Emancipation requires access for all to the means of physical sustenance and comfort, to communications, to the means of culture, and thus some growth of “stuff”: good housing for all, clean running water for all, electricity for all. But some, not all.

The first step is to unchain us from workplace-boss despotism and from long or exhaustingly unpredictable work hours, from being made mere means to produce yet more “stuff”. We want “the development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite”. □

From piecemeal strikes to class-wide battle

By Ollie Moore

A planned indefinite strike by Arriva drivers in north and east London, due to start on 4 October, was called off after the employer shifted to offer 11 percent pay rise. The strike was called off prior to the referendum on the deal. Although that referendum produced a clear overall majority in favour of accepting the offer, some individual garages returned huge majorities for rejecting. Workers at one of these garages, Palmers Green, held a work stoppage on the morning of 5 October over work safeguards.

Criminal barristers voted in a ballot ending 9 Oct to accept a 15% fee rise and other improvements to end their strike, indefinite since 5 September.

Civil servants, teachers and school support staff, nurses and other health workers, and firefighters are all at various stages of balloting, or preparing to ballot. The current wave, already on track, by this paper's estimates, to be the highest level of strikes since 1989, is set to continue and spread.

The Fire Brigades Union is putting a new offer on pay, for a five percent increase, to its members, with a recommendation to reject. The new offer



and decision to ballot on it will set back plans, already well underway, to ballot for industrial action, but that ballot will surely come.

There is a wave of ballots under way or coming soon in the NHS.

GMB is also balloting its members in two Amazon warehouses, in Coventry and Doncaster, in the first formal ballots of Amazon workers ever held in the UK. The ballots follow wildcat strikes over pay in a number of Amazon sites earlier in the year. The GMB's ballots close on 19 October; on 11 October, the union held an online rally with speakers including Derrick Palmer, the vice presi-

dent of the Amazon Labor Union, which won the first ever union agreement at an Amazon site in the USA.

Unite has announced another indefinite strike, again of Arriva bus drivers. Drivers at the Jesmond depot in Newcastle will strike indefinitely from 21 October, in an attempt to save the depot from closure. It is due to close on 31 October.

The pace of action maintained by the rail unions – of 24-hour strikes, often with several weeks in between rounds of action – is increasingly an exception rather than a norm. Some RMT officials argue that escalation would risk “fatigue”, and would undermine the union's imminent re-ballot. But sporadic 24-hour strikes rarely win disputes, and striking repeatedly without any signs of meaningful concessions from the employer is as likely to induce “fatigue” as anything else.

As more workers, in a range of sectors and services, gear up to join the strike wave, the political implications of the strikes – not only individual industrial disputes, but a burgeoning class-wide fightback against inequality – become

clearer. The RMT's Mick Lynch has repeatedly situated his union's strikes in a wider political context, in which “more and more workers are fed up with the way they're being treated at work”, emphasising the class-wide potential of the current wave. But he has also firmly rejected claims the RMT's strikes are “political”, and stressed that they are “an industrial relations matter” between the union and various employers.

In reality, the strikes are both. Disputes have to be fought on their own terms, but every big strike has political implications. With workers in health-care, education, the fire service, and other sectors hopefully striking soon, the strike wave will unavoidably pose profoundly political questions about how our society is organised and which class interests should predominate.

Socialists active in workplaces and the labour movement fight to win our workmates and our unions to a perspective that can answer those questions with a coherent programme for working-class power. □

Strikes

1-13, 18-20 Oct and 1-3 Nov: Teachers at Calverton school in Newham (NEU) strike

11 Oct: Dockers in Liverpool (Unite) strike again, to 17 Oct

13, 20, 25 Oct and 28 Nov: Royal Mail workers (CWU) strike

From 15 Oct: West Midlands Metro workers (Unite) launch 52 days of strikes, up to start of Jan

From 17 Oct: Housing repair workers in Barnet, north London (Unison) launch an indefinite strike, the first ever sanctioned by Unison's Industrial Action Committee

18-20 Oct: FE workers (UCU) strike
20 and 24 Oct: BT workers (CWU) strike

From 21 Oct: Arriva bus drivers in Jesmond (Unite) strike

22-30 Oct: Workers in 65 magistrates' courts in England and Wales (PCS) strike

2, 8, 14, 23, 30 Nov: Department-specific strikes of Royal Mail workers (CWU)

3, 9, 15, 24 Nov and 1 Dec: Department-specific strikes of Royal Mail workers (CWU)

4, 10, 16, 25 Nov and 2 Dec: Department-specific strikes of Royal Mail workers (CWU)

Ballots

TBC: Workers in various regional ambulance services (GMB) ballot for action over pay

“In the next few weeks”: Rail workers at Network Rail and multiple Train Operating Companies (RMT) re-ballot in their ongoing dispute over pay, jobs, and working conditions

Until 21 Oct: University workers (UCU) ballot for action over pay, working conditions, and pensions

Until 14 Oct: Teachers (NEU) and school support staff (NEU) indicative ballots for action over pay and conditions

Until 19 Oct: Amazon workers in Coventry and Doncaster (GMB) ballot for action over pay

Until 27 Oct: Midwives in Scotland (RCM) ballot for action over pay

1 Nov-13 Jan: School workers (NEU) ballot for action

Until 2 Nov: Nurses (RCN) ballot for strikes over pay

Until 7 Nov: Civil servants (PCS) ballot for action over pay, job cuts, etc.

27 Oct-25 Nov: NHS staff (Unison) ballot for action over pay

Around 9 Jan: Junior doctors (BMA) ballot for action over pay □



Upcoming meetings

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

Sunday 23 October, 6.30pm: The ideological roots of the Truss government

Wednesday 2 November, 7.30pm: Woman, Life, Liberty: Iran rises up for women's rights, Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London, WC1N 1AB

Sunday 13 November: Ecosocialist reading group

Saturday 26 November: All the Rage, Pelican House, 144 Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green, London, E1 5QJ

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



If Chris Williamson's the answer, it's the wrong question



By Jim Denham

Since the 2019 general election, the *Morning Star* and its political masters at the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) have been all over the place on the Labour Party. While their chum Jeremy Corbyn was in the leadership, they were happy to call for a Labour vote. Since then it's changed – not in any coherent direction.

During the Batley and Spen by-election (June-July 2021), the paper's coverage was clearly sympathetic to George Galloway's thoroughly reactionary campaign. In the local elections of May 2020, the paper failed to call even for a critical Labour vote (except, unaccountably, in Wales), carried an uncritical interview with the Northern Independence Party's Thelma Walker, and noticeably failed to address what it described in an editorial (13 April 2020) as the "widespread belief that a non-Labour vote only helps the Tories

in England and Wales, and the SNP in Scotland".

But a new low was surely reached when they carried an "opinion" article (23 September 2022) by the ultra-dodgy Chris Williamson (once a right-wing Labour council leader who governed in coalition the Tories, then a Corbynite Labour MP, then in 2019 resigning from Labour after claiming the party was "too apologetic" over antisemitism): Williamson's piece announced that he and his anti-Ukraine micro-sect Resist would be joining Arthur Scargill's semi-defunct Socialist Labour Party (SLP).

In a bizarre diatribe whose only political content was use of catch-phrases like "anti-imperialism" and "proxy war", Williamson argued that the only reason "parties like Respect, Tusc, and the SLP for that matter, foundered [was] because the timing wasn't right": nothing to do with their politics, then. In fact, the only positive argument in favour of the SLP that Williamson comes up with is "name recognition": "Having the name 'Labour' in the SLP's title is hugely beneficial."

Having cited the title (but not the contents) of Lenin's *What Is to Be*

Done? as his inspiration, Williamson goes on to quote Labour's 1974 manifesto commitment to "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people" (words that Starmer might have little difficulty signing up to) as his objective!

The *Morning Star* justified carrying this incoherent, apolitical drivel by claiming "Chris Williamson's arguments for joining the SLP form one part of a much bigger discussion of where the Labour Party is going". Really? What "discussion" does Williamson's rant enable?

Brexit

The same editorial complains that "[Labour] is not a democratic party and has demonstrated its ability to ignore conference, affiliated unions and the wishes of the vast majority of its members".

True but not new. It is interesting that the *Morning Star* (and, therefore, the CPB) should seize upon the question of democracy now. They have, repeatedly, decried the fact that the majority of Labour members opposed Brexit and have, repeatedly, argued that Cor-

byn should have defied the members, rather than accept the compromise stitch-up that emerged from Labour's 2019 conference.

Here's the *Morning Star's* / CPB's main man within Corbyn's inner sanctum between 2016 and 2019, Andrew Murray, setting out (in an interview with *Morning Star* editor Ben Chacko, published 27 September), exactly how he thinks the members' wishes should have been thwarted:

"Attitudes to a second referendum depended upon what question you asked the members. If you asked, do you want to stop Brexit – they would say yes. But if you asked what's more important, stopping Brexit or getting Jeremy into Downing Street, they would overwhelmingly have said the latter."

Even if Murray is right about that – I'm not at all sure – let's have no more bleating from the *Morning Star* about Starmer's disdain for democracy.

What the paper and the party that controls it do not have is any coherent way forward for rank and file Labour left-wingers: the fact that they can give the discredited shyster Williamson house-room is proof of that. □

Ukraine: the proxy fallacy

By Tom Harrison

According to Putin cronies such as Sergei Markov, the Kremlin is not fighting a war against a Ukrainian nation seeking to preserve its independence. What's going on instead is a "proxy war" between Russia and NATO. The Ukrainian fighters are merely "stooges" acting at the behest primarily of US imperialism.

Sadly this slander that Ukrainians fighting against enslavement by Putin's gangster state are nothing more than NATO dupes has credence amongst elements on the left, some of whom ought to know better.

The notion of "proxy war" is familiar to those who were around at the time of the Vietnam war. Supporters of US imperialism's war against the national liberation struggle in Vietnam claimed then that it was really a "proxy war" con-

ducted by the Soviet Union against the USA.

North Vietnam and the NLF were in receipt of considerable military aid from Brezhnev's Russia and Mao's China during the sixties and seventies, without which they might not have proved victorious. Yet nobody on the left would dare suggest they were mere "puppets" of big power backers rather than independent actors fighting to liberate their country.

The same standards do not apparently apply for some to Ukraine, seemingly because they rely on armaments from western imperialist countries to fight off invasion by a power intent on colonial conquest. This is essentially cretinous campism at its worst of the "my enemy's enemy is my friend" variety.

It is crude reductionism to bring international politics down to a world where there

are only three actors – USA, Russia and China – and everyone else their various puppets. That's the kind of world Donald Trump would like to see and one he shares in his bromance with Putin. The reality is that other nations and peoples are capable of independent actions, especially when their country is invaded by a predatory imperialist power.

Colonial wars haven't only taken place in Africa and Asia. The history of Ireland is enough to testify to that. Lenin had good reason to refer to Tsarist Russia as "the prison house of nations." Great Russian chauvinism continued as a major driving force in subsequent Kremlin regimes. Under Stalin this involved the forced deportation of national groupings and their replacement with ethnic Russians.

With Putin, their presence outside of Russian Federa-

tion gave him "justification" for land grabbing wars. Putin apologists in the *Morning Star* and elsewhere would excuse his behaviour on the grounds that Russia has been "humiliated" since the collapse of the USSR. However, the nature of this "humiliation" is that parts of the old Soviet empire broke away. Amongst the numerous national groupings that remain under the Kremlin's auspice there are distinct murmurings of unrest motivated by feelings of discrimination. They have been living under a corrupt regime and its rottenness is being exposed by military failure in Ukraine.

Putin's policy is one of irredentism – the claim to regain people and territory "lost" to the nation. Its narrative of victimhood is similar to that of German nationalism in the aftermath of the First World War. Nevertheless, the Cold

War brought "casualties" and "losses" to the nations seeking independence from Greater Russia, not to Russia. Russian lives are only being lost now in Putin's drive to reassert colonial control over Ukraine.

In a war of colonial conquest, socialists are on the side of the forces resisting the invaders, rather than denigrating them as proxies and stooges. "Neither Washington or Moscow" was a good slogan when we marched against the Vietnam war and in support of those fighting for independence for Vietnam. It is just as applicable for Ukraine. Devotees of *Socialist Worker* should do well to note that. □

Eric Lee

Eric Lee is pausing his column for a while as he works to get a book ready for publication. □

Unveil Iran



**Women's
Fightback**

→ from "Unveil Iran", page i

place in different cities. Women participated in the protests without the veil. (Many women had stopped observing the veil and the regime had tried to escalate the attacks on unveiled women, therefore the death of Mahsa.)

Demanding women's liberation and abolition of the rule of the Islamic veil have important politico-ideological significance.

Why does the veil have such a prominent place in the political scene in Iran?

The veil is the banner of the Islamic regime and movement throughout the region. The veil is the symbol of Islam. The veil is both the tool and the symbol of women's oppression under Islam. The gender-sexual relationship in Islam is an important characteristic. The relationship between women and man under Islam is like that of slave and slave-owner; thus the significance and prominence of the veil and gender apartheid in Islam. Therefore, the Islamic regime cannot accept any setback on the question of the veil.

The women's liberation movement will not accept the veil and gender apartheid, so this war will go on until one side completely defeats the other. The women's rights movement was the first movement to take to the streets against the regime and the first one to impose a defeat on the regime, be it short-lived. The hostility between this movement and the Islamic regime is deep and has a long history.

What we are witnessing in Iran is the culmination of the women's liberation movement and the total integration of it in the general socio-economic and political opposition to the Islamic regime. This is the first time in history that



a movement for women's freedom and equality has equally attracted men and women in large numbers with so much dedication and passion.

Women's liberation is an important part of the protest movement but it's not the only demand. People have taken to the street to topple this regime. Death to the regime and its leader has echoed throughout the country. People have braved the streets and are fighting with the security police. The psychology of the society has transformed; fear has subsided; people feel empowered and are defiant.

It is of paramount importance that the international progressive and freedom loving people and organisations to support the movement and show solidarity with the people in Iran.

We also need to be vigilant regarding the US and the West's regime change plot. It seems that the regime change has moved to the top of US agenda. Particularly in the last few months, in the climate of US warmongering efforts to impose a new world order, US has openly defended a regime change and is planning for it. The threat of another regime change like the one in 1979 is real; the danger of the people's movement for freedom, equality and prosperity being once more hijacked by the US and Western power. □

• Taken with thanks from azadizan.org/?p=5198

#LABOUR PURGE



**Activist
Agenda**

At Labour conference, the leadership did not dare defend its attempt to "ban" front-benchers from joining picket lines; a motion calling on all Labour MPs to join picket lines was passed. And the leadership could not sustain its attempt to "ban" MPs from criticising the monarchy during the "official mourning" period: Clive Lewis defied it in [The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com).

A [protest](#) against the ban on Workers' Liberty (decreed by the NEC in spring 2022) was circulated at Labour Party conference, and is now in open circulation, and Islington South CLP has passed a [motion](#) against the ban. Activists will campaign to push back the "banning" culture further with signatures to the protest statement and more CLPs and affiliated union branches passing motions.

• Links for campaigns and motions at workersliberty.org/agenda



**Action on
Covid-19**

The Covid hospitalisation rate in England is, on the latest figures, 3.3 times what it was at the low point of 10 Sep, and still rising fast. Epidemiologists always predicted a new surge in winter. It has started early, and it will continue.

The surge may be relatively mild, as e.g. in Australia in its winter. The rate of deaths with Covid on the death certificate is still going down, and went up only modestly in the big surge of Omicron cases in late 2021 and early 2022. But it's also possible it will be less mild, and that it will combine with a flu surge.

And it may create new pressure among left activists to work at home, not to go out to picket-lines or rallies or street stalls, etc. Short of a fierce new variant, picket-lines, street protests, and street stalls are quite Covid-safe, and the labour movement has to be sustained as an "essential service" even in the worst Covid conditions. But it makes it more urgent to use the autumn to get people out and about, campaigning for:

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

Qatar, Al Jazeera, Israel and The Labour Files



Letter

Keith Road's review of *The Labour Files* on Al Jazeera mainly accuses the series of saying nothing we don't know while conflating all accusations of anti-semitism in a way that suggests none of them has substance. That seems pretty spot on.

But one sentence troubles me. It seems overly simplistic and conspiracy-minded. "The primary purpose of the footage is not to give insight, but to further Al Jazeera and the attitude to Israel of its owner the Qatari state."

Russia Today, Press TV, etc. are straightforward propaganda mouthpiece channels for their regimes. Al Jazeera is different. Many of its journalists have been killed or

imprisoned across the Middle East by regimes of all stripes, including some allied with the Qatari regime.

Index on Censorship, Journalists without Borders, etc. rightly see it an outlet with some editorial independence from the regime.

I still think that there is slant in its coverage on Israel, and its journalistic standards are not unimpeachable.

However, something like the

nuance we bring to talking about the BBC – where we don't claim a one-to-one relationship between the views of the British ruling class and the BBC's editorial output – should be brought to Al Jazeera.

Also, I would be very surprised if the Qatari regime really cares about factional strife inside the Labour Party.

More likely, pressure of market forces allowed a slipshod and sensationalised pro-

gramme: they know there is a Corbynite audience that will publicise the programme on social media.

The outsized prominence of *Labour Files* is surely because of how little serious coverage like the Forde Report and Labour's expulsions of members have received in the British media. □

Luke Hardy, Leeds



Capitalist farming is wasteful



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

The Global Standard Farm, as George Monbiot's book *Regenesi*s calls it, is extraordinarily wasteful. 71% of the world's birds by weight are poultry; 60% of mammalian biomass is domesticated animals (36% are humans and only 4% wild animals).

While providing only a small proportion of our protein, our animals take up a lot of space and resources and produce a lot of waste. Grazing animals provide just 1% of the world's protein but occupy 28% of the land.

Domesticated animal excrement leaches into our rivers, creating algal blooms that strip rivers and seas of oxygen and kill off aquatic life. Our oceans are now pock marked by dead zones. Beef farming in Brazil is thought to have created an algal bloom that sometimes stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to West Africa.

Apart from the solid waste our domestic animal herds produce a lot of

gas. A third of greenhouse gas emissions come from food production, 70% of these from agriculture, the rest in transport, packaging etc. Ruminant animals, such as cows, sheep and goats, are the biggest source of methane on the planet. This greenhouse gas is over eighty times more potent than CO₂, although it breaks down within about 12 years into CO₂ and water vapour. Curbing methane emissions is widely seen as the most important measure for mitigating the impacts of global heating in the short term.

Yet the land currently occupied by livestock has the potential to flip from greenhouse gas emitter to major carbon sink. Careful restoration of those depleted ecosystems through rewilding projects could "could make the difference between our likely failure to prevent more than 1.5 degrees Celsius of global heating, and success."

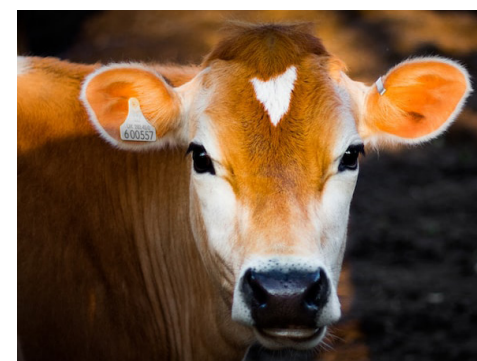
The Standard Global Farm produces the Standard Global Diet, high in oils and protein, which is driving an obesity crisis in the Global North. Inequality and the anarchy of world trade mean that despite producing enough food to sustain 10-14 billion people, we live in a world where 690 million are chronically hungry. If everyone had a diet

equivalent to the average British citizen we would need a landmass equivalent to the planet Mercury to sustain us.

The Global Standard Farm is fragile. Four crops, rice, maize, wheat and soya, account for 70% of the crops we grow. Since 1900 crops have lost 75% of their genetic identity. Four firms control 90% of world grain trade, four more control 66% of the global agricultural chemicals market, three companies make half of all farm machinery, 75% of abattoirs and beef packing plants are owned by four companies, another four control 70% of pig slaughter. 55% of the world's cereals and soybeans are channeled through a few choke points like the Panama and Suez canals.

Commodity speculation on food means even globally-small shocks in supply (as we will experience this year with Ukraine war, Pakistan floods, and multiple droughts) are magnified into huge spikes in price. The futures market, which ostensibly exists to stabilise food prices, ensures that food stores are closely guarded secret. No public authorities have an overview of how much food is being kept in reserve.

The Global Standard Farm is kept afloat by \$500-\$600 billion of taxpayers' subsidies. Subsidies tend to be



paid out in proportion to the amount of land a farmer owns, literally per sq kilometre. In a world where 70% of the land is owned by 1% of landlords "taxpayers of all stations kindly donate their hard-earned income to the dukes, oil sheikhs, Russian oligarchs, corrupt politicians, and other aristocrats and tycoons" who own hold the property deeds, many registered in offshore tax havens.

In the US, 10% of "farmers" (including the biggest American "farmer" Bill Gates) take 77% of the subsidies. It's "taxation without representation": an entirely unaccountable landlord class who leach off the wealth we create. □

• More on Monbiot last week (bit.ly/fv-se) and next week.

From US strikes to politics



Book review

By Simon Nelson

Kim Moody's new book *Breaking the Impasse* brings together an argument that the US left needs to look at the recent labour upsurges (Amazon, teachers' strikes, nurses) as the way forward in breaking from the broken two-party model of American politics.

He criticises the "New Social Democratic Nostalgia" which exists in wings of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) for a rose-tinted view of how major reforms from the New Deal and Civil Rights era were won, supposedly by coalition politics. In short the book is a rejection of both the Communist Party popular front and the "realignment" politics associated with the older Max Shachtman and, perhaps more visibly, Bayard Rustin.

The DSA, the audience for this book, has the potential to be a new force for socialism in the USA. The Sanders campaigns have popularised a broad idea of socialism, but Moody argues that there is a danger of it being subsumed by official Democratic Party politics if the dominant strategy of being electorally focused and working within the Democrats continues.

Moody's facts and figures on the money sloshing around the US political system will not come as a shock to many readers. Neither will the electoral statistics that show the Democrats more and more focused on urban votes, while the Republicans Hoover up votes across rural America.

The Build Back Better agenda of Biden could not gain enough support from within the Democratic Party to be legislated, despite it being probably less radical than a Starmer Labour government would be. DSA campaigned heavily for the PRO Act to ex-

tend labour rights, but, like the proposed Green New Deal legislation, it never even made it to the vote.

Moody argues that such legislation will never make it through all the committees and gerrymandering to hit the floor, even with more Democratic legislators. He describes the pressures on DSA members who have been elected as Democratic legislators at various levels is also laid out. The DSA is also not set up for ongoing accountability from those elected from its ranks.

Rank-and-file

As a long-term proponent of the rank-and-file strategy in the unions, Moody looks to this upturn as a way to break the impasse. Moody repeats his previous criticisms of the "organising model" of Jane McAlevey: overly reliant on professional organisers, e.g. paid union officials and staff, rather than long-term organisation of workers themselves in the workplace.

Today the Democrat coa-

lition relies on some of the wealthiest counties in the USA, and less on blue collar workers. Democrat voters are more likely to be college-educated, and often wealthier, than Republican voters.

Almost a quarter of congressional districts award two thirds of the votes to the Democrat candidates. Moody argues that a left-wing third party based on the more militant sections of the US labour movement (and presumably the DSA) could stand and gain ground, without letting Republicans win, in city areas where the DSA is strongest.

By using those safe districts as a launch pad, and promoting itself in rural areas and around logistics hubs the party would have more grip in rural areas than trying to shift the Democratic party left and pushing it where it is already irrelevant.

The US left should discuss the book and flesh out what some of this might mean. And if such ideas are to have root

in the labour movement then socialist activists need to be in the workplaces making these arguments. □

Black History Month reading

Ernest Rice McKinney: a socialist organiser for black workers

bit.ly/ermworkers

How UK transport workers beat the colour bar

bit.ly/transportcolourbar

Honour and learn from the Grunwick strike!

bit.ly/grunwickstrike

Haitian revolution vs British empire

bit.ly/jameshaiti

John Archer: black pioneer of labour politics

bit.ly/jarcherbattersea

Aviation: already approaching disaster point



Environment

By Finlay Asher

Finlay Asher of Safe Landing, a climate-oriented group of aviation workers campaigning for long-term employment by challenging industry leaders to conform with climate science, spoke to Solidarity.

Safe Landing's genesis was when a group of pilots met at an Extinction Rebellion [XR] meeting. During the 2019 XR protests Todd Smith was very visible, speaking in his pilot's uniform, and they were able to reach more people. It functioned as a bit of a support network for pilots and other aviation workers engaged with climate politics to discuss the professional, political and personal difficulties and contradictions they were experiencing.

I'm an aerospace engineer; I worked for eight years, 2012 to 2020, designing aircraft engines for Rolls-Royce, in Derby, Bristol and briefly Singapore. I believed that by designing future engine concepts, and improving aircraft efficiency, that I could make a difference to the huge contribution the sector makes to global greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2020 I decided I could pursue the struggle better if I quit. I got involved in various environmental campaigns and that was when I met the pilots' group.

I'd become very disillusioned by the culture of what you might call techno-optimism, obscuring and delaying the necessary policy shifts to deal with emissions. That's a wider phenomenon but it's particularly true in aviation; unlike say in buildings, in road transport, in agriculture, there's much less that can be done simply through technological changes in the timescales we're talking about.

Moreover the policies aren't in place to accelerate those technologies. There are major financial disincentives for coal-fired power stations, for instance, that don't apply to aviation, which is very poorly regulated. There's no lever to pressure aerospace manufacturers to accelerate research into radical aircraft architectures or alternative forms of propulsion.

The industry systematically misleads the public and politicians about what's on the cards in terms of technological solutions.

After 2019, when XR became more

prominent, when Greta Thunberg sailed across the Atlantic, and so on, there was a ramping up of greenwashing. I became very uncomfortable. I did a lot of work looking into so-called "Sustainable Aviation Fuel", and concluded that most of it isn't sustainable at all. I made quite a bit of noise about sustainability and about questions of defence ethics, particularly Rolls-Royce selling and servicing jet fighter engines for Saudi Arabia's airforce.

There's quite a strong union presence in Rolls-Royce, and I did go along to some events, but I was never really active, which I strongly regret now. I had the idea that I was paid enough already, and Unite didn't present itself as a mechanism to take up climate issues. I set up an Employee Sustainability Group, but it wasn't connected to the union. My connections in Unite, including with many people in the industry who are concerned and want to do something about these issues, are actually much stronger now.

Destination 1.5

When I joined the whatsapp, which was called "Destination 1.5", I brought in more engineers, and we started to grow the group. We held workshops to discuss more along the lines of what demands we could make for the industry. There was a consensus that we didn't want to be a climate-first group, so to speak, but more of a workers-first group that campaigns about climate through an aviation worker self-interest lens.

We believe that rapid climate action is necessary to secure a sustainable, safe and secure career for aviation workers. The issue of safety, such a crucial one in the industry, is an important focus. There's another pilot who quit his job, Dan Tipney, who wrote a great [article](#) called "This is your pilot speaking", drawing the analogy of if you're in the cockpit, and you ignore the red warning light saying "low fuel", you ignore the fact one of the engines is on fire, and convince yourself that it's probably not happening, because acting on the risk will be inconvenient...

Overcoming that cognitive bias of ignoring warning signs because they could lead to inconvenience is something pilots are specifically trained to overcome. Landing the aircraft safely should always be priority number one. Hence the name.

We've got some money from organisations that fund climate-related projects; that's allowed us to set up our

website, pay for travel to events, and currently have me working for the organisation full-time.

We try to do as much outreach to as many aviation workers as possible, through organising events, doing interviews, through contact with people on LinkedIn. We hear from new supporters all the time, but it's been quite a slow process of growth. There's a lot of workers who like what we're saying but are not confident to do anything even too public about it.

Safe Landing does not encourage people to quit their jobs. We clearly need people organising within industry, but having people – for example retired workers – who can very freely speak out is useful too.

Our demands are, firstly, for industry and political leaders to be honest about the environmental and social impact of aviation. We face a situation where they cite the fact aviation is "only" about 3% of CO₂ emissions – when in the UK the impact of all kinds of aviation emissions on warming is probably more like 15%, and headed fast towards 20%.

The second thing is being realistic about the limits of technology to solve this problem – on what timescales and in what quantity we can get technology in.

The third is to be transparent about the policies required. There is extensive policy- or solution-denialism, claiming that we don't need to tax aviation fuel, or limit air traffic, we don't need to limit fossil-fuel use, or put a price on emissions, and so on. We want to stop this avoidance of proper discussions about inevitable policies.

Lastly, we want a plan and strategy that deal with all this while supporting workers through the transition. For instance we think limiting air traffic and putting a price on emissions in the sector is inevitable; so we're calling for discussion about introducing these changes as soon as possible, in a way that is as smooth as possible for workers, rather than burying our heads in the sand, waiting another decade and then facing disaster.

We're already approaching disaster point. We should have phased these policies in twenty years ago; it's incredibly urgent now. One of the key things for us is that a just transition is an early transition, and therefore one that can be performed as smoothly as possible. The later we wait, the more chaotic changes be – always be bad for workers.

The answer is not necessarily about

transitioning all airline pilots to be train drivers, or all aerospace engineers to be wind-turbine engineers. It's about *right-sizing the industry in the first place*, so you can minimise people being trained for a role that's not future-fit and then having to be moved to a radically different job.

Jobs

Moving people to different jobs is scary for anyone, even if they're quite confident in their own skills. What we're saying is that we want to minimise that kind of scary, wrenching change, which means that the industry should not over-expand. At the moment Airbus and Boeing want to double the number of aircraft, air traffic and air miles in fifteen years. The worst possible thing you can do for workers is to have exponential growth which then goes into reverse, i.e. a major industry crash.

Say to get the reduced air traffic we need to cut 20% of jobs in aviation; that might appear difficult from where we are now, but if we double the industry's size, it will mean vast numbers of workers driven out when the crunch comes. We need to challenge expansion of the sector precisely in order to avoid the kind of scenario so many aviation workers are worried about.

Expanding aviation, only to then roll it back, also means wasting vast resources that could have been invested in something sustainable and useful instead, creating more jobs and more sustainable employment in the process.

Even with air travel, there will be many more jobs that can be created per passenger mile travelled. If we combine reductions in frequency, distance and speed of travel, we could actually achieve a reduction in passenger miles combined with an increase in the number of aviation jobs.

We're not saying we have all the answers. Our key idea is that we want aviation workers to be in the driving seat, to play a key part in defining these strategies and start to exercise some control – whether that's pilots, cabin crew, ground crew, airport staff, engineers, factory workers, even people in the tourism trade... and that's why we're calling for [Workers' Assemblies](#) to discuss and formulate the policies we need, so we can really start to push governments and corporations. □

• A fuller version will be online; and more next week.



Why secular

By Hein Htet Kyaw

In almost every socialist publication of the 21st century, whenever the self-claimed socialists discuss the term “secularism”, they like to discuss it by criticising the liberal left like Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and the new atheism movement. There may be nothing wrong with the critiques as such, but they may betray the Eurocentric mindset of the privileged people who were born in secular nations where religious textbooks and their teachings are unlikely to oppress the masses.

Socialists from different generations had successfully carried out their task of advocating secularism for several decades since the 1890s. The Paris Commune successfully separated the church and the state. The October Revolution also followed the same example. The Spanish revolution and other socialist influenced revolutions also kept this tradition of secularism. As a result, most of the developed countries these days have maintained their secularism even under liberal and conservative governments. Even if there are some far-right conservative groups trying to harm the LGBT and women’s rights movements with their backward religious teachings, socialists have a record of pushing them back.

However, all of these ended when “Islam” became a scapegoat for all the ugly policies of western imperialism. When the United States and its imperialistic allies resurrected political Islam, a locally rooted reactionary political movement in the Middle East as well as in some developing countries, during the Cold War to push back the USSR’s Stalinist regimes, Islamism became a threat to the secularism of the Middle Eastern countries, undoing all of the secular progress there. As a result, the secular left throughout the Middle East became scapegoats for the power struggle between two imperialist powers, USSR and the West.

Since then, the USA and its imperialism have lost control of the Islamism they resurrected. In the meantime, a significant number of leftists in the west have become reactionary and hypocritical when it comes to Islamic fundamentalism. As a result, the majority of this entitled privileged left fraction, who have never been oppressed by religious government or religious autocracy, began to accuse legitimate third-world progressives like Salman Rushdie, Maryam Namazie, and Masih Alinejad of being reactionaries and Islamophobes.

As an underprivileged working-class socialist who has faced a lot of discrimination in life (just because I was born into a Muslim family in a Buddhist-dominated third world country), I can sympathise with those third world ex-Muslim progressives and those immigrants who have endured a lot of blatant racism. They’ve suffered a lot that most of these entitled privileged left fractions would never have thought of. That privilege itself manifests the saviour complex within the privileged whites left out of their guilty conscience. The second generation of immigrants, who are similarly privileged in terms of secularism because they have never lived in non-secular third world countries, reinforced such salvific complexity. They may have experienced severe discrimination because they are the offspring of immigrants, but at least they will not be arrested for being who they are or for what they believe in.

That itself explains how the second generation of immigrant parents are privileged over the same racial identity groups who were born into third world countries.

Privilege

Even though all workers need to be united under the banner of socialism, it doesn’t necessarily mean workers should be united with the lumpenproletariat who will betray the cause. It’s important for a worker to assess their privileges over other workers. It’s important to acknowledge their privilege in order to understand the sufferings of underprivileged workers. Otherwise, the privileged workers might act as lumpenproletariat or reactionaries, which might consequently affect the lives of the underprivileged workers.

Such reactionary elements reinforce one another, and self-proclaimed socialist parties began recruiting ultra-religious immigrants to fill their diversity quotas. Even after recruiting the ultra-religious immigrants just to prove their anti-racist politics, some of those regressive fractions failed to educate them to become materialists and, consequently, atheists. Sometimes, there are some fractions of socialists who claim “religious workers” should not be criticised for being religious. Let me clarify by saying that the above statement has nothing to do with religious workers. However, the above sentence has everything to do with the party members who identify themselves as communists, socialists, or Marxists. To simplify what is meant, some writings by Leon Trotsky need to be referenced.

Leon Trotsky once wrote:

“Naturally, we maintain the most considerate attitude toward the religious prejudices of a backward worker. Should he desire to fight for our program, we would accept him as a party member; but at the same time, our party would persistently educate him in the spirit of materialism and atheism.”

By analysing what Leon Trotsky wrote, it’s apparent that religious workers are alright even with their backwardness. They will not and should not be discriminated against for their religious prejudices. However, a socialist party member or a communist who will actively fight against imperialism, capitalism and other reactionary forces should be educated properly to understand materialism in order to become a legitimate Marxist who understands the concepts that Lenin and Trotsky believed in. Otherwise, they might end up becoming the reactionaries they should be fighting against.

Lenin also wrote something similar as well: “we demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned.” In addition, Leon Trotsky once again wrote a straightforward sentence about those kinds of religious party members who claimed their loyalty to both communist party and the religion: “Whoever fails to struggle against religion is unworthy of bearing the name of a revolutionist.”

Western left

In the imperialistic developed countries, the blasphemy laws are no longer active. People are free to choose their own genders and lifestyles, free of social pressures. People in third-world countries, on the other hand, are unable to choose their genders or how they live their lives. In most third world countries, LGBT people are being oppressed by their authoritarian governments and the religious teachings the governments claim to believe in. Here, there are some reactionary elements in the western world who are too privileged to acknowledge a simple fact about religions. For example, a self-claiming socialist group called “Solidarity (Australia)” claims Islam is not to blame for homophobia. Such kind of claim is not only ignorant but also opportunistic as well.

As an ex-Muslim socialist who has studied a lot on Islam, I reckon “Surah Al-A’raf” and the hadith teachings should be referenced to expose homophobic, transphobic, and sexist val-

ues within Islam. For those reactionary Eurocentric privileged self-claiming leftists who think Islam should not be blamed for homophobia and transphobia, personally, it would be great to see them travelling to University of Jihad in Pakistan as well as some other authentic Islamic universities in order to set up a series of debate on the LGBT issues. In this way, people will know who has more religious knowledge regarding LGBT issues.

Persecution

Apparently, the prophet Muhammad was reported to say “If you find anyone doing as Lot’s people did, kill the one who does it, and the one to whom it is done” in “Sunan Abu Dawood”, a hadith widely accepted by most Islamic communities all over the world. Such kind of blatant homophobia and transphobia are too toxic for a progressive person to believe in since it is calling for a murder of LGBTQ people. Thus, every fraction of the socialist left who would like to claim LGBTQ friendliness in a non-hypocritical way should defend secularism, the right to blasphemy, and the right to critically offend religions, including Islam.

In Third World countries, also referred to as the Global South by some Eurocentric left fractions, there are blasphemy laws which could lead a person to be sentenced to jail just for saying something controversial. For example, a religious reformist in Myanmar called Shin Nyar Na had to spend around 30 years of his life for interpreting Buddhism in a nonconventional way. Some foreigners who visited Myanmar were arrested just for decorating Buddha statues with headphones in a club.

In Pakistan, Ahmadiyya Muslims are being persecuted for believing in a different kind of Islam. These are the reasons secularism is necessary for every country. The right to be a person who can believe in anything they want, the right to worship in any way they want, and the right to interpret the holy books in non-conventional ways are the values that can be achieved only under the banner of secularism.

To achieve secularism, we needed to unite the secular minority of the population. Not all secularists are Marxists. There are a lot of liberal atheists, humanists, and neoliberal progressives who are secular. Even if they claim ypnr, there are a lot of different Marxist tendencies in our countries, ranging from Maoists and Stalinists to Trotskyists and social democrats.

Here, to link the very basic defini-

ism matters



tion of secularism with what socialists believe, let me quote Lenin's article "Socialism and Religion". Lenin stated that "Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority." Lenin wrote that in 1905. However, in third countries, such simple political values were not fulfilled yet even in the 21st century. Our female comrades are being shamed for having sex before marriage, let alone criticizing the nuclear family. Engels argues that "the modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife." Our religious teachings told us: "As to those women on whose part you fear disobeying with arrogance, ill-conduct and rebellion, admonish them (first), (then if they persist), forsake them in bed (i.e. turn your back to them), and (last) beat them".

Such kind of religious teachings pave the way for domestic violence against the women by their husbands. Furthermore, the prophet Muhammad once

said, "A nation which gives its leadership to a woman will not prosper." In this way, it paves the way for the women to be treated as second- or third-class citizens even in their own country, state, and the nuclear family. Therefore, it would be hypocritical for someone to declare themselves in favour of women's rights while failing to condemn the religions that are anti-women in nature.

Socialists should be secular at any cost. Being secular and being anti-racist are not oxymoronic. One can still defend the values of secularism while being an anti-racist. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions should be wholly intolerable to a socialist. No subsidies should be granted to the established church, nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. After all, these are the very basic characteristics of genuine secularism.

However, the very basic definition of secularism is supposed to be challenged in Islam. In Islam, the very basic goal of the religious teaching is to es-

tablish the Islamic State with the laws and teachings reflected by the holy books. A religious autocracy and a separation between the church and the state are indeed oxymoronic.

It's outrageous to see abortion rights stripped off from women in the USA. The public response, especially the response from the left, was inspiring. However, the whole incident makes me think one thing. A single regressive policy was passed and the whole population became outraged against the Christian right and the reactionary far-right segments of the population. And yet, when we, the underprivileged colonised third world people, became angry at the religious fundamentalists and the religious organisations that oppressed us for decades, probably for centuries, we were called Islamophobes and reactionaries. That explains how the limited experiences of western leftists due to their entitlement and privileges have blinded them with ignorance.

Silencing

Our mothers, our sisters, and our beloved ones are always in danger from patriarchal values (originated from religious teachings) of overvaluing virgins, honour killings, and treating women as objects owned by the male. However, whenever we try to push back such kind of sexist, homophobic, transphobic and conservative Islamists, we are called Islamophobes and our allies are silenced. With such kind of hypocritical actions influencing some fractions of the western left, personally, my hatred grows against these regressive left fractions, as they're serving the role of lumpenproletariat over our lives and struggles. They've become reactionary obstacles on our revolutionary journey.

Anti-racism politics is necessary given the climate of xenophobia in the west. Immigrants have every right to find a place where they can live their lives peacefully and happily. Some of them are still forced to carry the trauma of the regimes they had to face in their original countries. It's lucky for the second generation not to suffer the same fate as the first-generation immigrants.

Here I would like to quote Leila Al-Shami to address the imperialist nature of these days. In 2018, Leila Al-Shami wrote an article called "the anti-imperialism of idiots". The article stated that "anti-imperialism of idiots is one which equates imperialism with the actions of the US alone." In the 21st century, it's important to note that imperialism is not limited to the west and the US an-

ymore. Summing up, religion is opium for the people. Religion is a type of spiritual alcohol in which the slaves of capital drown their desire for a life more or less deserving of their human image. However, a slave who has grown to fight for their freedom after becoming aware of their condition has already partially stopped being one.

Here, it's up to the self-proclaimed socialists to decide whether to support the people who decided to fight for their freedom or not. Apparently, those who chose to support the conformists who decided to cling to their religious prejudices should not call themselves "revolutionaries" as they're "reactionaries".

To support a slave who has grown to fight for their freedom after being aware of their condition, one should advocate for "socialism", "social justice", and "liberty". All these values require secularism to thrive along with them. □

• The author is a socialist hacktivist actively struggling against the state blasphemy laws and state censorship in Myanmar. He is a spokesperson for an atheist/humanist organisation called Burmese Atheists. He describes himself as a libertarian Marxist who sees Stalinism as oppressive and exploitative as capitalism, probably more so. For discussion on this article, see bit.ly/h-h-k

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The debate on exclusion



Connolly politically unexpurgated

On 9 March 1914 the British Liberal government said it would seek to amend the Irish Home Rule Bill – then nearing the limit of two years for which the Tory-majority Lords could delay it – to allow counties or county boroughs (Belfast, Derry) to vote to be excluded “for six years”.

Curragh

On 20 March, in the “Curragh Mutiny”, British officers stationed in Ireland said they would refuse to act against Unionists then threatening armed rebellion against Home Rule in the north-east.

The Liberals later dropped their Amending Bill after they introduced it in the Lords and the Tory majority there

amended the Bill to make it exclude all nine counties of Ulster, permanently. The Tories still hoped to stop Home Rule altogether.

However, in 1920-2 a version of the exclusion would become fact, with the creation of a Six-Counties Northern Ireland state with its own “home rule”.

The Irish Home Rule party backed the Liberals’ exclusion plan. The British Labour Party followed the Home Rulers. The Irish labour movement preferred no Home Rule at all to partition.

In the Glasgow Independent Labour Party weekly *Forward*, in April 1914, James Connolly debated this with George Barnes MP.

Barnes then wrote a regular parliamentary report for *Forward*; had been Labour Party leader in 1910-1 (the ILP was affiliated to Labour); visited Dublin and protested in Parliament to support the workers in the Dublin Labour War

of 1913-14; then joined the wartime Lloyd George coalition government and was in the Cabinet when the British military shot James Connolly and other prisoners from the 1916 Easter Rising; refused to resign from the coalition in 1918 when Labour withdrew support,

was expelled from Labour, and faded from politics. The debate went no further in *Forward*: Barnes never replied to Connolly, and the Labour MPs in the Commons in 1914 never got to vote on the Amending Bill. □



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Taking the line from the Irish nationalists

By George N Barnes MP

As I predicted last week: the Tories have been in somewhat chastened mood recently. In fact there was something like a revolt on the back benches for a day or two, and it looked as if Bonar Law & Co. were to be thrown overboard.

The Army had been tried and it had turned out a cock that would not fight. The warriors, in short, had bowed their crested heads to the storm of indignation which had been evoked, so the Tories gave up bullying and tried cajolery.

Irishmen were urged to win Ulster by kindness, to try Home Rule for Catholics till Protestant Ulster was willing to come in; they were told that Tories wanted nothing better than Irish amity. Then, when that would not do, the tap was turned on to Federalism. Anything to cover up the discomfiture of defeat of the Army debacle seemed to be the order of the day. But

the Irishmen long ago cut their political wisdom teeth, and they accordingly stuck grimly to their point, and kept a good stiff upper lip while at the same time giving a welcome ear to the more conciliatory speeches from the back benches.

The conciliation mood was soon over. Balfour took a hand, and after him Carson. The wasps – like Amery and Yate – followed, and we were soon back in the old rut. The talk was lengthened out by a day, and it finished up only last night. So far as I have been able to discern, we are exactly as we were a week ago. A sad feature of the debate was the rancorous ravings of Tim Healy. It wound up, however, with a majority of 80 for Home Rule. The offer of the compromise is still open, but nothing will be done at our end of the passage now. If there is to be a settlement by consent, it will be when the thing is in the Lords.

I am not much concerned

with the question of such settlement excepting in so far as it might contribute to a happier start for the Irishmen and a more complete clearance for us for at least six years. But I have taken my line, along with my colleagues, from the Irish Nationalists. I note that an Irish Correspondent in your columns takes me to task for following the lead of Irish Members of Parliament instead of Irish Trades Councils and Labour bodies generally. In regard to which I have only to say that the Nationalists of Ireland have sent men to Parliament and the Labour men have not. I assume that the Irishmen know their mind and business best, and I take it as expressed in that fact.

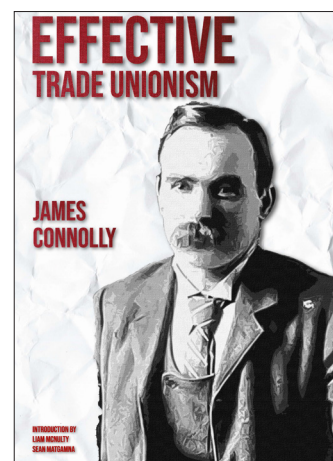
Your correspondent has also a good deal to say about the merits – or rather the demerits – of the suggested compromise; and points out to me that the cutting out of Ulster from the rest of Ireland will divide ASE membership in Ireland into two different political

camp. It is sheer waste of fact arguing about it. Nobody defends it on its merits. It is put forward as the price of peace. If peace is not brought by it, then it goes by the board. And so I leave it.

We put 38 out of our 39 men into the lobby last night, the only absentee being the most characteristically Irish of any Irishmen whom I have known. I mean our old friend and fellows fighter, Jim O’Grady. Jim is still at home – or rather is again at home, having left the

hospital a week or two ago. He is still far from well, but is on the mend. It must have been a sore thing for Jim last night to be the only one of the Labour Party out of the final vote for Home Rule. □

• *Forward*, 11 April 1914, titled “Home Rule, etc.” There, the Tory ultras are named as “Amery and Pete”: our guess is that “Pete” is a typo for “Yate” (Charles Yate MP, an ally of Leo Amery’s).



Aiming to replace capitalism with socialism, James Connolly’s organising and ideas evolved considerably. One idea he clung to from the turn of the century to his death in 1916 was industrial unionism. £5. □

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Ireland on the dissecting table

By James Connolly

This being Easter week, the news from Ireland for the readers of *Forward* will necessarily be of a short and scrappy character. We are all busy enjoying ourselves, and as this is the last Easter before the red flames of war will light up our hilltops and the red rivers of blood flow along our valleys (ahem!), our amusements must perforce be absorbing and exciting.

For it is an awful and serious thing to think that in a month or two the wooden guns of Ulster may go off, and the trained ambulance corps may be wrestling with the problems of how to tie up broken heads or staunch the flow of blood from bleeding noses.

We may not see "red ruin and the breaking up of laws," but we may see the breaking of window panes and hear the rattle of cobble stones upon our doors.

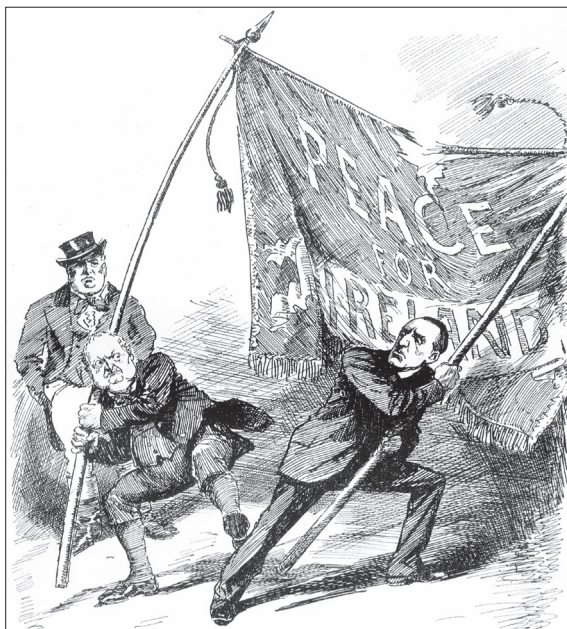
The wooden guns of Ulster! Aye, but let us be frank with ourselves and confess that the wooden guns of Ulster have, at least, succeeded in frightening the Liberals, or if they have not frightened them, then the Liberals are engaged in the greatest game of sham these countries have ever seen. They are pretending to be frightened in order to cover their action in going back on all the promises with which they have held the Home Rulers of Great Britain and Ireland in leash for a generation.

Charles Stewart Parnell could have got Home Rule with Ulster excluded thirty years ago. We have been told ad nauseam about the statesmanlike qualities of John E Redmond as the leader of the Irish race, and yet it appears that his statesmanship has brought his followers to the point of accepting with joyful eagerness and gratitude that which Parnell rejected with scorn thirty years ago. A more miserable fiasco than this ignominious collapse of a great national movement is not recorded in history.

To this poor end have come all the glorious promises, and this poor reward is all the Irish Party can show for its persistent fight against Labour in every three-cornered election in Great Britain, in every municipal election without exception in Ireland.

It is to us a grim comment upon the boasted solidarity of Labour when we see a Labour MP, in Great Britain, calmly announcing that he prefers to follow the official representatives of Irish capitalism rather than the spokesman of 86,000 organised Irish workers, and that he does so because the latter are yet too weak to protect themselves politically – have no votes to deliver in Parliament, whereas their enemies have.

Personally I make no complaint about the position taken up by Mr. George N.



A contemporary English cartoon (*Punch*, 15 April 1914) shows Britain (John Bull) as a puzzled onlooker of the conflict between Catholic and Protestant Ireland, symbolised by Redmond and Carson. In fact the English parties stoked the flames by suggesting British support for repression of the Protestant north-east (Liberals, who then recoiled) or for armed resistance by the north-east (Tories).

Barnes MP, and his colleagues. I do not complain, because I expected it. I have always preached in Ireland that politically we were far behind the English and Scots workers, that many of the measures we required as an imperative necessity were already in working order in Great Britain, and that it was absurd to expect the British working men to turn aside to fight our political battles when his own required so much effort and sacrifice.

On these lines of argument I have fought for the establishment of a Labour Party in Ireland, for the separate political organisation of the Irish workers and for the separate economic and industrial organisation of the Irish workers on a more revolutionary basis than was usual in England and Scotland. This I felt to be wise, because, as much of Ireland is practically unorganised, I do not see the necessity of us committing all the mistakes in organisation already made in Britain, when we have so much practically virgin soil to till in industrial organisation here.

In doing this, in carrying on such a propaganda, I have been continually subject to misrepresentation and even abuse. I have been told that I was no Internationalist, that I was preaching hatred of England, that I was a disruptor. In vain for me to insist that the usual mistake of the Englishman, viz., that he understood Irish problems better than the Irish did themselves applied quite as strongly to British Socialists as to the British ruling class, and that therefore the Irish Socialists should work out their own policy and create their own literature, and that we must expect to be

misunderstood until we could compel recognition by our own strength.

For preaching this doctrine I have generally suffered the boycott from the official Socialists in Great Britain, and dislike from those in Ireland who followed their lead. But now comes along Comrade Barnes MP, and blandly acknowledges that Socialism in England in the votes of its Parliamentary representatives will take its cue from the representatives of an Irish party that openly avows in Ireland its hatred of Socialism and its opposition to Independent Labour representation in this country. This, I take it, is a confirmation of my position that the Irish workers must work out their own salvation, and that in the process of working it out they need not be astonished if the working-class leaders in Great Britain utterly fail to understand them.

This question of presenting Socialism so that it will appeal to the peculiar hereditary instincts and character of the people amongst whom you are operating is one of the first importance to the Socialist and Labour movement. A position, theoretically sound, may fail if expressed in terms unsuited to the apprehension of those to whom you are appealing. For years I fretted at what I considered the utterly foolish attitude of certain Socialist propagandists in Great Britain. Their arguments did not appeal to me, and I did not believe that they could appeal to anyone else. Since then I have come to believe that these people, perhaps, understood the psychology of their own countrymen better than I did, and that this question of psychology or mental make-up was of fundamental importance.

Since that dawned upon me, I have painstakingly stuck to the endeavour to translate Socialist doctrines into terms understood by the Irish, in or out of Ireland. I fancy that I have at least in that respect set a headline for abler persons than myself to copy in future.

But we cannot deal with Ireland without getting entangled in the question of religion. Hence I have got frequently involved in disputes centring around that point. Now observe this confession! I have, I believe, fairly well presented my case on that subject, but my case was the case for workers to whom the traditions and aspirations of Irish Nationality had been of prime importance. That achievement was reserved for, and I think has been most excellently performed by our Comrade John Wheatley and his colleagues of the Catholic Socialist Society. Nowhere have I come across literature so well suited for the purpose of making Socialists of Catholics; my own poor attempts have been, as I have said, directed to the enrolment in my ranks of Irish workers.

All this is a digression in a sense, but an understanding of it may explain to the reader "that tired feeling" that comes across us in Ireland when we witness the love embraces which take place between the Parliamentary Labour Party deadliest enemies – the Home Rule Party. I say our deadliest enemies, because the Unionist Party is only a negligible quantity except in a small corner of Ireland, and in that corner it is not destined to be permanent. We do not get angry when we see these things or read such letters; we simply say – "What the devil is up with those fellows?"

There will be no bad feeling over such letters as Mr. Barnes', or the implied refusal of the Labour Party to pay any attention to the request of organised Labour in Ireland, but it will not help on a better understanding between the militant proletariat of the two islands.

The Belfast branch of the Independent Labour Party of Ireland has issued the following manifesto on the question of Ulster. 10,000 copies were given out at the chapel doors on Sunday.

Manifesto

Fellow-Workers: As the only political organisation in the North of Ireland which, seeking first the well-being and freedom of the working class, has yet at all times resolutely stood for the attainment of Irish Nationhood, we desire to appeal to you and the public generally to protest with all possible power and without loss of time against the proposal to allow the unity of Ireland to be placed at the mercy of the voters in a small part of Ireland.

The Exclusion Proposals put forward by the Liberal Government, and accepted by the Home Rule Party, mean that a vote is to be taken of the electors in the Ulster counties and in the two boroughs of Belfast and Derry on the question of whether these places will continue to be reckoned as part of Ireland, and therefore as subject to the Home Rule Bill. If the majority in any one of these places vote against Home Rule then that county or borough will be cut off politically from Ireland and the Home Rule Bill will not apply to it. This, in simple language, means that a local majority, in Belfast or Derry, for instance, are to be given the power to wreak their hatred upon Ireland by dismembering her, by cutting Ireland to pieces as a corpse would be cut upon the dissecting table.

Cromwell, in his worst days, the Orange Order in its most atrocious moments, never planned a more dastardly outrage upon the Irish nation. And remember that this is planned by the political parties who for a generation have taught you to believe that they hoped for and worked for Ireland a nation.

Yet in the moment when it was pos-

continued on page 12 →

→ from page 11

sible and easy to realise that ideal they consented to betray you, and to place your hopes and the unity of your nation at the mercy of the voters in the Ulster counties and boroughs, where the seeds of intolerance, bigotry and opposition to social progress have borne the most evil fruit and darkened the vision of the largest multitudes.

But we will be told that this Exclusion is to be only temporary, and Home Rule and Liberal politicians are whispering into your ears that they are resolutely opposed to any extension of the six years' limit. Do not be misled. Remember that no man can foretell the course of politics.

Could any Home Ruler have foretold one year ago that the Home Rule Party would have consented even to discuss this dismemberment of the Irish Nation? He would have been driven in disgrace out of the AOH or the UIL, if he had suggested a year ago that such a thing was possible. But today these organisations are loud in their approval of the proposal to put Ireland upon the dissecting table and to give into the hands of Sir Edward Carson and his dupes the knife with which to cut her

up.

But truth will out, and even the politicians themselves let slip the fact about the real probabilities of the future. Read the speech of Mr. John Dillon, MP, in the House of Commons on the night of Wednesday, April 1st, as reported in the *Liberal Daily News and Leader* of the following day. He laid stress upon the fact that two General Elections will take place within the six years. He said: "Ulster had been offered the safeguard of two elections, and it would be an event unparalleled in British history for the Unionist Party not to win one of them."

What would happen then, if the Unionist Party won one of these elections, as Mr. Dillon says they almost certainly would? On the same night the Solicitor-General supplied the answer. He said: "If the other side came into power and brought forward a Bill to exclude Ulster it would have a royal and triumphal procession to the foot of the throne."

So that here you have two leading spokesmen of the Liberal and Home Rule Parties admitting that the six years' limit is only a form of speech – that in practical politics it will have no real

existence. What this proposal is really doing is establishing the right of, and giving the power to, a small minority to destroy the nation as a nation to – we again repeat it – place Ireland upon the dissecting table, and give into the hands of Sir Edward Carson and his followers the knife with which to cut her up.

No amount of speeches against Exclusion which the Home Rule politicians may hereafter make should be allowed to cover or hide their complicity in this damnable crime, or to obscure the fact that it was and is their acceptance of Mr. Asquith's proposal that alone makes Exclusion possible.

Think of all the measures needed by the workers in this part of the country which will be impossible if this Exclusion is allowed! The Nationalisation of Irish Railways, so badly needed, will be an impossibility; the Extension to Ireland of the Medical Benefits of the Insurance Act, the Provision of Meals to Children at School, the Abolition of Sweating, and the general safeguarding of the interests of Mill Workers and other forms of Labour needing Legal Protection, will all be delayed, if not absolutely lost, if any part of Ulster is

cut off from Ireland as a nation. And, in addition, all the old sectarian jealousies will be kept up, workers will be kept fighting with workers and progress will be impossible.

We appeal to you then to arouse yourselves to the gravity of the occasion. Make your protest in every possible way. Do not allow it to be said of you by the children of the future that your generation was the only generation in all the history of Ireland that consented to betray her, that granted to an intolerant minority the power to destroy the unity of the country to disrupt and dismember it, and that you granted this at the very moment when Labour elsewhere in Ireland was most assertive of its rights and most desirous of a Free Irish Nation as the natural guardian of those rights. □

• *Forward*, 18 April 1914. Published with tiny abridgements online with the titles "[The Solidarity of Labour](#)" and "[Ireland on the Dissecting Table](#)". "Chapels" in Northern Ireland meant Catholic as against Protestant places of worship.



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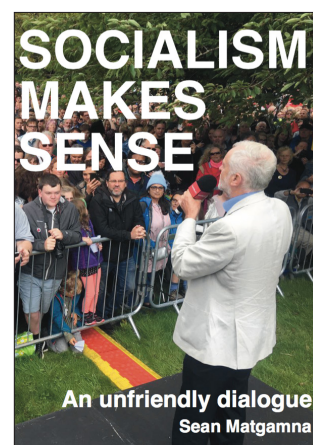
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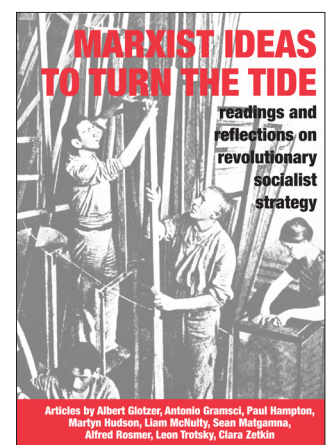
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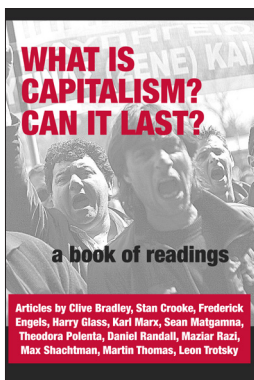
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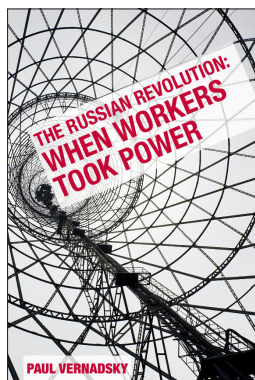
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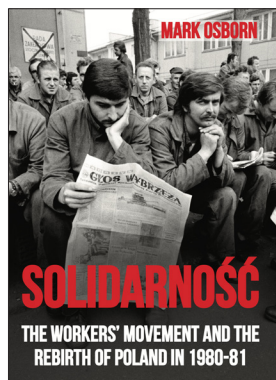
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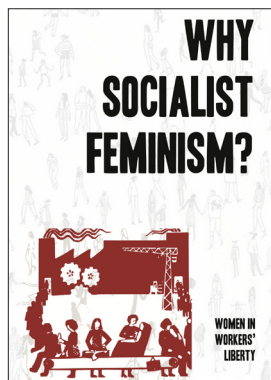
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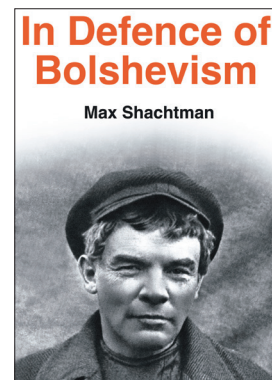
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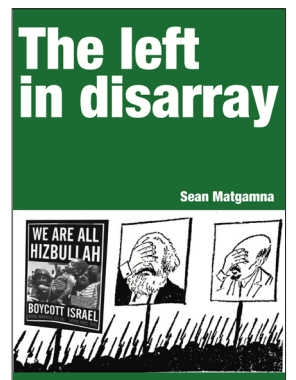
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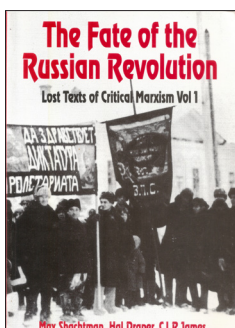
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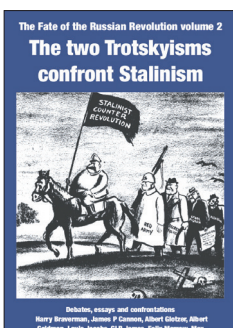
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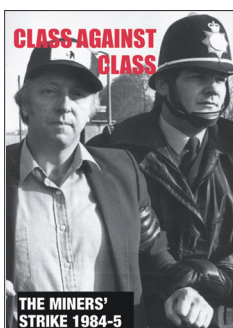
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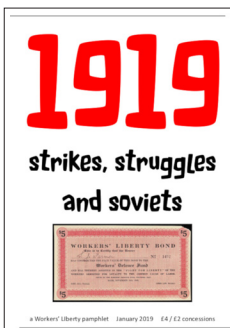
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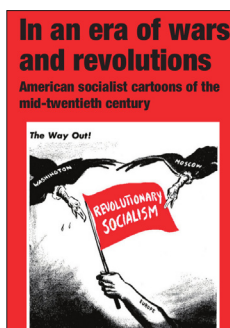
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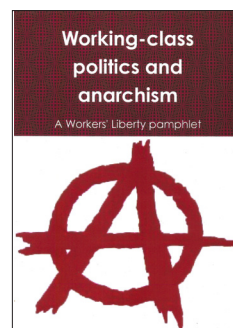
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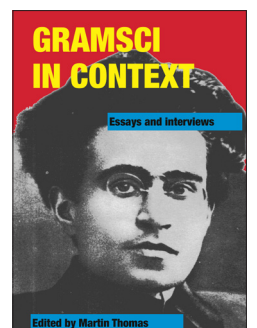
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The 19 days in Royal Mail

A postal worker and CWU rep in south-west England spoke to Solidarity.

The different unions striking together on 1 October have deepened the public sense of this strike wave as a working-class fightback against the Tories. People who aren't involved in the labour movement don't know the ins-and-outs of balloting law. They won't necessarily be looking at this and seeing individual unions fighting individual industrial disputes. They see the union movement taking on the government. We need to harness that feeling and expand it.

I think there's a strong level of public support for our strikes, rail workers'

strikes, and others. The knowledge that people are on our side gives us a big boost.

We've announced strikes through the beginning of December, but there's a willingness to go further if necessary. If these strikes don't get results, we are prepared to name strikes throughout December, using the power we have around the Christmas period.

Our action on 30 September and 1 October was a test of the level of support for the dispute, as people were potentially losing two days' pay in a week for the first time. But the support absolutely held up, the strike was totally solid.

When the union announced the programme of 19 days of strikes running

into the beginning of December, there was a really positive reaction from members. We've built up slowly and now we're hitting them hard. The period around Black Friday [25 Nov] and in the run-up to Christmas is where we have most power and leverage.

Within Royal Mail, we're split into different functions: network, distribution, delivery, international... The 19 days is a programme of rolling action across functions. There'll be days where everyone is on strike, but each function is only striking for a maximum of nine days.

There's a feeling of confidence, we feel that these strikes could win the dispute.

But we're also coming towards a crunch time. There's a feeling that we have to win the dispute this year, because we have less leverage after Christmas.

The support we've had has been brilliant. In my area, Salisbury and District Trade Union Council (TUC) have been fantastic. Last Saturday (1 October) we were on strike alongside other unions, including the RMT. The locations where we picket are about 400 yards apart, and we had little marches periodically throughout that day where we marched the TUC banner between pickets, which kept everyone buoyed up and was a good show of solidarity. □

Battling a 2.5% pay offer in FE

By Keith Road

Workers from Lewisham College joined the strike of 23 Further Education (FE) colleges on 6 and 7 October, again on 10 and 11 October with three strike dates the following week. Six other colleges are striking on other dates.

On 6 October a lively, noisy picket line, well supported by students and other supporters, heard speakers from Lewisham College, an RMT Tube driver, University and College Union (UCU) speakers from Lambeth College and Goldsmiths University, and UCU General Secretary Jo Grady.

Speakers pointed to the increased salaries of the college's principal and of the leadership of the Newcastle College Group, which Lewisham College is part of. During a previous strike the

college had tried to cover the teaching with learning support workers, but this time those same workers had joined the picket. The UCU branch has grown.

Students were cheered as they left the college after only minutes inside, as no teaching was taking place. Shamefully the college is trying to make it appear otherwise by marking student registers with an "I" for "independent learning". Those students that joined the pickets and supporters got a more valuable lesson.

Across the sector UCU are demanding a pay offer that "reflect[s] the soaring cost of living". The demand made to the employer body, the Association of Colleges (AoC), is for 10%. Their recommendation is just 2.5%. Two strikes have been suspended with colleges making offers of 8% for the lowest paid



and 5% for most lecturers. Colleges can be independent or part of a group, and are not bound to AoC rates, so some disputes can be settled before others have even received an offer.

Since 2009 pay in further education has fallen behind inflation by 35%, and the pay gap between school and college teachers stands at around £9k.

The Department for Education has announced £1.6bn in extra funding

for further education and UCU estimates that colleges already have an additional £400m available to spend on staff compared with 2019-20. Some college principals have had annual pay rises of over 8% and now earn more than £200k per year. The lowest paid unqualified teachers are on £21k, and some qualified teachers on £26k. □

Schools formal ballot to open 1 Nov

By David Pendleton

The National Education Union's [NEU's] support staff "preliminary ballot" opened on 7 September, and the teacher one on 24 Sep. Both look like showing a strong will for strikes, on good turnouts.

The NEU Executive met on 6 Oct and decided that the formal ballots will open 1 Nov and close 13 Jan. The extended timeline is to deal with the disruption likely from postal strikes in November. The ballot question will refer to a claim for a fully funded pay increase above inflation (RPI).

Support staff will be balloted despite Unison accepting the pay award and the likelihood that the GMB will too. There will be a big focus in the campaign, for both ballots, for the pay awards to be fully funded. The current offers are not funded, meaning the measly increase in pay will also mean schools having to lay off staff, most likely support staff. The union's approach to this is good. It confirms its position as the school workers' union and shows a growing will to fight for all its members. (And for others. GMB and Unison support staff have the same

legal protections joining a NEU strike balloted for in their grade as NEU members have.)

The first strike day will be in the week beginning 30 Jan. Support staff will strike alongside teachers. A specific proposal for two then three further days in February and March was defeated before it got to Executive, but the words "there should be a pattern of action that escalates pressure on the government and seeks to co-ordinate with other unions" were inserted.

We will need to fight to ensure an escalating and adequate tempo for action. We will

also need to argue for strike committees and democratic lay control of the dispute. □



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

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

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

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- 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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Queueing to get into hospital



Diary of a paramedic

By Edel Ginger

My shifts are getting harder. Every day now there are calls about every half hour over the radio for crews to come clear for category 1 calls – someone in a life-threatening emergency. But we can't come clear because we are sat waiting to get into hospital.

We never get in without queueing now, usually for around three hours. When the queueing first started the A&E consultants used to come round the ambulances checking how the patients were. It made it feel like someone was

paying attention to how unsafe sitting in a carpark with acutely sick people was. That rarely happens now. We just wait.

On my last shift I saw three patients. One into resuscitation and two queue waits, three and five hours. Two hours late off.

When management sent a memo out saying we shouldn't let the waits at hospital affect our clinical decisions it really pissed me off. They usually send these memos when something has gone wrong. "We're damned if we do, damned if we don't", says T when we talk about it.

"If we tell patients there's a long wait, we are seen to be dissuading them from going to hospital. If we don't tell them, we're not giving them the full pic-

ture for them to make a decision about their care."

"If they need to go in, then I take them", says G. But for me the disadvantages of sitting in an uncomfortable ambulance for five hours in the middle of the night should be a factor in thinking about the best options for a frail elderly patient!

We are reduced to debating how we should be working for the best within these horrendous circumstances. From management there's just a complete lack of realisation of what it's like and a constant suggestion that blame will fall on individuals if mistakes are made.

Instead, we need recognition that no one can make good decisions when they are wading in shit. □

The paradox of the 1980s



Pages from a militant life

By Bob Carnegie

Until I reached 11 or 12, the only takeaway food I can remember was fish and chips (lapsed Catholics) and very occasionally Chinese (my favourite dish was and is special fried rice).

The rise of the giant convenience food companies began in the early seventies. Kentucky Fried Chicken (now KFC) and McDonald's dominated. In my opinion, it was only really in the mid to late eighties that these companies became part of the common experience in Brisbane, the capital of Queensland.

KFC had a store not far from one of the places we lived when I was a kid. We only ever visited it on a couple of

occasions. That was because of cost. It was expensive.

A few weeks ago I had a medical specialist appointment. Whilst waiting I went to the local McDonald's. It was packed with school children spending money on coffee and hamburgers.

Where are these middle-class young people getting the money to pay for this? From their parents.

Somewhere in the mid 80s there was a massive shift in the availability of credit which created a capacity for many working-class people to buy consumer goods and indeed to improve their lot in a substantial way. Yet trade unions were going through their greatest reversal since the Great Depression.

When Billy Bragg sang "A nation with their freezers full are dancing in the street, outside another nation is sleeping in the streets", he hit on something which still needs to be analysed by the left.

There seemed to be a quite visible rise in living conditions for many, perhaps the majority of, working people – while coal miners were in an heroic though unsuccessful struggle to save their industry and their union, and while unions throughout the western world were being put to the sword.

In April-May 1985 I was a rank-and-file merchant seafarer. I spent 22 days in maximum security prison for refusing to sign bail papers that would have prevented me returning to a picket line in support of electrical workers employed by a state government body, SEQEB. I had been arrested nine times. The SEQEB workers remained locked out for a year and most of their jobs were replaced by scab labour.

The combination of the rise of consumer wealth in 1980s and the attack on organised labour needs further study. □

Coal Miner's Daughter



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

The recent death of country and western singer Loretta Lynn evokes the biographical film *Coal Miner's Daughter* (Michael Apted, 1980). With Sissy Spacek as Loretta the film traces her early life in a remote coal mining community in Kentucky, and her move with her husband (played by Tommy Lee Jones) to the Pacific North West, where her singing and musical ability is discovered.

She befriends fellow country and western singer Patsy Kline and goes on to a glittering career. Her songs,

many of which she wrote herself, often portrayed the hardships of her early life, as in the song *Coal Miner's Daughter* itself, released in 1970.

She acquired a reputation for speaking out for women in her songs: against drunken husbands and the hardships of a woman's life. In her own words: "I didn't write for the men. I wrote for us women. And the men loved it too".

Yet, she was a mass of contradictions, refusing to align herself with the women's movement and late in life supporting Donald Trump.

The film is well worth seeing for Sissy Spacek's excellent performance and, early in the film, for its depiction of the lives of the Kentucky miners and their families. □

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A sense of confidence



John Moloney

Our members working for His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) in 65 magistrates' courts across England and Wales will strike 22-30 October. They're fighting for the removal of a computer system that's been introduced for organising their work, called "Common Platform". The system increases workload whilst also opening the door to job cuts, the worst of all worlds.

It's important that, while our national ballot continues (26 Sep to 7 Nov), local and departmental disputes continue to be fought, and that we keep a

focus on them. We have a number of such disputes which are still live, where members have recently taken industrial action. Not only are these disputes important on their own terms, they can also feed into the national dispute by building a general atmosphere of resistance and giving workers the confidence to take industrial action.

Threshold

The national ballot campaign is obviously still ongoing. We're still some way off 50% in terms of the report-backs we're getting from branches about who has voted, but there's also a real sense of confidence that we will hit the threshold.

Meanwhile, as the ballot continues, discussions will take place about

what kind of campaign of action we need when we do hopefully get the required turnout and majority. Those discussions will take place within departmental groups, and their ideas and proposals will be fed into a national dispute committee, which will be tasked with synthesising those ideas into a plan for action, which the Executive will then be asked to review and ratify. As I've written in this column previously, I believe we need to announce a programme of action which involves all-out national strikes, supplemented with selective action across departments, with strike fund payments to members wherever possible.

On 10 October, I supported a protest against anti-union laws organised by the Free Our Unions campaign

outside the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Like all unions, we're constrained by existing laws, and will also be directly impacted by the Tories' plans for new restrictions and attacks on unions' right to organise. For example, they want to reduce facility time in the civil service, which will severely undermine workers' rights to union representation. The PCS Executive has previously resolved to support Free Our Unions; it's vital the whole labour movement mounts an active campaign not only to resist proposed new laws, but to fight against existing ones. □

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



Liverpool dockers strike again

By Gerry Bates

Liverpool dockers are striking again from 11 to 17 October, and will strike yet again for two weeks from 25 October unless they get a settlement with the employer, Peel Ports, on wages and jobs.

Talks with the employers, Peel Ports, at Liverpool docks in the week 3-7 October, when the dockers had returned to work, produced no movement on the dockers' demand for a pay rise and a comprehensive pay review. On the contrary: Peel Ports responded by threatening 132 redundancies, and are now refusing to meet the union again.

The union, Unite, called this response "desperate". Work in the port has been growing and will continue to grow. Peel Ports must be losing millions from the dispute. Unite dockers in Southampton have refused to handle ships redirected from Liverpool.

On the picket line on 11 October, everyone felt that they could win but it'll take time. Even if it takes a couple of months, the workers are well organised and up for it. □

Unite members reject TfL pay offer

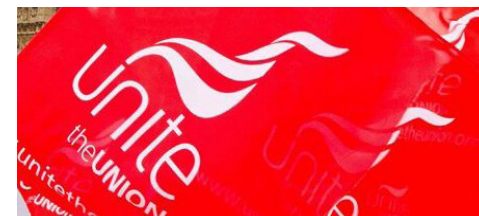


Unite members working for Transport for London (TfL) have rejected the company's insulting pay offer, by 92 percent to eight percent. RMT members had also previously rejected the offer. Unite is demanding an 8.4 percent increase for 2022, and plans to

move to a new industrial action ballot.

Unite's members at TfL work in Dial-a-Ride, Croydon Trams engineering and maintenance, river services, Victoria Coach Station, and Compliance, Policing, Operations, and Security (CPOS). They also have some members working for LUL in engineering depots, who are covered by separate pay arrangements.

The derisory offers made to TfL staff are likely to presage similarly low of-



fers made to LUL workers once the LUL pay settlement expires in April 2023. A strong fight is needed by all unions across both TfL and LUL to win above-inflation pay increases. □

UAL cleaners plan to escalate

By David Santos

Cleaners in GMB at University of Arts London (UAL) High Holborn campus struck 26-30 September, as part of a wider campaign against outsourcing across the university. At the High Holborn branch, the specific demand of the cleaning team was for an additional five members of staff, to make up for those who had been cut as the cleaning contract has been passed around different agencies in the last few years.

The contractor offered an "independent investigator" to provide a staff number. But cleaners there know the reality, after one worker had to take a month off sick, whilst another had to have an ambulance called to the workplace, both because of overwork.

UAL is one of few London universities to stick with outsourcing, though poor conditions for the lowest paid workers remain common amongst the sector. The picket lines got support from a student campaign at the university, as well as other local striking union branches, cleaners at the Royal Opera House in CAIWU and SOAS cleaners at Unison.



Dialogue between these groups of workers is an important way to continue the struggle – though cleaners at SOAS won insourcing in 2018, they remain in dispute about staffing levels and pay.

Lessons, tactics and strategy can be shared, the need to bolster each dispute is best answered in a coordinated fightback.

UAL cleaners have crowdfunded money for their strike fund, and expressed an intent to escalate their action. The rest of the labour movement should get behind them! □

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Unveil Iran!



Women's Fightback

Azar Majedi, an exiled Iranian women's rights activist and revolutionary socialist, gives her view.

Iran once again has become the scene of revolt, protest and bloodshed. Even though protests are nothing new in Iran, this time there is a marked difference in the protest movements occupying the streets of many cities and towns in Iran. As the mood, expression of revolt and the slogans have changed, so has the narrative of the mainstream media in the west.

Up to now, any time people took to the street, we heard the narrative that people in Iran do not want an overthrow, they just want some reforms in the regime. The state reformists took to the stage to give a skewed narrative of reality. This time the agenda has changed. They're propagating a regime change. The narrative might have changed, the aim is the same: to offer a self-serving interpretation of the protest movement and people's aspiration.

But what do the people want?

The desire to topple this regime and to create a free, equal and prosperous society has a deep root in Iranian society. This regime from day one has faced fierce struggle from a sizeable section of the people.

Only a couple of weeks after coming to power the women's rights movement came to the streets to oppose Khomeini's mandate to enforce the Islamic veil on women. On 8 March 1979, in the midst of organisation for 8 March meetings in Tehran, thousands of women took to the street and demanded freedom and equality. In response to the calls by the regime for forceful imposition of the veil as an Islamic duty and an anti-western, anti-imperialist act, demonstrators shouted: "Women's freedom is neither Eastern nor Western, but universal".

This slogan was significant as at the time so-called "anti-imperialism" was dominant among the populist left. The irony was that the Islamic regime was to the bone a western/imperialist product: a result of a regime change by the US and western governments to obstruct the left gaining prominence. The uprising for a better world was

hijacked by the West and by the Islamic regime in 1979.

Once the society began to free itself from the traumatic murderous assault of the 1980s, the wave of periodical protests started, among them a few large-scale ones. In 1999 when the so-called reformist president Khatami was in power, a protest started by the students was bloodily suppressed by the regime. In 2008 there was a large protest opposing the results of the presidential so-called election, many were arrested, shot dead or murdered under torture. In December 2017 the new wave of a national protest movement began, which has been ongoing and have taken different forms from workers' strikes to street demonstrations and street riots.

The current round of protests is much more radical and militant, it's much more widespread, it's all over the country, and many more people are involved.

However, the country has been in real turmoil for the past four years. There have been several mass protests which have taken the country by storm for a few days, then taken a step back, only to emerge stronger. The slogan of death to the Islamic regime and its leader has been common in all these protests.

There have been numerous workers' strikes. Some lasted months. Workers have attempted to create their general assemblies and workers' councils; abolishing the regime-made organisations and trying to make their own organisations; many workers, teachers and pensioners protested in the streets.

Two years ago there was a week-long revolt that resulted in at least 1,500 deaths according to the official figures, but the real number is much higher. Arrests of workers, teachers, students and political activists have been carried out by the regime.

This protest movement is not only more widespread and militant. The main slogan and the trigger point of protests are significant as well. The protests were triggered by the tragic death of a young woman at the hands of the security force for not observing the Islamic veil; therefore, the demand for women's liberation, against the veil.

The Islamic veil is a fundamental symbol of Islam and Islamic regime. The current protest movement is aiming at one of the pillars of the regime. Beautiful scenes of burning the veil took

continued on page 5 →

Why we welcome Ukrainian victories

By Dan Katz

What is at stake in the Ukraine war? On 24 February Ukraine was invaded by Vladimir Putin's Russia. As Russian tanks crossed the border, Putin denied that Ukraine had any right to exist.

Russia is seeking to destroy Ukraine as a functioning political unit, subordinating Ukraine to Russian power. Immediately Russian President Vladimir Putin is looking to stop Western support for Ukraine by making the cost of backing Ukraine higher than the West is willing to pay.

The Western powers back Ukraine because they believe, rightly, that the threat from Russia won't stop if Ukraine is occupied and destroyed, but get worse. Moldova and the Baltic states might well be next if Russia wins.

Putin's strategy is currently not working. Limited supplies of advanced American weapons and Ukrainian determination, plus Russian demoralisation, mean Putin's armies are on the backfoot.

In the last month Russian forces have lost large areas in the north east and south of Ukraine to counter-attacks. And on Saturday 8 October the Kerch Bridge, which Russia uses to supply its troops in southern Ukraine, was partially destroyed.

Self-determination

Ukraine is fighting for its right to self-determination. More than that, Ukrainian workers know that if Putin wins this war they will lose their political rights to vote and to organise, and their trade union rights. Ukraine's workers know that in Donbas, occupied by Russia since 2014, the area is run by Moscow-controlled gangsters without respect for the rule of law.

In areas liberated from Russian control, investigators have found plausible evidence of widespread war crimes including murder, torture, and sexual assaults.

There are those on the left who still refuse to back Ukraine's war, its right to fight in self-defence and the right to demand weapons from wherever they can get them. Apparently *Socialist Worker* still thinks Ukraine is simply acting as a proxy for the West and NATO.

As a consequence *Socialist Worker* has no policy for Ukraine and is despised by the Ukrainian

left. What do they believe Ukrainian workers should do? Die quietly and accept a treaty imposed by Moscow that rips their country to bits, in order to ensure "peace"?

And if Ukraine is a US proxy it is a strange kind of proxy. NATO still refuses to allow Ukraine to join. The EU has not admitted Ukraine into membership. The US still limits weapons supplies. The EU states are scared of the war and its implications and possible outcomes, not gleeful that it is happening.

Leaders

In fact the Russian leaders are solely to blame for this war. Putin chose to invade for his own nationalist-imperialist reasons. The war has been a nightmare for the Ukrainian people and they are right to want it to end, and to end with Ukraine's territorial integrity restored, Ukraine rebuilt and democratic. Ukraine is fighting to stop the daily possibility of people being killed by Russian missile attacks. And they are right to do so.

The scale of the economic and human damage inflicted on Ukraine by Russian imperialism is extraordinary.

In mid-July the Kyiv School of Economics reported: "18 civilian airports, 779 medical institutions, 1,371 educational institutions, 690 kindergartens, 23 shopping centres, 28 oil depots, 105,200 private cars, 563 cultural and religious facilities have been damaged, destroyed or seized."

The World Bank currently puts the cost of repairing the war damage at \$300bn. That is much more than Ukraine's pre-war GDP. The Bank expects Ukraine's economy to contract by 35% in 2022. Inflation stands at 24%.

Even before the war started Ukraine was the poorest state in Europe, with a GDP per head of only \$3,700. Now 60% of Ukrainians live below the official poverty line.

Within Ukraine 7mn people from a population of 44mn are internally displaced. 7mn Ukrainians are living as refugees across Europe. The UN has recorded 14,000 casualties and 6,000 civilian deaths, although accepting the actual figures are likely to be far higher.

We should support Ukraine's resistance to Russian imperialism. Victory to Ukraine! □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

Campaign to raise benefits!

By Mohan Sen

Liz Truss's government may backtrack on cutting benefits. Truss and Kwarteng had implied most working-age benefits, including Universal Credit, would rise in April 2023 in line with earnings, not inflation – producing a real-terms cut of 4-5%. Now public outrage at the Tories and jitters in their parliamentary party may have pushed them back.

If Truss and Kwarteng's original plan goes ahead, it will increase the numbers in poverty by 450,000 at a stroke, including 200,000 children. 350,000 of those will be in households where someone works.

But maintaining benefits at their existing poverty-level is no great victory. Those on benefits will suffer between now and April whatever the rise then. Inflation is [higher](#) for the worse-off. We need campaigning to raise the real level of benefits.

The standard rate of Universal Credit (UC) was £95 a week before the Tories slashed £20 last October, citing the retreat of Covid. It's now just over £77 a week – if you're under 25, just over £61.

Among the 38 countries in the OECD grouping of richer economies, UK unemployment benefits are pretty much the

worst – *much* worse than most. In most OECD countries unemployment benefit is equivalent to over 60% of the worker's previous earnings, at least in the first period, and in quite a few above 70% or 80%. The OECD average is equivalent to 65% of earnings after six months, 56% after six months, 43% after two years and 29% after five. Even the US manages 54% after six months and 42% after a year.

On the same measures, Universal Credit is 21% of earnings. In the OECD, only Romania and Russia are in the same ballpark (both are more generous, at first): bit.ly/oecdbenefits

In 1970, UK unemployment benefit was 19% of average earnings (a higher figure than "previous earnings" of workers becoming unemployed). By 2010 it was under 11%. I think that percentage has risen slightly, but only because of a squeeze on wages.

If Universal Credit was raised to the 1970 level, it would be over 50% higher.

The labour movement failed to campaign meaningfully against the £20 cut last autumn, and has continued its quietness and stillness since.

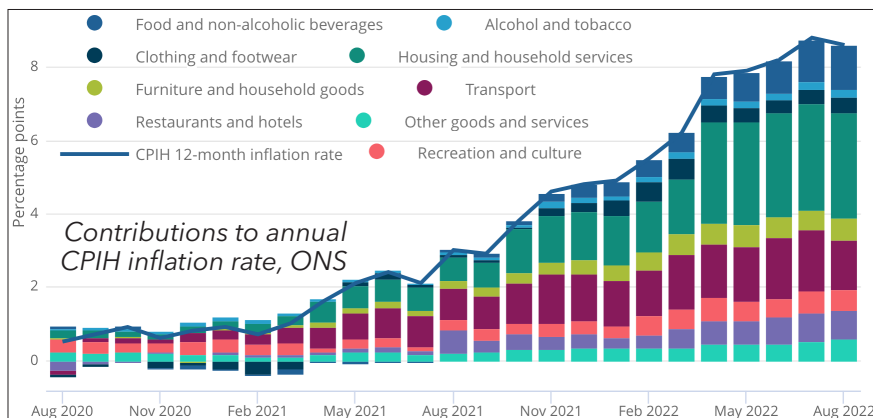
Labour spokespeople say, quietly, that the party opposes a real-terms benefit cut – begging the question why they won't say that, even quietly, about wages.

The TUC proposes increasing UC to £260 a week – but we've seen no union campaigning even for an inflation-matching rise, let alone anything more.

The Tories are vulnerable here. Socialists should agitate for the unions and Labour Party to exert some real pressure.

At the same time, a serious, successful fight to raise wages can help push up benefits. □

• More: bit.ly/raisebenefits



The ideas that Starmer wants to ban