

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

NO KINGS, NO BOSSES!

» Up the republic!

» For economic,
social, and political
democracy

» Towards a
workers' republic



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No kings, no bosses!



One of Boris Johnson's last gambits before being ousted as Tory leader and prime minister in summer 2022 was to ask the Queen to dissolve Parliament and call a new election.

The move would stall the Tory rebellion, and force MPs to rally behind him for the election.

The Queen, or the Queen's advisers, had the sense to say no. But the monarch has the power to make such moves.

In 1975, the Governor General of Australia, acting on behalf of the Queen, sacked the reforming Labor government there. It is doubtful now that the monarch has the authority to sack a government against the will of the prime minister, but the doubt has never been tested in practice.

The monarch certainly has the power to choose the prime minister. Usually, at least since May 1923, when King

George V is reckoned to have had some role in choosing Baldwin over Curzon, that is a formality: one party is clearly the leading party in the Commons, and the monarch is obliged to choose its leader.

It could be different in a crisis, for example if a left-winger is leader of a Labour Party but many right-wing Labour MPs are open to rallying around another figure who might form a cross-party coalition.

The monarch makes the government amend laws, usually to protect the monarchy's tax scams and exempt it from regulations. The current Head of the Civil Service, Simon Case, was Private Secretary to Prince William in 2018-2020, in between civil-service top jobs. Surely he didn't take the job in order to schedule flower-show openings well. He reckoned it an important behind-the-scenes part of state administration. The prime minister has powers to legislate over the head of Parliament, and those derive from the "Royal Prerogative", i.e. from the prime minister using "Crown" powers.

In quiet times, the monarchy looks like an expensive absurdity – £345 million of public money each year, and 23 palaces, to maintain a relic of unelected hereditary status. In stormier times, it could be worse, partly because quiet times give the monarchy the aura of being "above politics".

Republic

So: no king! Not a president like an elected king, as in France, either, but a republic accountable to a democratic elected assembly, with only a "ceremonial" president if any.

Among people aged 18-24, there is now a 38%-32% majority for a republic (the rest, "don't know").

But more. Even in capitalist republics, workplaces remain monarchies. The boss is king and prime minister combined. Their position may be directly hereditary (as with the Murdoch family), or hereditary in the looser sense that almost all top bosses come from wealthy family backgrounds.

That "hereditary" element in the ruling class is increasing, rather than decreasing, as Thomas Piketty showed in

his book *Capital in the 21st Century*.

Salaried top managers have merged with owners at the top of the capitalist pyramid. The middling CEO of a FTSE100 company gets £4.15 million a year. They can't spend that all on watches and yachts. They build up big wealth portfolios, in other companies as well as their own.

Their class controls the means of production, so have power over all of us who must sell our labour-power to live.

Within limits imposed on them by trade-union action, they decide how much we're paid. They decide how stressful and life-devouring our wage-work is.

They decide how we use our social creative capacities, what we produce, and how. They decide to continue fossil-fuel operations because they yield bigger profits than renewables or energy-saving schemes.

They make it an unequal, exploitative, world. No bosses! Replace them by social ownership and democratic and workers' control, across all the major concentrations of productive wealth. □

Organising economic life without "bosses"



By Martin Thomas

"Neither god nor master", ni dieu ni maître, was the name of a newspaper launched by the revolutionary socialist Auguste Blanqui in his old age, in 1880.

The slogan was later used mostly by anarchists, though Blanqui was not an anarchist and the "Blanquists" would in 1901-05 merge into a more-or-less Marxist Socialist Party

in France. According to the 2021 UK census, "managers, directors, and officials" are 12.9% of the entire workforce, a bigger number than factory operatives or "elementary occupations" or indeed any category except "professional". Does that mean that "no bosses" is now utopian?

Supervisors, coordinators, schedulers will be needed in any complex system of production, and in socialism too. In capitalist workplaces those supervisors are sometimes bullies and harassers. Even now, especially where the workers are unionised and self-confident, often they aren't.

The Unite union in New Zealand, about the only union in the world outside Scandinavia to organise fast-food workers successfully, prioritises unionising supervisors, because they are the only workers in the fast-food places likely to stay around long.

Under socialism we will not need bosses – people who are "bossy" – but we will need coordinators. They will be elected; they will have wages

like "ordinary" workers rather than present-day top managers' pay; and they themselves will be "supervised" by confident, well-informed workers with a democratic say in what is produced and how, not workers cowed and worried they will lose their job or their promotion.

Marx

Karl Marx put it [like this](#): "The labour of supervision and management is naturally required wherever the direct process of production assumes the form of a combined social process... However, it has a double nature.

"On the one hand, all labour in which many individuals co-operate necessarily requires [some role] as that of an orchestra conductor. This is a productive job, which must be performed in every combined mode of production.

"On the other hand... this supervision work necessarily arises in all modes of production based on the antithesis between the labourer, as the direct producer, and the owner of the means of production.

The greater this antagonism, the greater the role played by supervision. Hence it reaches its peak in the slave system. But it is indispensable also in the capitalist mode of production, since the production process in it is simultaneously a process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power...

"An orchestra conductor need not own the instruments of his orchestra, nor is it within the scope of their duties as conductor to have anything to do with the 'wages' of the other musicians. Co-operative factories furnish proof that the capitalist has become no less redundant as a functionary in production as he himself, looking down from his high perch, finds the big landowner redundant..."

In Britain [today](#), 20-odd % of 18-49 year olds say they have been bullied as adults. People report worse impact from bullying as adults than from bullying as children: 71% consider the bullying to have been "severe", and 70-odd %, to have had a big impact.

In 56% of cases, the bul-

lying was by a boss or manager. Probably not because the bullying directly served productivity – as Marx noted, capitalist wage-slavery is different from direct slavery on that – but because the power gained as agent of the owner fosters bullying traits.

Socialism cannot make everyone kind and gentle. It can suppress capitalism's chronic tendency to encourage harassment in the workplace.

I promised more on education this week, but no.671 instead. □

Solidarity 671 will be 12 May

Because the Workers' Liberty annual conference is 29-30 April (in London: for details email awl@workersliberty.org), and so we'll have few sales over that weekend, we're skipping a Wednesday again on 5 May. *Solidarity* 671 will be dated 12 May. □



Corrections

The headline "63 heroic days" on the article in *Solidarity* 668 about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was taken from *Labor Action*, in which it was first printed, but didn't fit: the general Warsaw Rising of August 1944 lasted 63 days, but the Ghetto Rising of April 1943, 27 days. □

Unions need more democracy

By Ollie Moore

As the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) and Unison begin their National Executive Committee (NEC) elections, members are reminded that unions are not insurance companies, but democratic collectives. Workers’ Liberty supporters active in those unions are supporting slates proposing more radical tactics in industrial disputes, and democratic reforms of union structures.

The current strike wave shows that trade unions remain both the bedrock organisations of the working class, through which revivals of struggle will be expressed, and bodies in great need of transformation. Within PCS, only two of the union’s officials – its general secretary and assistant general

secretary – are elected. In Unison, the general secretary is the only elected official. Influential positions such as “Head of Health”, the official who leads the union’s bargaining and negotiation in the NHS dispute, are staff appointments. Often these officials are paid much more than the workers whose pay and conditions they negotiate.

In GMB, officials have, so far, supported Amazon workers in conducting their dispute democratically, with decisions about strike strategy made in members’ assemblies. But those officials are also unelected; if the GMB bureaucracy decides things are going too far or too fast at Amazon, then without democratic reform, Amazon workers have no means to directly hold those officials to account. Democratic reforms do not guarantee success in disputes.

But more democratic unions give workers a better chance of developing and enacting strategies that can.

On 29 July, a range of cosponsoring organisations including Workers’ Liberty will contribute to the “[Troublemakers’ Conference](#)” initiated by StrikeMap. The conference can be an important opportunity for discussing how to develop and fight for programmes of democratic reform within unions, as well as spreading best practice from nuts-and-bolts workplace organising. If it is successful, the conference, which is modelled in part on the “Troublemakers’ Schools” organised by the US journal *Labor Notes*, could help establish an ongoing network of training and discussion events for rank-and-file workplace and union activists.

A basic reform to fight for, in all unions

and sectors, is for a radical increase in transparency and communication. Too often, details about developments in negotiations, including offers from employers, are withheld from rank-and-file members until the last possible moment, when they are often presented as take-it-or-leave-it faits accomplis in referenda. Union negotiators often uncritically go along with employers’ insistence on “confidentiality”, leaving workers in the dark about discussions about their own working conditions.

Against such opacity, rank-and-file bodies must push for regular communication and the fullest possible information from officials and negotiators at every stage of a dispute. Having full access to information is a prerequisite for workers having informed discussions about their next steps. □

Price inflation: facts, prospects, and responses

By Rhodri Evans

How much have prices risen? 10.1% (CPI), 13.5% (RPI), 19.2% (food), between March 2022 and March 2023.

The high CPI and RPI rates are due to food prices? Not entirely; [Germany](#) has 22% food inflation, 7.4% CPI; [France](#) 16% food, 5.7% CPI. Food is only 10% of the CPIH

“basket”. The UK’s higher rate is mostly due to household energy prices having jumped sharply here between March and April 2022.

So the official May inflation figures (for rise between April 2022 and April 2023) will be lower? Almost certainly. Also, world wholesale food price rises have been slowing for a

while, and that will probably feed through to shop prices. But we don’t know *how much* inflation will go down.

RPI

Why is RPI higher than CPI? Many reasons, but one main one is that they average over prices in the basket of goods differently. There are technical merits to the CPI averaging,

and most countries have only a CPI equivalent, not RPI. But the Resolution Foundation [reports](#) that inflation now (March 2022 to March 2023) is 3.5% higher for the worse-off than for the better-off. It is usual for prices of high-ticket consumer durables bought by the well-off to rise more slowly than prices of basics. It makes sense for unions to cite RPI as a rough-and-ready “compensation”. Mind you, even at a given income level, inflation will differ between households in different areas, with different diets, with different transport use... Private rents went up 4.9% on

average between March 2022 and March 2023, but some rents will not have risen, others will have risen sharply. France’s official statistics website allows you easily to estimate inflation for different sorts of households. Not Britain’s

What’s the answer? Better than plucking a single month’s RPI figure as a makeshift base for wage claims (as unions often do), construct a working-class prices index. And demand escalator clauses to increase wages in line with prices every month. (Belgium already has escalator clauses, though not monthly). □

Strikes

21-23 April: Workers at Amazon’s BHX4 warehouse in Coventry (GMB) strike

24 April: Support staff at Pot Kiln Primary School in Suffolk (Unison) strike

24-25 April: Outsourced ISS domestic and catering staff at South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (GMB) strike

24-26 April: North Sea oil workers at five firms (Unite) strike

27 April: Teachers in England (NEU) strike

28 April: Civil servants in England and Wales (PCS) strike

28 April-29 May: Rolling strikes by engineers at Chessington World of Adventures theme park (Unite)

1-2 May: Nurses in many NHS trusts in England (RCN)

and other NHS workers at various trusts (Unite) strike. RCN strike starts 8pm 30 April

2 May: Teachers in England (NEU) strike

2, 4, and 6 May: NSL parking and traffic wardens in Westminster (GMB) strike

Until 4 May: Serco workers at Devonport naval dockyard (Unite) strike every weekend, and every weekday evening

4-6, 9-10, and 25-27 May: Heathrow Airport security workers (Unite) strike

From “mid-May”: St. Mungo’s charity workers (Unite) strike (probably)

Ballots

20 March-9 May: Civil servants (PCS) re-ballot to renew mandate for industrial action over pay and conditions

29 March-5 May: Junior doc-

tors in Scotland (BMA) ballot for industrial action over pay

From 31 March, “for several weeks”: Amazon workers at warehouses in Mansfield, Coalville, Kegworth, Rugeley, and Rugby (GMB) conduct consultative ballot for strikes

31 March-28 April: NHS workers in Unite vote on whether to accept the government’s pay offer

3 April-28 April: NHS workers in GMB vote on whether to accept the government’s pay offer

6 April-4 May: Workers at mainline Train Operating Companies (RMT) re-ballot to renew mandate for industrial action

24 April-10 May: RCN ballot on new pay offer in Wales

From early May (tba): RCN to re-ballot nurses on pay strikes □



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 14 May, 11am: Ecosocialist study group

Saturday 27 - Monday 29 May: Fête de Lutte Ouvrière, near Paris

Sunday 28 May, 2pm: Socialist feminist reading group. Betraying Big Brother: The Feminist Awakening in China by Leta Hong Fincher, Ruskin Park, Denmark Hill, London, SE5 9AW

Friday-Sunday, 14-16 July: Ideas for Freedom 2023, London, a weekend of socialist debate and discussion. Watch this space!

For our calendars of events, updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, [see \[workersliberty.org/events\]\(https://workersliberty.org/events\)](https://workersliberty.org/events) or scan QR code □



Union links after 21-24 April



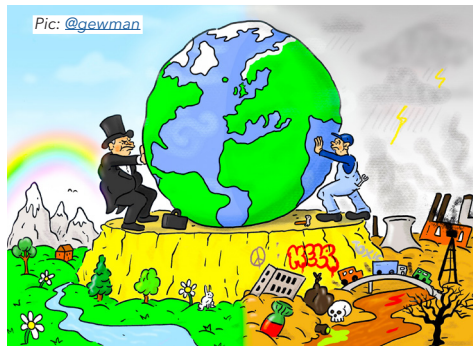
Environment

By Sacha Ismail

Tens of thousands of people participated in the 22 April central London march that marked the highpoint of Extinction Rebellion's 21-24 April, "The Big One", a long weekend of events and protests.

Workers' Liberty was there, as were some other socialists and trade unionists, including the organised [XR Trade Unionists](#) grouping. The civil service union PCS officially backed the event. There are left-wing, class-struggle-oriented stirrings in the XR milieu, or at least on its edges.

At The Big One XR Trade Unionists ran a lively and interesting "hub" with speakers, ran stalls, collected contacts and gave out material. The [Safe Landing](#) aviation workers' group, which campaigns on climate alongside sustainable jobs and workers' rights, organised members on the demonstrations, particularly the 21 April march against aviation expansion, and got a good response. Workers' Liberty activists supported these initiatives, ran stalls, promoted our pamphlet [For Workers' Climate Action](#) and the centrality of workers' transition plans like



the one recently developed by [North Sea](#) oil and gas workers.

But overall there was little organised left and even less trade union presence during The Big One.

In the first instance that is a criticism of the labour movement for failing to engage. That reflects the labour movement's general lack of street mobilisation, certainly around political questions; and the conservative positions a swathe of the movement still holds on the climate crisis. (The two biggest trade unions in high-emission industry, Unite and GMB, favour airport expansion. GMB backs gas for energy generation).

But also, XR has failed to orient to the labour movement or to advocate pro-working class policies and politics – or really much in the way of politics at all.

The earlier, extravagantly apolitical stances adopted by XR and its activists

(just demanding that the government "do something") have faded, and many 21-24 April protesters were aware how the climate crisis is connected to other aspects of social justice and human rights, migrants' rights and internationalism.

Many XR activists and even the national organisation sometimes nod to linking up with unions, despite the latter's failings. That is progress. But still limited, low-energy, and low-politics.

Socialists

Socialists need to organise and argue among workers and in the labour movement for mobilisation of a specifically working-class and socialist presence in support of and within climate activism. We need to argue among climate activists for orientation to the labour movement, working-class struggles and socialist ideas.

There are plenty of picket lines to invite XR and other climate campaigners to. There are plenty of workers in the XR milieu to invite into union activities. Simultaneously we should argue and organise for pro-working class, anti-capitalist and socialist demands to tackle the climate crisis.

Public ownership seems key. Take aviation. As aviation-worker activists in PCS argue, comprehensively transforming the industry in the interests of climate, sustainable jobs and workers'

rights is not possible while it remains in private hands.

We need to take up those discussions among climate activists, including in XR. We should encourage other trade unionists and socialists, including XR Trade Unionists, to do likewise.

XR previously thought it had how invented a whole new form of campaigning. For 21-24 April it reverted to more traditional forms of action, like "A-to-B marches". A variety of street tactics are still very much necessary, but even more necessary are links with the labour movement, support for specifically working-class direct action, and class-struggle policies and ideas. □



Activist Agenda

The latest anti-refugee bill, the Illegal Immigration Bill, is set to have a third reading in the Commons on 26 April, and goes to the Lords on 10 May. The Labour Campaign for Free Movement is discussing plans for a series of fortnightly small protests which it hopes can help build towards a big national demonstration, maybe in late June.

Watch this space. □

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

Morning Star mentions Nicaragua again



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

For several years until last Saturday (22 April) the *Morning Star* had little to say about Nicaragua. The last significant coverage was in November 2019, when it published a fawning interview with "the much loved" President Daniel Ortega, by its (then) international editor Steve Sweeney.

The overall tone of the interview can be gauged by the contribution of Ortega's wife and Vice-President Rosario Murillo, praising her husband as "a strong leader because of his [Catholic] faith" and stating "Daniel has wisdom and humility, he is very humble."

This was just over a year after more than three hundred unarmed protesters (including former Sandinistas) had been gunned down by police and gangs of masked thugs unleashed by Ortega's government. According to Amnesty International, more than 2,000 protestors were injured and hundreds

arbitrarily detained. In a blatant lie, the *Morning Star* described the peaceful protests as a "Washington-backed failed armed coup."

Since then, the increasingly corrupt, authoritarian, right wing and anti-women (abortion has been banned in a deal with the Catholic church) nature of the Ortega-Murillo regime has become so obvious – even to much of the left that defines itself as "anti-imperialist", meaning support for almost any force hostile to the USA – that the paper has steered clear of any detailed coverage or analysis. Until 22 April.

Coup?

In what promises to be the first of a series of articles, Dan Kovalin and John Perry repeat the lie that that the 2018 protest movement was a violent, US-backed attempted coup: the demonstrators (initially protesting against a social security tax increase and then broadening out into anti-corruption and anti repression demands) are accused of "suddenly [having] access to hundreds of homemade mortar guns, deployed at roadblocks ('tranques') made by ripping up paving stones ... 22 police officers [were] killed ... and

within just four days 121 [police] had been injured, mainly as a result of gunfire."

The authors give no sources for these claims and no credible, independent observers have reported anything of the sort. In fact, many left wingers and former Sandinistas have gone on record, stating that the protests were peaceful and the government's response was viciously brutal.

The article published in the 22 April *Morning Star* cites a recent book *Nicaragua: A History of US Intervention and Resistance* as though it is an authoritative source. The article doesn't mention that one of the authors of the article – Dan Kovalik – is also the author of the book.

The article's co-author John Perry, appears to be an interesting figure. On 10 April 2018 the *Daily Beast* carried a story about how a Nicaraguan student protester, Dania Valeska Aleman Sandoval, had appeared in an obviously staged video "confession" admitting that she had been part of heavily armed gang of killers. The video was filmed from inside a prison. Later on, Sandoval told the *Daily Beast* that the author-

ities had "said that they were going to kill me and my family" and threatened to shoot her companions if she didn't read out the statement.

Sandoval's forced "confession" was a major propaganda coup for the regime and was spread online by its supporters. One of the most prominent of these was a man supposedly named Charles Redvers, a Canadian living in Nicaragua who had written extensively under that name for outlets including the *Guardian*, *Open Democracy* and the *London Review of Books*, always defending the regime.

The *Daily Beast* revealed that "Redvers" was in fact one "John Perry" who, as well as circulating Sandoval's forced confession, had signed an open letter published by the red-brown website Grayzone denouncing the *Guardian* for publishing reports from a journalist "who openly associates with opposition figures" in Nicaragua.

Now this craven apologist for the corrupt Ortega-Murillo regime has re-emerged in the pages of the *Morning Star*. As he and his fellow apologist Mr Kovalik are promising further articles, I'll no doubt be returning to them. □

The politics of emotional life



Women's Fightback

By Kelly Rogers

Iva Gotby's *They Call It Love: The Politics of Emotional Life* is the latest contribution to a growing series of Verso books on the topic of Social Reproduction Theory, in which Gotby explores the concept of emotional reproduction. She defines this as, on the one hand, the work of generating certain feelings in those around us, and, on the other, the work of maintaining the social norms that are both "cause and effect" of emotional labour as we know it.

Family

The nuclear family, Gotby explains, remains the "proper place of intense feeling"; the source of emotional well-being and where we're taught to seek comfort and support. Despite the fact that families can also cause pain and trauma, much is invested ideologically into painting the family in this way. This is what Gotby calls "the ideology of love". Finding romantic love and building a stable, nuclear family are seen to be central to contemporary ideals of the "good life", and failure to meet these norms leads to feelings of social exclusion and personal failure.



Positive or negative emotions are shaped by normative values and she emphasises the need to "de-naturalise" these feelings. The ideologies of love and the family ought to be engaged with critically, rather than assumed to be an innate part of human nature.

Gender

Within the heterosexual family, Gotby continues, women are expected to contribute more to the emotional well-being of their partners and families. There is the expectation that they will put the emotional needs of others ahead of their own. Motherhood, especially, is treated as an emotionally unique experience and the failure to experience positive emotions when raising children is seen as a failure of womanhood.

Gotby calls this "emotional privatisation", whereby emotional labour is seen as the preserve of particular people. Men, in this context, get emotionally de-skilled and are "given license to act as solitary individuals". They undertake "masculine labour" instead and their self-worth tends to be based on their own achievements,

rather than on their relationships with others.

Extractive

As such, positive feelings move upwards in social hierarchies. Working-class people are raised to be pliant and gracious to those they work for. Women are raised to serve the emotional needs of men. And this social framework exists to maintain the capitalist system: to keep the sexual division of labour and the division between public and private spheres intact.

Emotional labour is thus presented as extractive; as something that costs us at the bottom of the social hierarchy. No doubt there's an element of truth to this. But the overall message of Gotby's book is bleak. No matter whether you

find pleasure or fulfillment in loving or supporting your friends or family – you are being duped.

Struggle concepts

Gotby draws on Silvia Federici's notion of "struggle concepts": "concepts that name and produce antagonistic relations." The basic premise is that we ought to raise demands such as wages for housework or call for the refusal of – in this instance – emotional labour, not because these are realistic but to "make visible" the social underpinnings of capitalism and raise a politics that is generally disruptive. "Emotional reproduction is a struggle concept", she says, "through which we can view our emotional lives as inherently political."

The positive proposals she makes for changing the world are extremely limited. She argues for the repurposing of our emotions. Positive emotions, she says, shouldn't be seen as the only emotions of worth. Rather, emotions like anger and frustration, when wielded collectively, are "feminist emotions" necessary to movement-building. She's not wrong, but as the sole demand of her readers, it's not especially groundbreaking. □

• Workers' Liberty's South London socialist feminist reading group, held monthly, discussed *They Call It Love* for its April meeting. For details of the May meeting contact: office@workersliberty.org.

EHRC flies a kite for Tory "culture-war"

By Angela Driver

In February, equalities minister Kemi Badenoch asked the "Equality and Human Rights Commission" (EHRC) for guidance on changing the Equality Act 2010 define "sex" as "biological sex" rather than "gender".

EHRC has [responded](#) (3 April) that "[o]n balance" using "biological sex", rather than "gender" would be an improvement. Purported advantages include making it easier to exclude trans women – even those with a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) – from being categorised as lesbians, from women's groups (like book clubs), from women's spaces (like hospital wards), from women-only shortlists, from women's sports even where not "necessary to do so in the interests of fairness or safety".

They also say it would allow trans men protection against discrimination for pregnancy

or parenthood. It erroneously makes much of GRCs in the current situation: these are rightly not currently needed for equalities protection. The report recognises that the change would have disadvantages for trans women.

The government's proposal would remove trans people's current legal rights to access services and spaces in keeping with their gender identity.

LGBTIQ+ organisations have rightly condemned the government and the EHRC for these proposed attacks, and their transphobia. The letter was welcomed by transphobes, while it heightens the significant anxieties many trans people already face.

In 2020, Truss [appointed](#) a new chair and commissioners to the EHRC to make it back the Tories' culture war. This followed huge cuts in 2013. In 2022 whistleblowers [revealed](#) the EHRC's new "anti-LGBT" culture. The new chair "completely ignor[es] everyone's

expertise" and personally edits others' documents, making them "transphobic and seriously inaccurate". Those speaking up face disciplinary.

Given likely timescales, this proposal may amount to anti-trans posturing rather than something this government will actually implement – but we must not be complacent.

Such restrictions may be unworkable – will book clubs really demand everyone supply birth certificates? – but would heighten discrimination against trans people and against cis women who don't fit gender norms.

Starmer made positive noises about the proposals. LGBT+ Labour campaigning is against them.

Socialists must campaign for trans liberation. This is part of a wider culture war, and a global campaign by conservative and far right lobbies to roll back LGBTIQ and women's reproductive rights. □

Diane Abbott and racism

By Mohan Sen

Left-wing MP Diane Abbott has apologised unreservedly for what she wrote about "Irish, Jewish and Traveller" people not suffering racism. Even ultra-Blairite John McTernan commented: "Swift and appropriate apology from Diane Abbott. She has been subjected to vile racist abuse throughout her career, and her apology should be accepted in the spirit it is offered".

The Labour leadership, which has largely declined to defend Abbott against racist and misogynist abuse, is opportunist and hypocritical on bigotry and oppression, and will show that again if it doesn't lift her suspension from the Labour whip.

Nonetheless, Abbott's comment (even if, as she says, an "early draft" sent in error) was indicative of serious problems on the left.

In a letter to the [Observer](#) responding to an article by [Tom-iwa Owolade](#), Abbott wrote:

"Irish, Jewish and Traveller people... experience prejudice. This is similar to racism... It is true that many white people with points of difference, such as redheads, can experience this prejudice. But they are not all their lives subject to racism... At the height of slavery, there were no white-seeming people manacled on the slave ships."

In this narrative huge swathes of the world have disappeared, not only the discrimination facing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people across Europe (in which the Labour leadership itself is complicit), not only the resurgence of antisemitism, but even the Holocaust.

I hope Abbott and others will ask themselves how a left-wing MP could write in this way, and what the issues are. Workers' Liberty fights for the serious discussion about antisemitism and other forms of racism and bigotry that did not emerge from the mess of the Corbyn years. □

Solidarity, not saviour complex

Part 2 of a guest article by
Hein Htet Kyaw

It's important to note that condemnation against India alone for the occupied Kashmir regions is reactionary to its core. Both Pakistan and India should be equally blamed for the occupation since they both are the main obstacles on the way to an independent, sovereign, autonomous Kashmir region.

The western left's condemnation of India alone over Kashmir has two political reasons. One of them is a guilty conscience about their imperialist government and the "war on terror" colonial invasions against the countries that are majority Muslim. As a result, Islamists have become their political ally against western imperialism. If Afghanistan or Iraq were not colonised by Islamic colonialism and still had Buddhist, Hindu, or other local religious communities, the western left might show their guilty conscience for those communities too. After all, it's not about Muslims or Islam. It's about self-guilt and reactionary politics. Besides, since India is being led by the Hindu nationalist party, the western left has had to become the useful idiot of the Pakistan-backed Islamists.

Superpower

Secondly, India is a superpower in the region compared to the other countries. So, the western left failed to blame both Pakistan and India equally. Likewise, the western left failed to be informed about the Kashmir population too. For most of the western left, the Kashmir community is thought to be monolithic. However, just like other countries, Kashmir has a lot of religious groups and different ethnic groups.

Thus, the self-interest of each community is different even though they share the same Kashmir region. Such failure in acquiring knowledge leads to a failure to support the separatist movements of the Kashmiris.

Kashmir politics is not about Hindus and Muslims. It's about the sovereignty of Kashmir and the success of the Pakistani, Indian, and Kashmiri working classes over their reactionary governments. The solidarity



between these groups can only be established when the divisive politics of religious theocracy are buried, and a pluralistic society is established. All of these cannot be gained by cherry-picking one community over another, by inciting communal hatred and playing favouritism.

Subsequently, the minority politics of both India and Pakistan have been appropriated by the Eurocentric knowledge of the western left too. For example, while the western left is loud about the Muslim minorities inside India, they're muted when it comes to the Hindu minorities, Buddhist minorities, and Sikh minorities inside Pakistan and Bangladesh. Leave these minorities aside, but even within the Muslim community itself, the Ahmadiyya Muslims are being persecuted in Pakistan.

With their limited Eurocentric knowledge, the western left appears to ignore and fail to notice sectarian differences in Muslim communities. It's apparent when *The Lady of Heaven*, a Shia movie, was released in UK and faced with opposition from Sunni religious fundamentalists over the movie. Apparently, Shia are portraying their version of tradition in a movie, just like Muslims are appropriating Jesus in their own way. If Sunni are triggered over that movie, it's a serious threat to multicultural pluralistic society and free speech.

Only Alliance for Workers' Liberty, along with first generation Muslim reformers and ex-Muslims, seem to acknowledge this situation. The other

groups seem to be either ignoring or ignorant on this issue. For those who are difficult to digest, it's like random Christians are mad because Muslims also believe in Jesus except a few component of the tales being changed. Similarly, Shia, a minority Muslim sect believe in a tale that's a bit different from the majority Sunni sect.

Rohingya

Thus, no one has a right to stop or threaten the movie from being displayed. All of those who are forcefully trying to stop or threaten the movie theatre from showing this movie are potential extremists.

Even though the western leftists were concerned about the Muslim communities in Bangladesh and Burma when Rohingya genocide attempt by the Myanmar military is considered, they still failed to write or stand in solidarity for the Buddhist minority and Hindu minority along the Chittagong Hill Tract. Australian Trotskyist groups from the IST tradition, Socialist Alternative and Solidarity (Australia), wrote extensively about the Rohingya genocide while failing to write a single article for the Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and other indigenous ethnic groups from CHT regions who are being oppressed by Bangladesh's governments. With the historical position of the International Socialist Tendency and Aussie Eurocentric Trotskyists such as Corey Oakley, who never hesitated to blame *Charlie Hebdo* even when *Charlie Hebdo* was the victim of the terrorist attack, a white

saviour complex and white guilt conscience for the Muslim community are apparent. They're acting as useful idiots for the Islamists with their white saviour complex and white guilt conscience, along with their Eurocentric knowledge.

The International Socialist Tendency and its loosely connected Trotskyists tend to confuse race, ethnicity, and religion when

it comes to Islam and Muslims. Plus, they seem to confuse religious scripture with the acts people from specific religious groups are doing.

In one of the articles in *Solidarity* (Australia), they claimed Islam is not to blame for homophobia. However, the religious scripture suggested otherwise. Since *Solidarity* (Australia) is mostly full of white Trotskyists and second- or third-generation immigrants who have no experience living under religious rules and theocracy, their ignorance on these matters is apparent.

As an individual who has received Islamic education since childhood, I can say that homophobic quotes can be found on the hadiths such as "Sahih al-Bukhari 5886," which states, "The Prophet cursed effeminate men: those men who are in the similitude (assume the manners of women) and those women who assume the man-

ners of men, and he said, 'Turn them out of your houses.' The Prophet turned out such-and-such a man, and Umar turned out such-and-such a woman." As a individual who was raised as a Muslim, I believe that reactionary leftists in the West are one of the reasons why progressives are unable to reform Islam and the Muslim community.

Summing up, the western left seems to be interested in helping the autonomous movements in the Third World and minority struggles, as they should be. Most of these problems happened because of either British colonialism, French colonialism, or western imperialism. The Kashmir issue has historical roots in British colonialism. So has the Chittagong Hill Tract. The Palestinian issue and the Rohingya genocide also have historical links to British colonialism.

So, the western left should stand in solidarity with the people suffering from such conflicts not because the western left is more educated and knowledgeable but because western civilisation, especially white colonialism, is historically one of the main factors that led to these inevitable conflicts. Nevertheless, since the actual stakeholders are the organic people who are living in the regions, the western left should serve the political interests of the organic working-class and secular progressives from the regions, not the other way round. □

• Part one of this article was in *Solidarity* 669



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Connolly, the strike, and the children of Dublin



Connolly politically unexpurgated

By Sean Matgamna

James Connolly, in support of Jim Larkin, led the workers of Dublin in the great Labour War of 1913-14. The attempt to get strike-bound children to families in Britain and Northern Ireland that would take care of them during the strike was a major event in the Labour War.

It led to a sectarian Catholic hue and cry. The then very strong "Catholic Orange Order", the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin), rioted and attacked strikers. Eventually it was direct physical force that stopped the transfer of strikers' children.

The account of the events in Desmond Greaves's history of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) and in his biography of Connolly is false. So is the account in Padraig Yeates's otherwise extremely good *Lockout*.

In the years before the First World War, the great Jim Larkin had organised the savagely oppressed workers of Ireland's capital city and made them a power in Ireland. Organisation, labour

solidarity, the sympathetic strike by workers not directly in dispute – these were their weapons. These weapons began to mark them out as no longer a driven rabble but a class, women and men increasingly conscious of a common interest, a common identity and common goals.

The bosses organised their own "union" and fought back. Their leader was W M Murphy, one of Ireland's biggest capitalists, and a prominent Home Rule nationalist politician. In August 1913, they locked out their employees, intent on using starvation to get them to submit and foreswear "Larkinism" and the union. The British state in Ireland backed them, sending hordes of police to attack strikers, some of whom were beaten to death. It turned into a war of attrition.

Here, fighting impoverished workers with no reserves, all the advantages were with the employers. The workers' chance of victory depended on two things: on an adequate supply of food or money from sympathisers, and on an industrial solidarity that would tie up the whole trade of Dublin and beyond. It was to the British labour movement that Dublin's workers had to look for help.

Help

Magnificent help came. Ships full of food for the strikers came up the Liffey, and all over Britain the labour movement rallied, collecting money and food. But sufficient industrial action did not come, and that was decisive: money and food would keep Dublin's workers in the fight, but only industrial action in Britain – by the rail and seafarers' unions, for example – would allow them to win.

In Britain, militants argued for industrial action, even for a general strike, in support of Dublin. But the trade union leaders – who held a special conference on Dublin in December 1913 – would not agree to take action.

The strike dragged on eight months, and then, beaten but not crushed, the last workers went back to work, or accepted that they had been sacked. The union whose destruction had been the bosses' prime aim was still intact, though its strength was shackled.

The attempt to move the children of Dublin out of the Labour War zone began in October 1913. Dora B Montefiore – a member of the British Socialist Party, then 62 years-old and in frail health – organised it. In mid October 1913, two months into the strike, she



spoke in the Memorial Hall, London – one of many enormous meetings being held all over Britain to build support for the Transport Workers' Union. As she sat on the platform listening to Larkin talk of Dublin, Montefiore, who knew which side she was on, remembered what had been done to save the children of strikers during bitter battles in Belgium and in the USA.

When Larkin sat down she passed a note along the table suggesting that the starving children of working-class Dublin should be evacuated, to be looked after by the British labour movement for the duration of the strike. Would he, she asked, back such a scheme? Larkin passed a reply back along the table: yes, he would. He thought it was a fine idea.

Montefiore then passed a note to another of the speakers, the Countess of Warwick – an unlikely and strange, but genuine socialist – asking if she would be the Treasurer. Warwick replied: Yes. So a committee was set up. It was an authorised action by the union and Jim Larkin, its secretary.

Next day, Dora Montefiore explained her plan in the *Daily Herald*. Soon they had offers of 350 places for children, and more were streaming in. Labour movement bodies, trade union branches and trades councils offered to take the responsibility for one or more children. So did sections of the militant suffragettes, the WSPU. It was not, as critics said and the Stalinist historian Greaves repeats, an irresponsible stunt by busy-bodies, but a properly organised part of the effort of British labour to help Dublin. Dora Montefiore reported to the readers of the *Daily Herald* on 14 October:

"From Glasgow, Liverpool, London and a dozen other places, come the welcome offers, and I know that if the Dublin mothers could read some of the letters, it would do their hearts good to know the sort of mothers and fathers who are planning these temporary

homes for their little ones.

"Several Roman Catholics have written and one friend offers 'travelling, lodging and board expenses for two Dublin children while the strike lasts', and suggests 'boarding them for a time in a convent in Liverpool or London'."

And on 17 October she wrote:

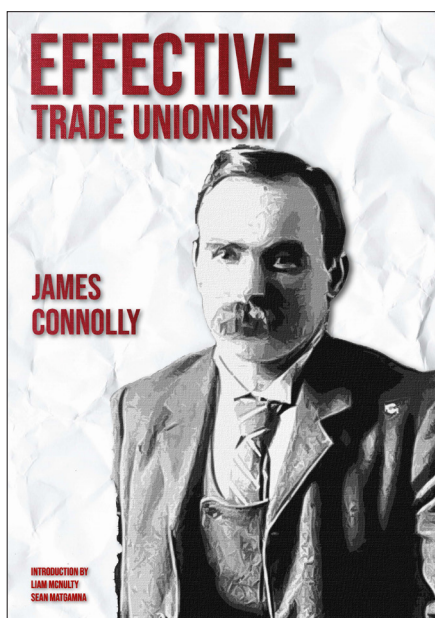
"... Plymouth friends offered to house 40 children and 5 mothers, and they wired later that they were in communication with the Catholic parish priest and Catholic medical officer re the care of the 'kiddies'."

On 17 October, Dora Montefiore, Lucille Rand, and Grace Neal, a trade-union organiser who acted as secretary, went to Dublin to organise the migration of the children.

They were given a room at Liberty Hall, the Transport Union HQ, and a meeting of wives of strikers was called. These mothers of hungry children eagerly grasped at this offer of help.

"Meetings of wives of the locked-out workers were then called, and we three delegates from the English and Scottish workers gave our message and laid the scheme before them. As a result Grace Neal was kept busy Tuesday and Wednesday registering the names of mothers who were anxious to take advantage of our offer. The passage leading to our room was blocked 'til evening with women and children. We tried to let them in only one at a time, but each time the door opened

continued on page 8 →



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 was industrial unionism, workers' solidarity across grades and trades, and sympathetic strikes. That is how he saw his work in the Irish Transport Union. 64 pages **£5** □

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the crush was so great that often two or three mothers forced their way in....

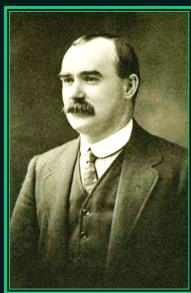
"When the work of registration was over, 50 children were selected to meet Lucille Rand at the Baths, where a trained woman had been engaged to clean their heads and bodies [of lice, which were endemic]... Grace Neal presided over a batch of volunteer workers at our room in Liberty Hall, who were sewing on to the children's new clothing labels bearing their names and addresses, and small rosettes of green and red ribbon."

But if the strikers saw Montefiore's plan as the rescue it was, so too did the bosses and their friends. They resented this attempt to deprive them of one of their traditional weapons – the power to weaken and break the spirit of strikers and their wives by forcing them to watch while their children starved and wasted. More: they saw the chance to whip up a political and sectarian scandal as a weapon to undermine "Larkin" by lining up Catholic and nationalist Ireland against him.

Catholic charitable organisations such as Saint Vincent De Paul had already refused help to strikers and their families. Now the Church discovered that the strikers' children faced danger worse than starvation. This plan to deport children was, they said, a plot to convert "Catholic children" into Protestants! They set up a hue and cry against Montefiore and her friends.

The campaign was led by fanatic young priests and by the then very strong "Catholic Orange Order", the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) (or "Hibs", or "Molly Maguires").

Liam McNulty



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Publicly they campaigned on religious grounds. Underground, they spread the whisper that Montefiore and her friends were really "agents of the White Slave Trade" – recruiters of prostitutes – who would sell their children to foreign brothels.

They whispered too that it was a plot to wreck the morals of the women of working-class Dublin: take away from them the daily responsibility for their children and they would inevitably become adulterous and promiscuous. People threw stones and mud at "the white slavers" in the street.

Dr Walsh, the Archbishop of Dublin, who had a reputation as a "friend of labour", as long as labour did not help itself, issued a public proclamation condemning the "deportation" of the children. He added his full weight to the frantic agitation of the "Hibs". It was not long before sectarian violence erupted.

Montefiore

Dora Montefiore reported that when the children were at the public bathhouse, "I was out in the town selecting enough clothing to make up what was required for the 50 children, taking the [train and boat] tickets, arranging for reserve carriages on the other side and buying food for the kiddies on the journey. It was when I returned to [Liberty] Hall that I heard the first news of trouble being made by the priests, who were taking away the children from the Tara Street Baths.

"I at once drove down and found Mrs Rand being personally annoyed and technically assaulted by the priests who were shouting and ordering the children about in the passageway leading to the girls' baths.

"The scene of confusion was indescribable. Some of the women were 'answering back' to the priests, and reminding them how they had been refused bread by the representatives of the Church, and how, now that they had a chance of getting their children properly cared for, the priests were preventing the children from going.

"Other women, worked upon by violent speeches of the priests, were wailing and calling on the saints to forgive them.

"They could not prevail against the priests and their mob.

"When we found we could, in consequence of the action of the priests, do nothing more for the children we had promised to befriend, we drove back to Liberty Hall, through a crowd that threw mud at us as we got into the cab, and raised cries of, 'throw them in the Liffey!'"

What else should they do with "white slavers" and those who came to steal the bodies and souls of Irish children? These, many believed, were "souters" – like the legendary Protestants offering food during the Great Famine to Catholics who converted. [1]

Back at the union office, Liberty Hall, "kindly hands were stretched out to us on all sides and 'God bless you' followed us as we went up to the rooms



Dora Montefiore

where the rest of the children were being dressed for their journey."

When the "little batch" of children was ready, Larkin spoke from a window of Liberty Hall to the crowd gathered down below. He "asked the men to see to it that the children reached the railway station... The whole party of women and children left the Hall under the escort of the men, while Mrs Rand and I drove with a little chap of five to the station."

But the priests and the "Hibernian" mob got there first.

"We found at first every door shut against us and we were pulled back and forth and separated from the men and the mothers and children who were crowding the entrance to the station. At last one door was opened", and Montefiore counted through the women and children who were to accompany Rand. Having given out the tickets she found that she had a large block left, bought for those who had "been snatched away by the priests".

She made her way to the carriage where Lucille Rand sat with her group of women and children. "As I approached the carriage door, a priest threw me rudely aside and held me back by the shoulder. I told him he was assaulting me by laying his hand on me, and when he saw I was calm but very much in earnest in the matter he let me go." Montefiore of course dressed and spoke like the upper-class Englishwoman she was. The ragged Catholics of Dublin's slums were another matter. They could be pushed about with impunity.

"I again approached the door to speak to Mrs Rand, when another priest flung the door back against me, hurting me considerably and making me feel very faint. I then got into the next carriage to Mrs Rand, determined to go down to the quay, and help her get the children on board. In the carriage were four of our boys wearing our jerseys and the green and red badges. The train was already late, but the officials, at the command of the priests, delayed it further; and just as the train started, two priests who had no tickets pushed two women into the carriage where I was, and got in themselves.

"The journey down to Kingstown [now Dun Laoghaire] takes about 20 minutes. During that time the women were kneeling in hysterics on the floor of the carriage, calling on the saints to forgive them, while the priests started a systematic bullying of the four boys, telling them they would deal with their fathers and mothers for having let them go. They pulled off the labels and the rosettes we had put on the boys' jerseys, and told me, as I sat passive and contemptuous in the corner, that they did not want any of our English charity for their children."

They and their charity organisations had been letting the children starve rather than give indirect help to the red anti-Christ Larkin.

Montefiore continues: "The same gross scenes of intimidation of the children that we had seen at the station were repeated at the quay... More children were snatched away from Mrs Rand... She, feeling her responsibility towards all the children who were in her care, and who, she was told by passengers would be removed by priests at Holyhead [on the British side of the Channel], left the steamer with her charges at the last moment."

When she got off the boat, she was arrested and taken to the police station, to be charged with "kidnapping a child under 14 years of age, and feloniously removing it from the care of its father"! The rights of fathers as distinct from mothers were also being asserted and underlined.

Dora Montefiore herself, when she got back to her hotel, was visited by detectives and taken to the police station. She too was charged with kidnapping. Constance Markiewicz and others came down to the police station and got her released on bail. Lucille Rand too was bailed out. The charges were later dropped. By this time, the Dublin press was in full cry against them, and their release was greeted with the headline: "English kidnappers bailed out by Dublin Jews"! The "kidnappers" you will recall, were really "white slavers".

Throughout the conflict over the children, the Dublin press stoked up the sectarians. For example, the *Evening Herald* on 23 October headlined: "Priests' unavailing protest – fifty more to be sent tonight. Priests to attend: hope that all city Catholics will support them" etc.

Larkin's response to these events was to announce from the window of Liberty Hall that 15 children would start for Liverpool on the boat that same night. He appealed to the men listening to him to see that they got through. The men would go with Grace Neal, to see that the children were not snatched by priests or "Hibs".

That evening, a small procession left Liberty Hall for the railway station, each of the 15 children perched on the shoulders of a docker.

They were met once again by a horde of priests and "Hibs", and by police who were on the side of the sectarian vigi-

lantes. This time, the union men forced a way through, and the 15 children got on the train, and later the boat. Counting them, Grace Neal found that she had 18, not 15: three extra children had been smuggled on to the boat by their parents at the last moment...

Grace Neal and her helpers stayed awake all night, on guard for the children. Cattle drovers, travelling with their cows on the boat, milked the cows and brought the children fresh milk in the morning. At Liverpool, the fortunate 18 were met by friends and taken to their temporary homes, where they stayed for some months.

Archbishop Walsh

The public "Manifesto" by Archbishop Walsh of Dublin was the authority on which priests and Hibs claimed to act. So Montefiore wrote to him explaining that she and her friends were in Dublin as representatives of the British labour movement, and that children were, contrary to all the rumours, going to working-class homes in Britain. She assured him that each child would be put in contact with local Catholic priests. In most cases, it would be possible for them to go to Catholic schools. She offered to call on him to explain further, or give additional information.

He replied on 22 October. They had, he said, a fund in Dublin, organised by the Lady Mayoress. Then, against the background of mob violence roused by the tales of "white slavery" and soul-stealing Protestants and Jews, the Archbishop wrote this. The letter was not intended to remain "private".

"If the motive which has inspired the scheme is a purely philanthropic one – and I dare say you have been made aware of some sinister rumours to the contrary that are afoot in Dublin – let whatever means are available be diverted to the fund to which I have referred. If that be done, I can answer for it the children of Dublin will not suffer want. Believe me to be, dear madam, your faithful servant, William J Walsh."

Dora Montefiore commented: "There were, according to Larkin, 21 thousand slum 'homes' of one room, in which families herd and breed, feed and sleep! And his grace, Archbishop Walsh, who should be the shepherd of his flock, has the insolence to suggest to three women delegates from the workers of Great Britain, that he is not certain whether the 'sinister rumours' in connection with their visit to Dublin have not a substratum of truth!"

Montefiore could see for herself what confidence to place in the Archbishop's assurances. She reported in the *Daily Herald* on 21 October:

"In the gutter in front of our hotel in the main street of Dublin there stood three garbage tins. Each tin was being searched furtively but rapidly by ragged kiddies, aged from four or five, who threw the ashes into their bags and wolfed the pieces of broken bread and meat they found among the garbage..." That was normal, lock-out or no lock-out.

Now a new chapter opened. Delia Larkin, Jim Larkin's sister, a union organiser, suggested that the way to answer the charge that the children were being taken to English homes to make Protestants of them, was to send them out of Dublin to Irish Catholic homes in Belfast. This was agreed.

Arguably, it was a self-poisoning act of political and ideological submission to the priests and the Hibs. There were left-wing and labour movement Protestants, as well as labour movement Catholics, in Belfast. (Denounced as "rotten Prods" by the Orange first cousins of the Hibs, they would be driven out of the shipyards along with the Catholics in the Orange Riots of 1920, which were triggered by the war waged for independence against Britain in the south).

But this was what was decided – to Catholic homes in Belfast. Once more, Grace Neal met with mobs of Hibs and priests out to stop her! But now the nakedly political – "Smash Larkin!" – motive of the priests and Hibs could not be disguised.

Dora Montefiore went with Delia Larkin to the station.

"At one end of the platform, in front of the compartment into which the parents were attempting to get their children, there was a compact, shouting, gesticulating crowd of Hibs. In the centre of the crowd was the little party of children and parents, and among them were the priests, who were talking, uttering threats against the parents, and forbidding them to send their children to Protestant homes. Some of the women were upbraiding the priests for allowing the children to starve in Dublin; and according to an American paper, whose correspondent was on the platform, 'one woman slapped the face of a priest who was attempting to interfere'.

"As a climax to this disgraceful scene, as the priests and Hibs found it impossible to prevent the parents from placing their children in the train under the charge of Miss Neal, they telegraphed for more police. I watched the reinforcements of 20 spike-helmeted destroyers of law and order march on to the platform, make a ring around the little group of parents and children. And then, when they had successfully played the priests' game and prevented the children from leaving for Belfast, the train was whistled and left the station, leaving the now infuriated parents to go back to the slum homes which capitalist conditions in Dublin provided for the workers and their children."

The union had to abandon the attempt to get the children out.

Jim Larkin – who was a Catholic – commented bitterly: "Until the present labour crisis, the priests never acknowledged that there were such things as slums in Dublin. The religion that could not afford to send children away for a fortnight [for fear they would 'lose their faith'] had not much to boast of". Some of the priests, he said, had shares in



Murphy's companies.

The union was now forced to play hideous politics with hungry children. Archbishop Walsh had promised publicly that the church would "deal with all cases of distress". The union tested the promise by suspending free dinners at Liberty Hall. The women and children were sent to the Church to ask for their dinners. And they were turned away – there was "nothing for them", nothing for Larkin's crew.

As winter drew in, the Union resumed its attempt to feed the children, who would queue up, their feet bare or wrapped in rags.

Motives

One of the motives of the Catholic Church in this affair, was explained by George Russell, the Dublin journalist and cooperative organiser, speaking at one of the meetings to support the workers, at the Albert Hall London in November 1913:

"You see, if these children were, even for a little, out of the slums, they would get discontented with their poor homes. Once getting full meals, they might be so inconsiderate to ask for them all their lives. They might destroy the interesting experiment carried on in Dublin for generations to find out how closely human beings can be packed together, on how little a human being can live, and what is the minimum wage an employer need pay him. James Larkin interrupted these interesting experiments towards the evolution of the underman, and he is in jail."

It is one of the great strange things of history that a large part of Catholic working-class Ireland did not turn violently against the Church as town workers in Catholic France and Belgium had done. In fact, very few ever did. The sound of that Dublin Catholic working-class woman's slap in the face of a hooligan priest – something shocking and almost unimaginable in Catholic Ireland then – should have echoed and re-echoed through Irish political life, announcing a new start. But it did not.

One reason may be that the leaders, Larkin, Connolly and others, themselves remained Catholics, or, Connolly, then, made a point of not publicly breaking with Catholicism. Though Larkin had for a while in 1907 united Belfast's Protestant and Catholic workers, he, like

Connolly, argued with the priests from inside Catholicism.

It may have been advisable to retreat on the children of Dublin at the end; but Connolly should not have made Larkin to blame, or made himself out as the good boy for those who used the children against the strike, as he did in an [open letter](#) to the Archbishop: "For ourselves we anticipated it all [i.e. the Church reaction], and have never been enthusiastic towards the scheme... We felt instinctively that the well-meant move of Mrs Montefiore and her colleagues would arouse in Ireland hostilities and suspicions they could not conceive of, and would not believe were we to attempt the task of making the matter clear. Hence, while placing no obstacle in the way of its fulfilment, and feeling deeply a sense of gratitude towards the noble British men and women of our class who have so unreservedly thrown open their homes for the purpose of sheltering our stricken little ones, we have nevertheless felt that the scheme was bound to be taken advantage of to our detriment..."

To "understand" the use of the chil-

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dren against the strikers, as that comment did, in terms of Irish history and the Catholic mythology or half-mythology of proselytising “soupers” during the Great Famine of the 1840s, was to make nationalist excuses for the priests. It was a self-betrayal and self-denial to bow before the Dublin strike-breakers,

and especially before the outcry when it was directed at Belfast Catholics and against Dublin children going there.

In the years after 1916, the Catholic hierarchy took a lead in nationalist politics. The anti-conscription campaign, which fuelled Sinn Féin to victory in the 1918 election, was heavily organised by bishops and priests. The priests kept

their place, even with the Dublin workers. □

• This is “Connolly’s Marxism, part 7” in our long-running [series on Connolly](#).

[1] The story was that Protestants offered Catholics food for apostasy. All who want knowledge of the Labour War will be in Padraig Yeates’s debt, but

not on the Catholic Church’s role in it: he writes a Catholic apologia. In fact Protestant missionaries did not prey in that way. It was Protestant missionaries in Catholic Ireland who drew attention to the outlook of persecuting antisemitism in Limerick in 1904, which led the city’s small Jewish population to migrate to Cork.

Looking back two years after

By Grace Neal

You ask me, as an English Trade Unionist who has spent some little time in Dublin, for some expression of my feelings on the subject of the recent rising [the Easter Rising of 1916]. The task is not an easy one, for one’s sympathies naturally go out to any person or persons prepared to sacrifice everything for their convictions – however wrong, wholly or in part, one may believe those convictions to be. And a Nationalism or Republicanism which, even if triumphant, would leave an employing class still in power, does not seem to me a goal worth the sacrifice of valuable lives.

But my own experiences in Dublin at the time of the strike

two years ago help me to understand why some of the Dublin workers came to look upon armed force as an inevitable weapon in their struggle against oppression, and how the Citizen Army came to be formed out of the Transport Workers’ Union. When I read in the papers recently of the rebels being marched down to the quay for deportation to England, it recalled to my mind that other march when, the scheme having been worked out for sending the strikers’ children away to England, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, led by the priests, turned out to frustrate that scheme by brute force. It was in those days -- to defend their own women and children from brutal treatment – that the Citi-

zen Army was formed.

And Dublin Castle, remember, was allowing (by taking no notice of it) the “free labourers” to be supplied with firearms. The funeral procession of Alice Brady, the girl who was shot by a scab, was guarded by Transport Workers armed only with “hurleys” (hockey-sticks). But you cannot meet shots with sticks, and so a Revolver Club was started.

Once this spirit had been aroused, it was fostered by police and military irritation, and encouraged by many of the Nationalists who came into touch with the Dublin Labour movement at that time.

I remember being helped away after the fight [over the children] at Amiens Street Station by someone who said.

“This is all the result of your English misrule”. “We did not give you the priests”, I replied. But the mere fact that one was English was sufficient for one’s motives to be questioned -- except, of course, by the small handful of class-conscious Internationalists.

Education

One comes back to the old and only solution – Education. And yet what chance is there of educating men and women living under such hopeless conditions as the bulk of the Dublin workers! But it is up to us to see that the lives of men like Skeffington [killed by British troops during the Rising, though he took no part in it] and Connolly [shot after surrendering] have not been

sacrificed in vain. We know that the ultimate blame will not be laid at their door, but at the doors of the same class who are ultimately responsible for this horrible war – this war in defence of small nationalities! Let us at least decide now that all nationalities shall be merged in one great Internationalism.

That, I believe, is what the saner leaders of the recent rising would have recognised as the true goal, had they not been blinded and maddened by their hatred of injustice and oppression. □

• Grace Neal, one of the organisers of the Dublin children scheme, writing in the *Plebs* magazine, 1916

Sheehy-Skeffington on 1913

Organised bullies: a tribute to the Ancient Order of Hibernians. What does Devlin say?

The mask of religion has been torn from the face of the Dublin clergy, and they stand revealed as the open enemies of labour. On Friday, and again on Saturday, they and their lay bodyguard, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, of which Mr Devlin MP is president, forcibly prevented Catholic parents from sending, or even taking, their children out of the city – not to England or to Scotland, but to Catholic homes in Belfast and Kildare.

Mob law could go no further. Take the scene I witnessed at Kingsbridge on Saturday. A locked-out man comes up with his two boys and a friend, He is bringing his children to Hazlehatch, where a home in the house of a Catholic labourer has been provided for them by that keen Socialist and Suffragist, the Hon. Mary Lawless, daughter of Lord Cloncurry. He takes his tickets for Hazlehatch, and shows them to the inquiring priest. He is assaulted and brutally beaten. The children are torn from him, the younger one sobbing piteously at the frantic scene. His friend is similarly treated.

I remonstrate, and am beaten, kicked, and hurled out of the station. Miss Lawless is hustled, struck, and threatened. The crowd promises to do for us, and we escape with difficulty.

Is it necessary to do more than to state these facts? Let me add that on duty as chief lay lieutenant of the clerical despots was Mr John D Nugent, general secretary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and Mr Devlin’s right-hand man. Mr Nugent is a candidate for the Lord Mayoralty of Dublin.

Next year, according to official Nationalist calculations, George Wettin is to come over to a Home Rule Parliament, and knighthood is the certain reward of the Lord Mayor who receives him. The ban which has hitherto prevented Nationalist Lord Mayors from receiving the English King will be taken off by the official Nationalists with the passing of Home Rule. Sir John Dillon Nugent would sound well as a title for the organiser of blackleg labour.

The great obstacle in the way of this ambition, however, is Larkin, who has exposed Nugent’s intrigues on behalf of the masters from all his platforms.

If Larkin could only be downed now on a specious “religious” pretext, and his followers divided and disheartened!

What does Mr Joseph Devlin MP think of it all? Will some of his English friends who allow this empty demagogue to pose on Labour platforms as a “Labour

Leader” kindly ask him this question? □

• *Daily Herald*, 28 October 1913, article by Francis Sheehy Skeffington, a Dublin socialist.

W B Yeats on the AOH and 1913

I want to know why there are only (according to the Press reports) two policemen at Kingsbridge on Saturday when Mr Sheehy Skeffington was assaulted and a man prevented from buying a ticket for his own child. There had been tumults every night at every Dublin railway station, and I can only assume that the police authorities wished those tumults to continue.

I want to know why the mob at North Wall and elsewhere were permitted to drag children from their parents’ arms, and by what right one woman was compelled to open her box and show a marriage certificate; I want to know by what right the police have refused to accept charges against rioters; I want to know who has ordered the abrogation of the most elementary rights of the citizens, and why authorities... have permitted the Ancient Order of Hibernians to besiege Dub-

lin, taking possession of the railway stations like a foreign army... □

• *Irish Worker* 1 November 1913. In 1925 Yeats would say to the Seanad of the Irish Free State, opposing the law against divorce: “It is perhaps the deepest political passion with this nation that North and South be united into one nation. If it ever comes that North and South unite the North will not give up any liberty which she already possesses under her constitution. You will then have to grant to another people what you refuse to grant to those within your borders. If you show that this country, Southern Ireland, is going to be governed by Catholic ideas and by Catholic ideas alone, you will never get the North. You will create an impassable barrier between South and North...”

Worker solidarity against apartheid



Theatre review

By Simon Nelson

In 1984 the Irish Administrative and Distributive Trade Union (IDATU) passed policy for a boycott of South African goods. They instructed their members not to handle goods produced in the state, which from 1948 to 1994 mandated white-black segregation (apartheid).

A young shop assistant, Mary Manning, refused to serve a customer a grapefruit in Dunnes stores in Dublin.

Result: an almost three-year strike, first against her suspension and then for the Irish government to boycott South African goods.

Strike!, at Southwark Playhouse until 6 May, tells the story of the young women and one man who kept up daily pickets at Dunnes Stores in Dublin. Those workers went on to speak internationally, visited South Africa, met Desmond Tutu and many years later attended Nelson Mandela's funeral. None of them went into their action knowing that much about apartheid, but all of them became convinced fighters.

They were supported by an exiled South African trade unionist, Nimrod Sajeke, tried for treason with Mandela

in the 1950s, who on his return to South Africa would leave the ANC and help found the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) now affiliated to Socialist Alternative in Britain and the Socialist Party in Ireland.

Difficulties

Strike! does a great job in showing the difficulties of the strike: former friends crossing pickets, Irish weather, falling behind on mortgage payments, derision from some of the Catholic church hierarchy. Several of the strikers, single mothers, take great pleasure in arguing back against the pious priests and nuns who think they know better than them.

IDATU initially supported the strike,

with both then General Secretary John Mitchell and local organiser Brendon Archbold backing the strike and agreeing to payments of £21 per week. But then a strike, which the workers were hoping would be for only two weeks, dragged on for months and years. The union eventually withdrew official support, once the Irish government agreed to boycott South African goods (but Dunnes found a way round this). We see the determination of the strikers, often inspired by Nimrod.

Unfortunately when I went, the theatre was half empty. There are plenty of tickets available for a moving, funny and inspiring story of workers' solidarity. □

St Mungo's strike to start mid-May

By Mark Simon

Workers at homelessness charity St Mungo's in London, Bristol, Brighton, Oxford, Bournemouth and Reading have voted to strike from 24 April to 21 May over pay.

A last minute management offer of an additional 1.25% is being voted on by members, because Unite reps had promised to bring back any consolidated offer. Members look highly likely to vote down

the offer. Over 300 members attended a union Zoom meeting with the vast majority for a strike.

If the digital vote rejects the offer Unite will give notice of a strike starting in mid-May.

The dispute goes back to 2021, when bosses imposed a rise of just 1.75% pay increase; they have refused to budge since except for an unconsolidated £700 lump sum payment.

In the last ten years St Mun-

go's chief executives have awarded themselves a 350% rise in total pay while imposing a real-terms cut of 25% on their front line workers. The senior managers' average pay has moved from £107,000 to £189,000 since 2013, while workers were allotted 1.75% in 2021.

The charity can easily afford better wages with reserves of £15 million and a £22.5 million year-end cash balance. Like many other charity bosses who



have benefited from privatisation and contracting-out of services, those at St Mungo's

have ensured that while workers get less they get a lot more of the cake. □

STUC backs Ukraine solidarity

By Dale Street

The 17-19 April Scottish TUC congress overwhelmingly rejected a composite motion on Ukraine backing the line taken by the *Morning Star* and the Stop the War Coalition: blame NATO for the war; accuse NATO of escalation; and make vacuous calls for negotiations.

Instead, congress backed a statement issued by the General Council which "rejected any suggestion of equivalence between the invader and the invaded" and expressed solidarity with Ukrainian trade unions, including their participation in the military resistance to the invasion.

Arms

The statement did not explicitly advocate (increased) arms supplies for Ukraine. But it did recognise that Ukraine would suffer permanent occupation "without support, including military equipment, from outwith", and that "effective peace negotiations" could not take place if such support was withdrawn.

The rejected composite was an amalgamation of motions submitted by half

a dozen Trades Councils. Although it included a ritualistic and hypocritical invocation of solidarity with "ordinary Ukrainians", its real concern was not with Ukraine but with mechanically saying no where NATO says yes.

In speeches proposing and seconding the composite, Ukraine received, at best, a passing mention. Their focus was the evils of NATO and, by contrast, peace-loving Vladimir Putin, whose "red lines" for peace had been ignored by the West.

The (former?) Socialist Action supporter who moved the composite even avoided use of the word "invasion". Instead, he referred to a "military intervention" and "escalation of the post-2014 civil war in Ukraine."

(Of course, that escalation was supposedly just a defensive response to NATO's aggressive expansionism and its refusal to recognise Putin's "red lines".)

Discussion on Ukraine was cut short due to the congress falling behind schedule. This was a pity, as the arguments advanced in support of the composite were so crass that they amounted to speeches in support of the General Council statement. □

Glasgow CCA expels Saramago

By Dale Street

The five-week-long dispute between the Industrial Workers of the World trade union and the Saramago café (located on the premises of Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts) is over.

The dispute began when Saramago sacked six IWW members, in two tranches, for a brief work stoppage over working conditions, as part of the union's organising campaign. Since then there have been daily protests in

front of the CCA (targeting Saramago, not the CCA).

Last Friday (21 April) the CCA issued a statement announcing that it was "discontinuing its relationship with business tenant Saramago" and that Saramago "will close with immediate effect."

The IWW stated that, with Saramago refusing to negotiate, "the CCA have taken the right stance against a union-busting business. We... appreciate the solidarity shown by the CCA workers throughout the dispute". □



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The German SPD on Zimmerwald, 1915



Letter

In *Solidarity* 662 Sean Matgamna discussed James Connolly's response to the Zimmerwald internationalist-socialist conference of 1915 and his promotion of German right-wing (pro-war) socialist voices during World War One. Digging out the response to Zimmerwald in the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD)'s central newspaper *Vorwärts*, 29 Sep 1915, gives context.

Despite the SPD majority's rightly-notorious capitulation by voting for German war credits on 4 August 1914 (and again later), *Vorwärts* responded more warmly to Zimmerwald than Connolly, who printed only a report from French delegates, not even indicating there were German delegates there. The SPD leadership got to oust the "soft" editors of *Vorwärts* [only in 1916](#).



Participants at Zimmerwald

"Avanti" and the international conference in Zimmerwald

The first and part of the second page of the Sunday issue of *Avanti* [paper of the Italian Socialist Party, which was anti-war] are dedicated to the international conference. However, the censorship has completely deleted the manifesto and the Franco-German declaration, so that one only learns something about them from the headline. The official report, on the other hand, has been almost completely spared from censorship. In the introductory article "The International is not

dead!" *Avanti* points out the great importance of the meeting. "Far sooner than we could have hoped and than our opponents could have feared, the International has risen again. Socialists from almost every country and, most importantly, socialists from belligerent countries have come together and, despite nationalist prejudices, have reaffirmed the principles from which the International arose and developed in opposition to capitalism. The meeting in Zimmerwald proved to the proletarians of the whole world that there are still people who hold up the banner of irreconcilable class struggle."

After pointing out the joy with which all proletarians and socialists will greet the gathering, the editorial remarks that although the gathering had had no other success than that for five days people from countries who were fighting bloodily in the name of of socialism, inspired by the common belief in the emancipation of the proletariat,

discussed in a comradely and enthusiastically made resolutions, defying nationalistic prejudices, it was to be warmly welcomed.

The second significant success of the meeting consists in the fact that Germans and French people, who elsewhere murderously fight each other, have come together to work together for a common ideal. Regarding the slanders that the participants of the conference will reap in different countries, *Avanti* says that each of the participants of the international conference expected these slanders in advance; But just now, when defectors are being so praised by the opponents of socialism, the slanders can only make them proud. We would only stop being suspected and slandered the moment we stopped being socialists.

The Zimmerwald meeting took up and confirmed the principles of the old International before the proletariat in this hour of its suffering. □

Chris Reynolds, London



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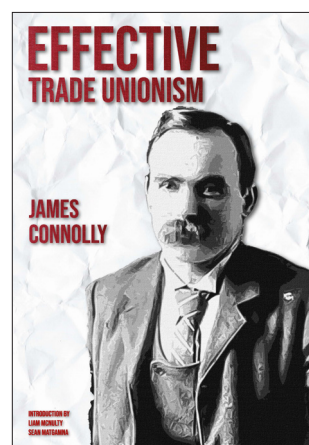
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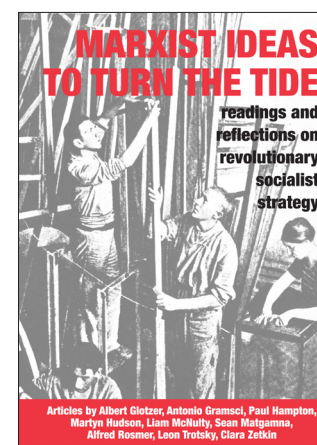
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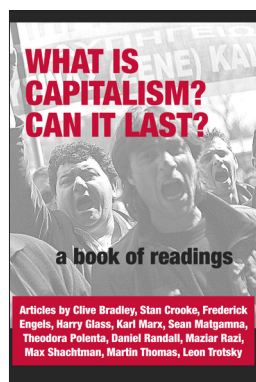
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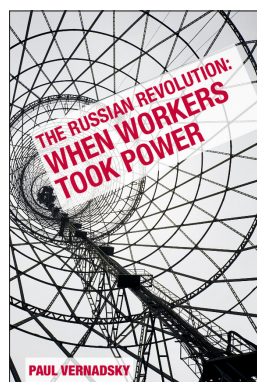
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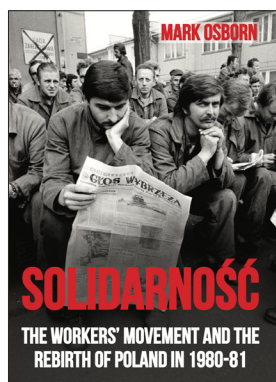
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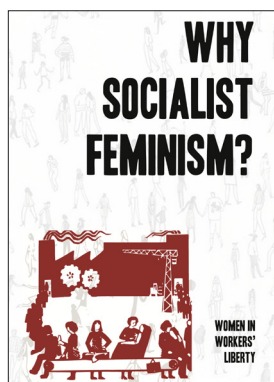
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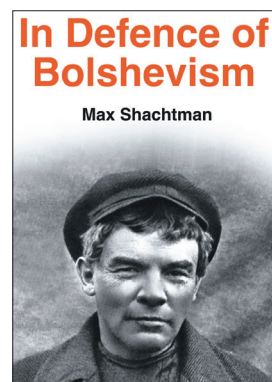
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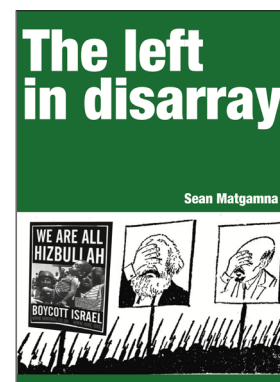
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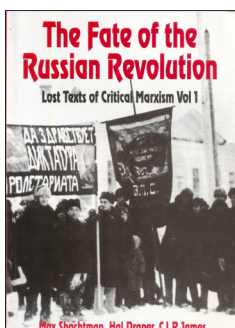
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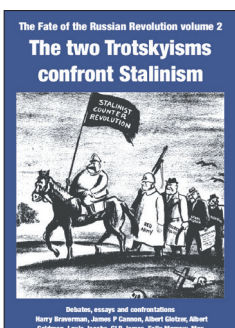
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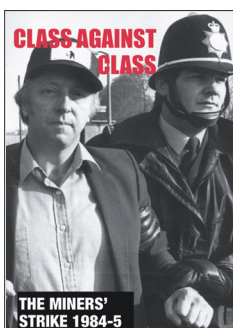
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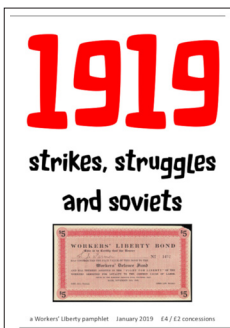
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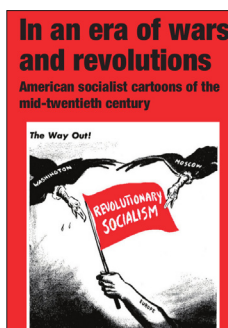
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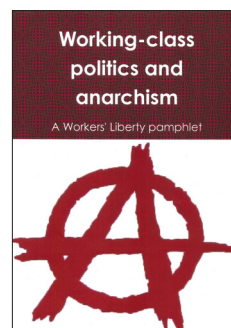
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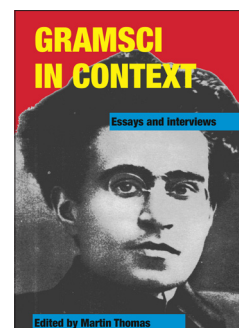
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NHS: press forward on pay

By Jayne Evans

As the RCN and some Unite health branches prepare for more industrial action, the Tories have taken the RCN to court to try to stop the action.

Stephen Barclay, the Health and Social Care minister, says that the original ballot closed at midday on 2 Nov 2022 and therefore its six-month mandate does not cover strikes on 2 May. The RCN has said that the strike (from 8pm 30 April to 8pm 2 May) will continue, and accuses the Tories of bullying.

This use of the courts by the Tories and employers could become commonplace if the next raft of anti-trade union law, the Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Bill is passed. The Bill begins the report stage in the House of Lords on 26 April.

The trade union movement needs to defy this law, and that means refusing to call off action in the face of the court injunctions that will follow a refusal to

instruct union members to comply with "minimum service" work demands. Other unions and the TUC should organise solidarity with any unions or workers who face a court injunction.

Right now, the trade union movement should call a national demonstration to stop the Bill and demand a future Labour Government repeals this law and all the others that stop us from taking action, back to the Thatcher laws. It is high time for regional protests to be called, too.

Offer

It is not yet clear what the Tories will do about the implementation of the pay offer rejected by RCN members. They may just impose it, claiming it has been accepted by a majority on the NHS Staff Council, or they may take the offer off the table, as they had threatened to do.

If the offer is removed, then Unison and other unions are still in dispute, and industrial action should resume.

At Unison health conference (17-19 April) the leadership tried to brand the RCN as selfish and only interested in themselves and to imply that the RCN wants a separate pay spine with better pay for them and lower-paid workers worse off. The right-wing Unison Unity faction continued after conference by retweeting and liking Stephen Barclay's statement announcing the threat to use the law against the RCN.

In fact if the RCN wins pay improvements of pay, then we will all benefit. A separate pay band would be detrimental to health workers, particularly at a time when the move to Integrated Care Boards in the NHS will likely lead to further pressure to break up national pay bargaining, but a victory which improves the pay of nurses would be a step forward for all of us. Time For Real Change in Unison has issued a statement supporting the RCN in their fight for pay and against the Tories' legal threat.

After the strikes at the end of April, the RCN will then begin a re-ballot for industrial action on the claim. NHS Workers Say No will be calling for a vote for industrial action in that ballot. They will be demonised in the press and pressure will be put on workers to back down and reject further strike action. The wider movement should help counter the arguments used by the Tories and large parts of the union leadership and organise solidarity.

Activists are also building networks of health workers in preparation for the next pay rounds, which will start at the end of the year. The health Pay Review Body has been discredited, and Unison and others have said they will withdraw from it.

We will still need to organise co-ordinated industrial action to address the years of pay cuts and the underfunding and privatisation that is destroying the NHS. □

Strikes, exams, and exemptions



As the National Education Union activists debated tactics for the next round of pay strikes in schools several issues needed resolving: How many strike days? Should we strike during the GCSE and A-Level exams (which run from mid-May until late June)? Should we offer exemptions to some staff who teach exam classes?

The question about strikes during GCSE and A-Level exams, and consequently also the question of exemptions, too, is a question impacting, immediately, secondary school workers.

I am a rep in a large secondary in south London. I opposed strikes during GCSEs and A-Levels, not because I thought it wrong in principle, but because I thought it would break the union in secondary.

Teachers are under enormous pressure to deliver good exam grades. Not all this pressure comes from management, Ofsted, the right-wing press and politicians. Teachers also know how important these quali-

fications are for the kids we teach, and we want them to do well.

On balance, my assessment was that given the level of organisation, lack of a recent record of striking, rep density and strength, membership engagement and militancy, we should not strike over the exam period. Too many teachers would go to work and cross our picket lines, including many who are normally pro-union.

Grandstanding

The Socialist Worker position, calling for strikes during national secondary exams, was hammered during our recent NEU conference, which reinforced my view.

(The SWP were grandstanding and posing left. Their role at the national level of the NEU is normally, scandalously right-wing, with their faces pressed closely to the arse of our joint Gen Sec, Kevin Courtney).

We are striking on 27 April and 2 May with advice issued by our leadership to ensure Year 11 and Year 13 exam classes go ahead. Mary Bousted, the other joint Gen Sec, originally demanded that reps be told to make certain Y11 and Y13 classes go

ahead, cooperating with head teachers during the strike days – illustrating a lack of understanding of the meaning of the words "strike" and "union".

Backlash

Of course there is a real issue here. Bousted wants to avoid a political backlash against the union if we are seen to be damaging exam prospects. But her solution is to disorganise strikes, while simultaneously calling strikes. She has transferred the problem to NEU reps, effectively saying: you sort it out.

The problem reps face is that the dispensation advice from the NEU is impacting against the strike in two ways. It signals to waverers in our own ranks that it is OK to go to work if they have an exam class. And it gives a weapon to head teachers. They can say: "Your own union says you need to help (break the strike)".

Schools without a rep, or without a confident rep, are particularly vulnerable.

Conclusion? The union is wrong to allow exemptions, at least in secondary. It is counterproductive. □

Dan Katz,
South London



By David Pendleton

Teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) will strike on 27 April and 2 May in their continuing campaign to win a full funded above-inflation pay rise. This will be followed by three consecutive days in late June or early July. Following the 2 May strike and before the dates in June-July the union will re-ballot members to renew its mandate.

Solidarity

2 May coincides with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) strike. This gives a good opportunity for solidarity and making the point about the issue being a wider public sector one. There are demonstrations planned across the country, sometimes with nurses joining with the NEU, as in Leeds.

We hope that the NEU will be soon joined by other school unions (Nasuwat, NAHT and ASCL), who are re-balloting for strikes (Nasuwat and NAHT) or balloting for the first time (ASCL, a union strong among secondary school head teachers). The NEU should not allow its campaign to be dictated to

or decided by more conservative and, in the NAHT and ASCL's case, leadership unions (however, if NAHT and ASCL do strike, they have great power, because head teachers have authority to shut schools for the day).

The NEU should re-ballot its support staff members alongside teachers to ensure that all members in schools are able to strike.

Presuming the re-ballot is won, the union should name a significant and escalating programme of action starting early in the autumn term. Activists should be ensuring that their NEU Districts are building hardship funds to ensure maximum participation in the strikes. □

More online

SNP: not just a victim

The SNP turmoil is not an artefact of Tory conspiracies: bit.ly/snp-row

What we stand for

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

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

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

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The Workers' Liberty fund appeal received just over a 7% boost this week. And with no strings attached. Like the FBU pay deal it was an improvement but it is still well below what is needed, and what is possible.

Thanks to Lawrence, Mark, Elaine, Colin, Zack, Alex,

Sara, Ruth, Maisie, Cathy, Duncan, Pete, Jill, Stephen, Pete, Daniel, Martin, Ali, Ben, Stephen, Vicki and Steve. That brings our total to £8,314. □

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Support the junior doctors!

By Mohan Sen

Junior doctors in the British Medical Association (BMA) are discussing further strikes for "pay restoration", after seven days of strikes in March and April. They will not strike alongside other NHS workers at the start of May, but their leaders have indicated a desire for coordinated action.

The BMA calculates real-terms pay has fallen 26% since 2008 – one of the biggest cuts for any group of workers. It is calling for a real-terms pay rise this year and a clear timetable to restore pay through a 35% increase. The government has responded by offering another real-terms pay cut and refusing to negotiate – supposedly unless the BMA drops the demand to restore real-terms

pay and calls off any strikes. The junior doctors are one of the groups of workers who have brought new momentum to the flagging strike wave this year. Their fight is also notable for the determination they have shown; the unusual clarity of their demands (the result of persistent organising by left-wing activists in the BMA); and because it is bound up with the fight to defend and restore the NHS.

Trade unionists should invite junior doctor speakers to their meetings, and make donations to and promote the [strike fund](http://workersliberty.org/fund). We need to raise the dispute more widely and effectively in the Labour Party, and pressure the Labour leadership to support the junior doctors – which it is refusing to do. (The Welsh Labour government has



committed in principle to pay restoration for NHS workers – while proposing another real-terms pay cut this year.) The BMA is also balloting consultants (senior doctors) over pay, pensions and related issues. □

• The Twitter of socialist junior doctor Emma Runswick, who is deputy chair of the BMA Council (national executive), is a good source of information: twitter.com/ERunswickBMA

Build uni Marking and Assessment boycott!

By a UCU member

After extensive consultation over (lack of) progress in its dispute, the University and College Union (UCU) called a marking and assessment boycott (MAB) by members at most UK universities on 20 April. The MAB continues the fight over the pay and conditions issues in the dispute.

A mandate for action remains in place on the UCU's dispute over pensions, but action is suspended on that issue while talks continue.

In response to the MAB, many University bosses have threatened to deduct between 25% and 100% of the wages of participating UCU members. Deduc-

tions can only be made after results are due, and for most lecturers involved this will be later in the term. But the threat is serious. It is meant to intimidate UCU members into stopping their action, or more likely, to peel some members away from taking part.

UCU branches will need to work hard to stop that from happening and to be in communication with participating members as long as the action is in place. A special conference of the UCU voted to call strikes in response to these threats. The UCU branch at Queen Margaret University Edinburgh has said that they will be taking indefinite local strike action in response to a 100% reduction in pay. Other UCU

branches may follow. UCU branches will also need to make strong effort to communicate with students – to explain the importance of and the effects of the action.

The MAB comes after two terms of strike action, although many strike days were dropped against the wishes of many members.

So far university bosses (the Universities and Colleges Employers Association) have imposed a below-inflation pay deal on all university staff and refused to guarantee any concessions to the UCU on pay and conditions, including, importantly, a long-standing and big problem of casualisation of jobs in higher education (use of fixed and short-term contracts). □

Michael Collins, from 1916 to 1922



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

April 10 was 25 years after the Good Friday Agreement, and 24 May will be 100 years after the end of the Irish civil war. Neil Jordan's 1996 film *Michael Collins*, with Liam Neeson as the Republican military leader Michael Collins, begins with the defeat of the 1916 uprising in Dublin. Collins vows that the next struggle will be different, a guerrilla war where the British superiority in numbers and arms will not prove decisive. After springing Eamon de Valera

(Alan Rickman) from prison, he builds up an effective guerrilla force. He wipes out the British secret service agents in Dublin and the British army retaliates by killing 14 spectators at a Gaelic football match at Croke Park. Collins plays a central role in negotiating peace with the British and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. A section of the Republican movement refuses to accept the Treaty and fighting breaks out between them and the "Free Staters". Collins commands the Free State forces, although he displays little enthusiasm for the job. He travels to West Cork to talk to de Valera, who has opposed the Treaty. While on the road his convoy is ambushed and he is killed. □

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PCS reballot ends 9 May



John Moloney

We are now in the run-up to the all-members' strike on Friday 28 April. All the indications are that the strike will be well supported.

That will be the most effective answer to the government's imposition of a pay settlement, which will see average pay increases of 4.5%, with a potential extra 0.5% for the lower paid. In the context of 10% continuing inflation, and even higher food inflation, the government is imposing a "real income" pay cut on members.

In parallel with the run-up to the all-members' action, activists and the union staff are still working on the reballot (20 March to 9 May), which if successful will allow us to take a further six months of industrial action and would also be a rebuff to the government.

Whilst the strike and the reballot are clearly the primary focus of the union, PCS has been also been involved with XR around the campaign's demos and events on 21-24 April. Unfortunately, we are one of only few unions so involved.

I was invited to speak at the main stage last Friday 21st and set out why it is vitally important that the climate change movement and the trade union movement work together. Whilst there may be differences between unions and campaigns around tactical questions, we in the trade union movement have a pivotal role to play not only in seeing just transition, but also in pushing for a faster transition to net zero.

Certainly, we have to be on our guard against any attempts to claim that climate change is somehow just a middle-class concern and that seeks to counterpose the aims of the green movement against those of the organised working class.

You saw an attempt made by some Tories to use energy prices as just such a wedge issue. They claimed that the cost-of-living crisis has been caused in part by an over reliance on renewable energies and that it was the green levy and subsidies that were the driver of high prices.

The truth is the exact opposite; over-reliance on fossil fuel and gross profiteering by energy and other companies that are the real causes of inflation, not moves to a cleaner system. □

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

Postal workers: reject Royal Mail deal!

By Ollie Moore

The "negotiators' agreement" reached by Communication Workers Union (CWU) leaders and Royal Mail has now been accepted by CWU's Postal Executive, and will go to a referendum of its members in Royal Mail.

The agreement has been circulated to CWU members with the heading: "We Are Still Here: A National Agreement Delivered by Your Support." Its formal title of the agreement is "Business Recovery, Transformation, and Growth Agreement." It purports to "set out how Royal Mail and CWU will jointly rebuild and transform the business." On pay, it gives postal workers a 6% increase for 2023/4, plus a £500 one-off lump sum, followed by a 2% increase for 2024/25. It contains a raft of changes to terms and conditions, including on sick pay, Sunday working, implementing later start and finishing times and seasonal hours, although does also include statements from Royal Mail Group that there are "no plans" to set up a separate parcel company, to introduce an owner-driver model, or to outsource any part of the business.

The agreement accepts jobs will be lost, but says that "the implementation of any headcount reduction will be based on workload and productivity improvement and prioritise natural attrition." Job cuts have been taking place at local level for several months. Royal Mail has guaranteed not to make any worker compulsorily redundant, but the agreement says that guarantee will be reviewed in 2025. The agreement also says that "where appropriate, the company and CWU will jointly approach the government and Ofcom

to discuss shared views on the future of the Universal Service Obligation."

In a recent online broadcast to members, CWU general secretary Dave Ward said postal workers would "have to make concessions" in any eventual settlement. Those workers are entitled to ask how a situation developed where their union was steeling *them* to make concessions, rather than focusing on how to force them from management.

Same deal, different day

As union members commenting on social media have pointed out, the core of the agreement is the same as proposals CWU previously rejected. But by calling no further action, despite a resounding renewal of the industrial action mandate in February, and having continually stressed the importance of "intensive negotiations" with Royal Mail, the CWU leadership helped to demobilise its own members.

The CWU's "We Are Still Here" branding suggests that its leadership has narrowed the horizons of the dispute down so that mere survival – rather than improving or even defending real pay and working conditions – is seen as an achievement.

In a national members' meeting on 21 April, Ward said: "They [Royal Mail] thought they were going to get rid of us, but we are still here. We are all over this agreement, and that, in itself, is a major achievement for the union." Deputy general secretary for post, Andy Furey, also flagged up "the number of times that the union is mentioned in the document" as an achievement. This suggests a primarily institutional approach to trade unionism, where a union's collaboration with an employer



to manage change takes precedence over any conception of the union as a weapon of struggle in its members' hands.

The timetable for the referendum on the deal has yet to be announced. Given the leadership pushing it, the delay, and the absence of any independent rank-and-file organisation, it is likely the agreement will be accepted. Postal workers who aspire to something better than a below-inflation pay deal tied to cuts to pay and conditions now face an uphill task.

But the recent vote in the RCN, where members voted to reject a deal despite their leaders urging acceptance, shows that there are possibilities to revive disputes. An enthusiastic rank-and-file campaign to reject, combined with developing convincing and effective strategies for escalating action, could force concessions from Royal Mail. And even if the deal is accepted, a strong reject campaign will put rank-and-file postal workers in a stronger position for future battles. □

Tube pay: don't let bosses set the pace



Tubeworker

London Underground bosses have told unions that they will begin negotiations over our next pay settlement on 11 May.

If previous years' talks are anything to go by, they'll likely drag on for months. Meanwhile, our pay falls further and further behind inflation. Remember: we were due a new settlement on 1 April.

Why should we accept this? Why should we allow management to set the pace? Instead, we should set our own timetable. If management haven't made us a satisfactory offer by an agreed date, we should immediately

move to a ballot for industrial action. Tubeworker suggests launching the ballot on 12 May if the 11 May meeting doesn't produce results. The idea that we have to "exhaust" a process of negotiation (the duration of which is entirely determined by management) is a product of a conservative, "that's-the-way-things-have-always-been-done" approach to industrial relations.

RMT's demand of an RPI-or-£5,000-flat-rate increase, whichever is higher, gives a clear focus to the campaign, as do the claim's other headline demands, such as a 32-hour, four-day week. Opening up another front of battle over pay gives us an opportunity to fight proactively for our own demands, even while we continue to resist planned cuts in our jobs, pensions, and conditions dispute. □

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Sudan: stop the war, fight for democracy

By Sacha Ismail

At least 427 people, including 264 civilians, had been confirmed dead when the two military factions fighting in Sudan since 15 April began a precarious 72-hour ceasefire on 24 April. This far outstrips the number killed by repression against the [mass protests](#) which followed the October 2021 military coup.

Something like 4,000 people have been injured. Large parts of Sudanese society have ceased to function as people are trapped in their homes and workplaces, leading to vast suffering and potentially many more deaths.

In these incredibly difficult circumstances, the thousands of local ["resistance committees"](#) that led the struggle against the post-2021 coup regime have [turned](#) to mutual aid and humanitarian organising.

The regular military headed by general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (Sudanese Armed Forces, SAF) has been fighting the ex-paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (more commonly referred to as Hemeti). The background is conflict over the integration of the RSF into the SAF, conflict over control of metals, mineral and other resources, and the ambitions of the leaders.

Both sides have accused the other of anti-democratic authoritarianism and connections with Islamists. Both are correct!

Both sides led the October 2021 coup against the military-civilian power sharing arrangement which emerged from the 2018-2019 revolution against three-decade military-Islamist dictator Omar al-Bashir.

A Sudanese comrade said to me that she refuses to say "RSF" but always refers to the "Janjaweed". Under this original name, Hemeti's militia carried out genocide in the western Sudanese state of Darfur, killings hundreds of thousands.

There have been reports – for instance on CNN – that Russia, which was an enthusiastic backer of the 2021 coup, is aiding the RSF / Janjaweed, including through the state-linked "private military company" Wagner. Wagner is also central to the Russian war in Ukraine, and is now bloodily active in many parts of Africa.

A possible outcome is Sudan becoming a patchwork of rival military fiefdoms, even worse than the whole country being a military regime

with some regular administrative functioning.

The left and labour movement internationally must support calls from Sudan's democratic organisations and activists to permanently stop the fighting, but also their continued struggle to subordinate the military to democratic civilian rule. We must reject the US and other Western government's attempts to patch up a deal preserving the military's (or militaries'!) independent power.

We must listen to comrades in Sudan and work out ways to aid humanitarian efforts and the country's impressive grassroots working-class and democratic movements. □

• Parliament.uk petition launched by a Sudanese left-winger in London calling for the UK to provide greater humanitarian assistance: bit.ly/sudan-p

Public Order Act imminent

By Mohan Sen

The Minimum Service Levels anti-strike bill still has some way to go through the parliamentary process, but the Tories' Public Order Bill will become law sooner. The Bill severely restricts the right to protest, bringing back the most extreme measures the government failed to get into the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act last year – including some that potentially impact the right to strike. (See Amnesty International briefing, bit.ly/ai-pob)

The protests against the Police Act could have been much bigger if the labour movement had not sat them out, but they happened and many were lively. Yet there have been almost no protests against the (even worse) Public Order Bill. Any possibilities for last-minute protests should be taken. But with the Bill set to become law, we need much more discussion about what we do about it.

Activists and organisations need to understand what the law does and doesn't do, and discuss how we limit its impact by refusing to be cowed. We need to organise to win support from our unions and a commitment from the Labour Party to repeal these laws. □

Russia out! Arm Ukraine!

By Dan Katz

On 21 April Yuriy Aristov of Ukraine's Defence Committee reported that the imperialist Russian war on Ukraine has caused \$143.8 billion of damage. He added that a quarter of all infrastructure and about 8% of industrial facilities have been destroyed.

On 12 March 2023, the UN Human Rights office stated it had recorded 21,965 civilian casualties in the country, although the exact figure is probably much higher.

Over 8mn Ukrainian refugees are registered living across Europe and probably another 5mn are internally displaced.

80,900 alleged war crimes committed by Russian forces are being investigated in Ukraine. Those crimes include rape, murder, looting, torture and kidnapping.

The Kyiv School of Economics states that 150,000 buildings, 25,000km of roads, 344 bridges, thousands of schools, and museums have been damaged. Much destruction has been caused by indiscriminate missile and artillery bombing and air strikes.

In Eastern Ukraine one in seven schools have been damaged or destroyed. In areas where very heavy fighting has taken place the big majority of all educational institutions have been damaged. In Soledar, near Bakhmut, ten of the twelve schools have been badly damaged. In the larger town of Mariupol forty-one schools have been damaged or destroyed.

Russia is systematically destroying Ukraine's cultural heritage in areas it controls and looting artefacts from museums and equipment from factories and hospitals. As Russian forces evacuated Kherson in November 2022 troops took 11,000 paintings and other artefacts from the Kherson Regional Art Museum.

Ukraine started the war as a poor country and is still heavily dependent on Western – centrally US – financial and military aid. The West's policy has been shaped by two fears: the consequences of Putin winning in Ukraine, and the consequences of Putin losing in Ukraine.

If Russia's imperialists win, then Moldova, the Baltic states and Poland are at risk. If Russia looks like losing, then Putin could lash out, escalating or spreading the war to defend his political position inside Russia. He has threatened to use nuclear weapons.

So the US and European states have provided enough weapons to stop Ukraine losing, but not enough to allow it to win. We support the Russian opposition striving to topple Putin, and demand



the West donate Ukraine enough material – military and financial – to allow it to force Russia out,

At the end of last year Mark Milley, Chair of the US's Joint Chief of Staff, assessed that Russia's military had taken over 100,000 casualties (killed and wounded), adding that it was "probably the same on the Ukrainian side." Russia's offensive, launched earlier this year with the aim of using newly mobilised troops to overrun Ukrainian positions in Donbas has only made incremental gains and at enormous cost to both sides.

The Dutch open-source Oryx organisation has verified Russia's visually confirmed tank losses at 1,847, with 550 more captured by Ukraine. The IISS think tank believes Russia has already lost half its original tank fleet.

One company in Ukraine's 125th Brigade was destroyed shortly after arriving in Bakhmut in January. "We lost 84 out of 100 soldiers in the first battle," said one of the survivors. Commanders from the 93rd Brigade have reported similar losses.

A new Ukrainian offensive is expected in May using the relatively small numbers of modern, effective battle tanks recently donated by the European states, the UK and US. It is unclear exactly where and when the Ukrainian push will take place.

The obvious place for Ukraine to fight is south from Zaporizhzhia and Kherson towards Melitopol and the Sea of Azov. It seems the Ukrainians have begun to build bridgeheads in marshlands on the left bank of the Dnipro river, facing Kherson City.

If the Ukrainians fight here the local population will back them. As a consequence, the Russians have built very substantial defences in the area.

So, perhaps, the Ukrainians will move elsewhere. Whatever happens it is a matter of basic anti-imperialist solidarity that the UK labour movement fights to back Ukraine and helps the Ukrainian left and trade unions.

It is encouraging that the 17-19 April Scottish TUC conference passed good policy on Ukraine and the Stalinist and SWP position against arms for Ukraine was defeated at the NEU education workers' conference on 3-6 April.

For Ukraine against Russian imperialism! □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

PUSH FORWARD AFTER MAY DAY WEEKEND STRIKES

By Ollie Moore

The return to strikes by nurses' union RCN, from 8pm on 30 April until 2 May, is an important opportunity to revive and accelerate the pay fight in the NHS. Unite members in various NHS trusts, including several ambulance trusts, will also strike on 1 and 2 May. If GMB members in the NHS also reject the pay offer in their ballot closing 28 April (possible, despite the GMB leadership recommending acceptance), their members in ambulance trusts and elsewhere in the NHS could also strike, officially from mid-May, but sooner if GMB members refuse to cross other unions' pickets.

Although junior doctors in the BMA have no further strikes named, they have conducted their dispute thus far with an admirable seriousness, extending their strikes from three to four days and taking steps to build up a substantial strike fund. NHS workers in unions that continue to strike must co-ordinate to achieve maximum impact for their action; those in non-striking unions can refuse to cross picket lines.

Teachers in NEU will also strike on 27 April and 2 May. Coordination such as joint local demonstrations and strike rallies, can help unite disputes.

The strike wave has shown clearly that sporadic strikes of



one or two days, with weeks in between rounds of action, do not get results against determined employers backed up by an anti-union government. Although civil service union PCS has mounted an impressive campaign of sustained selective action, its all-member national strikes, another of which is due for 28 April, have been infrequent.

And as NHS strikes resume, a dispute in another key sector, the post, may be ending. Although Royal Mail workers in the CWU voted overwhelmingly in mid-February to renew their industrial action mandate, CWU leaders called no further action. Now, a "negotiators' agreement" has been endorsed by its Postal Executive and the leaders are pushing it in a referendum of its members, whose energy and confidence has been sapped by no action

since December 2022 and a prior period of only sporadic action. In rail union RMT, activists in Train Operating Companies are organising to press the union to reject the employers' latest offer and resume strikes. A re-ballot to renew the industrial action mandate concludes on 4 May, with the newly-founded "Change Course Campaign", an as-yet informal network of activists, pushing for an acceleration of action.

With RMT's Industrial Organising Conferences currently taking place, and with its AGM due 26 June-1 July, there is also ongoing discussion reviewing the settlement achieved in the Network Rail dispute. Many activists argue that a combination of harder-hitting action and greater transparency and democracy in the direction of the dispute could have resulted in a different outcome. □