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REJOIN THE EU!

» Restore free movement

» Lower borders and trade barriers

» Workers unite against bosses across Europe



Iran: a year of resistance

Since Jina Amini was killed for "improperly" wearing a hijab

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TUC votes to back Ukraine

The congress also voted for action on the anti-strike laws

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Australia's fossil fuel exports generate huge carbon emissions

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A workers' response to Brexit



Editorial

Brexit has meant and will mean:

- An end to the free movement which enabled millions of workers from other European countries to join the British workforce not, like other migrant workers these days, with a visa status dependent on employers' goodwill, but as workmates with equal rights. Freedom of movement also enabled large numbers of British-origin workers and students to travel the other way with equal rights. In other words, Brexit means new obstacles to workers' unity.

- A disruption of the economic (and, limitedly, political) integration with Europe which Britain had been part of for decades. Socialists do not support capitalist forces even when they carry through capitalist cross-border integration (in their own way); we respond by seeking wider workers' unity. But we recognise that cross-border integration even under capitalist rule, with the limited but real social "levelling up" that has come with the EU, gives us a better terrain for struggle than high economic borders between countries.

- Loss of jobs when British capitalists can no longer sell to the EU. There will be higher prices for many items when UK checks on imports from the EU are finally activated in 2024 (they have been postponed five times because the Tories fear the kickback)

- An open door for the Tories to repeal workers' and environmental regulations and protection. The Tories have mostly hesitated so far, again for fear of kickback, but they want widescale repeal.

- Increased sectarian division in Northern Ireland. The revisions to the "Northern Ireland protocol" have only eased and fudged the contradiction inherent in hard borders between the UK and the EU, and a soft border between a Northern Ireland part of the UK and an Ireland part of the EU. The contradiction will sharpen as and when UK governments repeal EU-derived regulations.

- Loss of the EU funds which aided poorer areas of the UK. The Tories talked of "levelling-up", but in fact the loss of EU funds for those poorer areas has been greater than the erratic Tory "levelling-up" sops.

- Greater obstacles to winning concerted Europe-wide (let alone world-wide) environmental action.

Yet we face a Labour leadership insisting that Brexit is "done" and can't be reversed, only mildly tweaked.

A motion submitted to the 2023 policy conference of Unite, Labour's largest

affiliated union, by its auto workers section said: "That the government won't acknowledge [many] problems [facing workers] or do anything to address them comes as no surprise, nor does its disgusting attempts to stoke anti-immigrant and anti-refugee hatred to deflect attention and blame. It is also totally unacceptable that the Labour Party refuses to acknowledge or talk about these problems, especially Brexit." But generally trade union leaders gone have been almost entirely silent on the issue.

No policy with regard to the European Union will improve working-class lives unless workers also press for improvements by strikes and other struggles. But if the UK continues on its Brexit-connected trajectory, it will make life that much more difficult for the working class and labour movement.

Socialists are seeking to organise the rank and file of the labour movement to revolt against Labour's absurd stance. We demand a serious debate in our movement and advocate that Brexit is reversed.

Labour

We want a labour movement campaign distinct from but working alongside wider anti-Brexit activism. A distinct labour-movement campaign is crucial because of the labour movement's huge potential weight, because of how the issues involved intersect with specifically working-class interests, and because Labour is the only real governmental alternative to the Tories.

Edinburgh Central Constituency Labour Party has submitted a motion to the upcoming Labour conference (8-11 October, Liverpool) that calls for:

- "pledge to rejoin the Single Market and Customs Union and restore UK-EU free movement"

- "re-enter Europe's free movement area and end the hostile environment with policies including extending voting rights to all UK residents, replacing Settled Status with an automatic Right to Stay, ending indefinite detention, abolishing 'no recourse to public funds' and rejecting any immigration system based on incomes, utility to businesses or number cap"

- "aim to rejoin the EU".

We know that even a British government intent on rejoining the EU would now have to go through years of difficult negotiations to achieve that. But rejoining the Single Market and the Customs Union would be easier, since even the Tories have hesitated to depart much from EU-derived regulations or to impose checks on trade from the EU. And it would set a direction of travel. "Labour has a responsibility",



the motion rightly says, "to criticise the Tories' ultra-hard Brexit and offer an anti-racist, internationalist alternative." The motion sets out why the Tories' Brexit policy has been so bad for workers, and sketches out how Labour can begin to undo the damage".

Labour conference debates only twelve topics, six chosen by the unions, six by local Labour Parties, and probably the Labour leadership will exert pressure to swing the priority vote against motions about Brexit. Whatever happens formally, we must treat this as an opportunity to break the silence and start building a campaign. In 2022 there were no motions against Brexit, not even ones which failed to win the priority vote.

Across Europe

We oppose Brexit and advocate reversing it not because we like the existing European Union, capitalist and neoliberal as it is. In many regards, its policies are more and more reactionary, notably on migrant rights, if not as bad as Britain's. We favour lowering the borders between the UK and the EU because we recognise how much more reactionary, on many, many levels, the really existing Brexit alternative is, and because we want to be part of workers' unity across Europe to change those EU policies, democratise the EU, level up across the EU.

Socialist and trade union struggles to change to challenge and change the anti-working class policies and structures of governments and societies – in individual countries and across Europe – will only succeed if linked up internationally. We advocate workers' unity internationally whatever the borders and barriers capitalism and its governments

put up. But from the standpoint of both working-class struggles and general considerations of human welfare and freedom, we also advocate the lowering of borders between countries.

We advocate in the left and trade unions for much greater attention to, learning from and solidarity with workers' struggles in other countries.

The fight for free movement and migrants' rights is pivotal. Greater free movement would be not some unfortunate overhead of moving to reverse Brexit, but a positive benefit. Positive in terms of the economic consequences, in terms of expanding human rights and freedom, and in pushing back aggressive nationalist politics in the UK and across Europe. (There also other motions for conference focusing on free movement and asylum rights as such). And yet a main reason why the Labour leaders will not challenge Brexit is that they fear to challenge the Tories' ranting against free movement. We need a radical political shift.

We fight those who are critical of Brexit but whose politics are conservative, the Michael Heseltine (or even Peter Mandelson) types. We still want to work with left-wing, internationalist people (even if they are not socialists or labour-movement activists) for such goals as reversing Brexit and asserting migrants' rights and free movement. □

Solidarity 685

Solidarity 685 will be dated 4 Oct; 686, 18 Oct, and then back to usual weekly schedule. □

New revolt against Assad in Syria

By Simon Nelson

Protests against the Assad regime began in late August across the south of Syria and continue. Druze majority areas in Sweida are the centre of the new movement. Those protests have raised the flag of the Syrian opposition, not seen in the regime-controlled areas since the "Arab Spring" days in 2011.

The Druze, who number 700,000, mostly in the south, had previously tolerated Assad. Druze conscripts previously only served in Sweida, and Assad's forces didn't interfere in the running of the province.

The total pre-war population of Syria was around 21 million. More than half that population is now displaced, 6.8m internally and over 5.3m abroad.

The economy has collapsed. The risk of malnourishment and starvation is very real. The regime is still bolstered by its partnership with Iran and Russia, and there is widespread anger that the Ba'athist elite are getting rich on the Syrian drug trade. Reports that Alawite

Syrians, from the same sect as the Assad family, are also hostile to the regime mean that these protests go beyond tribal and sectarian alliances.

Syrian writer Robin Yassav says that Assad's main tactic has been to "scare minority groups to sell them the lie that only Assad can protect them from the Sunnis. So mass protests of Druze are particularly difficult for Assad to deal with". Sunni-sectarian Islamist groups like Daesh are in sharp decline and unable to seriously vie for power, so the regime's ability to cope with these protests is diminished. Assad's response has been to crack down violently but continue to claim to be a protector of minorities.

Other protests in the Deir Ezzor province contain more complex dynamics. There, there have been protests and military clashes between the Syrian



Protests in Al-Karama Square in Sweida

Pic: @nedalalamari

Turkish president Erdoğan, hostile to Kurdish self-determination, has backed the Arab tribal leaders in their clashes, stating that the Arabs are the rightful owners of the land, and warning against perceived demographic shifts by Kurds across north-east Syria. That situation is further complicated by Ankara's moves to repatriate Syrian-Arab refugees back into Kurdish majority areas.

Erdoğan has claimed that Putin supports his view, and

that the continued arming of the Kurds by the US is helping to undermine Syria and Iraq's integrity. This follows Erdoğan joining Iran and Russia in calling for the US to withdraw its remaining 900 special operations forces. The US is unlikely to abandon a reliable ally, not least because the SDF runs the prison camps that house suspected members of Daesh and their families.

Assad too wants the protests in Deir Ezzor to end or restore support for the regime.

As with the Druze, the Baathist regime's relationship with the province is complicated. Some of those tribal leaders had previously been loyal backers of Assad. Their own National Defence Force (NDF) was loyal to the government at the height of the civil war. The situation now is less clear. Some local Arab leaders are loyal to the SDF, and some are undoubtedly influenced by remnants of the civil-war opposition to Assad, much of which was intractably Islamist. □

Strikes

Every weekend until the end of the year: Social workers at Swindon Borough Council (GMB) strike

Discontinuously from 13 September-7 October: Network Rail Cardiff S&T depot workers (RMT) strike

16-22 September: Workers at Barts Health NHS Trust (Unite) strike

17-22 September: Workers at Liverpool John Moores University (UCU) strike

18-22 September: Workers at the University of Edinburgh (UCU) strike

18-22 September: Beith Ministry of Defence munitions depot workers (GMB) strike

18, 22 and 25 September: Journalists at National World group (NUJ) strike

18 September-1 October: Tower Hamlets council refuse workers (Unite) strike

18-22 and 25-29 September: Workers at Queen Mary University London (UCU) strike against pay deductions

19 and 21 September: Staff at the Royal Society of Arts (IWGB) strike

19-20 September: NHS consultants (BMA) strike

20-21 and 26-29 September: Workers at City of Glasgow College (EIS-FELA) strike

20-22 September: Junior doctors (BMA) strike

25 September-1 October: Nottinghamshire County Council Veolia re-

fuse workers (GMB) strike

25-29 September: University workers (UCU) strike

26 September: Barnet Council mental health social workers (Unison) strike

26-28 September: Non-teaching staff in primary schools in Scotland (Unison, Unite, and GMB) strike

30 September and 4 October: Train drivers at multiple Train Operating Companies (Aslef) strike

2-3 October: Support staff at 21 universities (Unison) strike

2-4 October: NHS consultants and junior doctors (BMA) and NHS radiographers (CSR, 3 October only) strike

3-4 October: Barnet Council mental health social workers (Unison) strike

4-6 October: Cleaners at the University of the Arts London (GMB) strike

6-9 October: Vanderlande Industries baggage handlers at Heathrow Airport (Unite) strike

Other strikes: See bit.ly/ro-up

Ballots

From 6 September: Further Education college workers (UCU) ballot

13 September-mid-October: Engineering construction workers (Unite) ballot

22 September-19 October: Rail workers at multiple Train Operating Companies (RMT) re-ballot □



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](#).

Wednesday 20 September, 7pm: Women, Life, Freedom: the struggle in Iran, one year on, Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont St, London WC1N 1AB

Thursday 21 September, 3pm: Tubeworker monthly meeting

Saturday 23 September, 12pm: Rejoin the EU march, Hyde Park (south-east corner), London

Wednesday 27 September: Sheffield Workers' Liberty students: What Will Socialism Look Like, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill, Broomhall, Sheffield S3 7HG

Saturday 30 September, 9.30am: Oppose the Far Right in Honor Oak, Honor Oak Pub, 1 St German's Road, SE23

Sunday 1 October, 12pm: Protest at Tory party conference, assemble at Oxford Road, near Manchester Museum

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



Pat Markey: “for the liberation of humanity”

By Liam Conway

Pat Markey, a longstanding Workers' Liberty activist who died this month, was not a person prone to song-and-dance routines. He had no interest in being in the limelight or making tub-thumping speeches from the platform. Pat was just a person who dedicated his life to fighting injustice and in pursuit of a better, socialist world, based on liberty and democracy.

Before becoming a teacher and an activist in the National Union of Teachers and National Education Union (NUT-NEU), Pat worked in the engineering industry, but had to move on because of skin conditions brought on by the chemicals used at work.

During his teaching career Pat did not have to work with dangerous substances, but he was staggered by the amount of unpaid work done by teachers. Recalling his time in the engineering industry Pat wrote, “no-one who worked there ever suggested that we might consider stopping late without pay to help the company out. Quite the opposite, in fact. It had long been established that you would go and wash your hands before the shift change, not after – the point being that if you

gave the boss an inch, they would come for the mile. The concept of working extra time as part of ‘goodwill’ was an alien concept.”

Pat was actively involved in the campaign in the NUT for a National Contract demanding clear limits to hours worked. He wrote that “winning such provisions would result in vastly more humane working conditions for teachers and would transform the context in which our students learn... (and) make me more likely to willingly give up my ‘free’ time to support students who request it.” “After all”, he continued, “whereas there was nothing I could do about the rejected rollers destined for scrap, all our pupils have the potential to work with us for the eventual liberation of humanity”.

And the liberation of humanity was at the centre of Pat's world, often at the expense of his own welfare. On many occasions Pat was in conflict with his employer and very occasionally he was in conflict with his own union, sometimes with those on the left.

In June 2011, Pat's school in Northampton, Duston, was due to become an Academy. Despite promises to maintain current terms and conditions, the



day strike” was simply sapping “the energy out of our members”. Instead, Pat argued, the union needed a leadership prepared to “stand up for education” with an action campaign capable of forcing real concessions on pay and conditions from the Government.

Pat was very much involved in the launch of the Education Solidarity Network (ESN) in 2012

following the sell-out by the public sector unions on pensions. Pat also stood twice for the NUT National Executive as a rank-and-file candidate, though he did not get the support he deserved across the left.

To the very end Pat was committed to the liberation of humanity. His work as a teacher, trade unionist and political activist were geared to that goal. As his daughter Beth so beautifully expressed, “Something I will forever be inspired by was Dad's commitment to helping people. He was a dedicated socialist and union activist, supporting hundreds of teachers and support staff over the years. A firm believer in social justice and equality, in his own understated way Dad made such an impact in Northamptonshire.” □

school took a decision to prevent Pat from continuing with his union facility time of one day per week, even though the local authority would continue to fund it. In April 2011 the union organised a “defend union rights at Duston” protest at the school gates, and the management used that as a pretext to sack Pat. Pat ran a strong campaign against the victimisation, but after that had to work on short-term contracts.

In 2014 Pat was involved in the campaign to replace the existing union left leadership, Christine Blower and Kevin Courtney, with one that would actually lead a fight against the government – in this case, Martin Powell-Davies for General Secretary and Patrick Murphy for Deputy General Secretary. Pat said, “limping along with an occasional one-

Morning Star, Labour, and syndicalism



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

The *Morning Star* reflects the incoherence of its political masters, the Communist Party of Britain, when it comes to the Labour Party.

Between 2015 and 2020 the paper presented itself as a cheerleader for the Corbyn leadership, while quietly opposing Corbyn's one and only clear position on Europe – to avoid a “no deal” Brexit at all costs – and calling for a “people's boycott” of the May 2019 European elections: in other words “don't vote Labour”, even under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership!

Since the failure of Corbynism, the paper's incoherence has descended into total, desperate confusion.

In the run-up to the local elections of May 2020, the paper failed to call even for a critical Labour vote (except, unaccountably, in Wales), and carried an uncritical interview with the Northern Independence Party's Thelma Walker.

A report in the MS of 26 July 2023 seemed positive about (in fact hopeless) plans for a new left wing party: “Figures from the labour movement have called for the creation of a new party ‘Transform’ warning that Sir Keir Starmer is ‘planning to follow the same brutal policies as the Tories’.”

Then, on 7 August, the paper gave a full page to one Richard Rudkin who argued that: “A Labour vote will be endorsing a party that will protect Israel from criticism, which will keep the bedroom tax, which has no money for the NHS but will find money for war. A government that refuses to nationalise energy and water despite people struggling to keep warm in

the winter... A vote for Labour will be an endorsement of Keir Starmer as party leader ...”

Rudkin's rant (followed up on 6 September by a report apparently welcoming the bizarre, anti-Labour “Stop Starmer” campaign) may not represent the official “line” of either the MS or its political masters. Leading CPB member Andrew Murray is much more likely to. In his Eyes Left column (MS 23 August) he raised a question: Is the Labour Party still the “political expression of organised labour”? Murray seems to suggest it might not be any longer, and that “It is ... a formulation that can choke off fresh thinking...”

In any case, he pontificated: “For the great majority of voters, including working class voters ... it is no longer a very interesting question – more labour theology than an issue with practical consequences.”

Murray went on to concede: “Working-class pressure, in-

cluding by trade unions, can certainly affect the course of a putative Starmer regime, but such action could under any circumstances, not as a result of affiliation. Protest, not process, will be key.”

Cutting through the waffle, what Murray seems to be saying is that unions – at least for the time being – have little or no need of political representation and should give up on efforts to influence Labour policy. There's a name for that sort of politics: syndicalism. And the Socialist Workers Party do it with much more vim than the MS and CPB.

Finally, on 8 September, we read what can be taken as the paper's definitive statement on Labour, given that it was published as part of the CPB's Party Congress Resolution inserted into the MS as a pull-out. Having described a Labour victory at the next general election as “the best possible outcome in the in-

terests of working people and their families”, the statement continues: “Wanting a Labour victory next time would normally mean urging people to vote for its candidates wherever they have a reasonable chance of victory... except where there's an opportunity to vote Communist. However, this should not mean supporting those Labour candidates who have played a prominent part in turning the party to the right, attacking and excluding Jeremy Corbyn and other left MPs, instigating or praising the anti-left purge and advocating neoliberal and pro-war policies.”

And if you still don't understand, never fear: “In such cases, the Communist Party executive committee will elaborate its alternative position in consultation with our party's district and nation committees.” There you are: crystal clear, isn't it? □

Union demands 12 months maternity for firefighters



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

A new report into maternity pay and provisions in the fire service has been published by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) showing women firefighters are “systematically undervalued” by the current arrangements.

Information gathered from fire and rescue services across England has uncovered vast inequality in maternity pay. Freedom of Information requests reveal that a firefighter in Cornwall receives £15,000 less than their counterpart in Staffordshire in maternity pay.

The national minimum for maternity pay for firefighters provides only 90% pay for an initial six weeks, decreasing to 50% pay for 12 weeks, followed by statutory maternity pay. In some services, the FBU’s campaign has been able to secure superior maternity provision. The low minimum standard has created a postcode lottery.

To address this disparity, the new report makes the case for twelve months of maternity leave on full pay for all UK firefighters. It cites research which has found that exposure to contaminants while firefighting impacts the health of pregnant firefighters, fetuses, and babies.

The union argues that improving the provisions for maternity and caring responsibilities will also have a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of women in the fire and rescue service. At present, just one in ten firefighters are women.

“Fight for 52” includes several case studies of the impact of current maternity pay and discrimination in maternity, collected by the FBU’s National Women’s Committee.

One firefighter reported:

“When I was pregnant, I had one contract terminated when I told [the service], and my temporary promotion ended all because I was pregnant. This was made clear in an email sent to me.”

Ben Selby, Fire Brigades Union assistant general secretary, said:

“It cannot be right that a new mother in Cornwall gets £15,000 less than a new mother in Staffordshire. This system is unfair and systematically undervalues women firefighters.

“Every year, women are forced to return to work too early – to a job that is physically and psychologically stressful



– because their maternity leave is so bad. Others have experienced serious economic hardship.

“There is clear evidence that exposure to toxic fire contaminants is a threat to the health of new mothers and babies.

“The fight for equality in the fire and rescue service is vital. But the service cannot hope to recruit and retain women firefighters if it continues to have such poor and patchy maternity leave provision.

“We urge employers not to miss this opportunity to properly address the

problem, and to agree to a UK-wide policy of twelve months on full pay.” □



Activist Agenda

Labour Party conference (8-11 October, Liverpool) will consider a National Policy Forum report where “increase statutory sick pay” has been replaced by “strengthen statutory sick pay”, “create a single status of ‘worker’” to cover gig-economy contractors has been replaced by “move towards a single status”, etc. Many other policies have been diluted; many were watery to start with. Check out the report and read comments at bit.ly/f-npf.

The facility to “refer back” text in the NPF report is being denied on the grounds that the report is final (there is no further NPF process to “refer back” to), so the only way to demur is to vote against.

Motions to reverse Brexit are coming to the conference from Edinburgh Central and Lewisham Deptford CLPs at least. At least two CLPs, Oldham East and Southampton Test, have submitted motions to restore free movement across borders.

Housing (especially the “Right to Buy” scam which is depleting social housing), energy, anti-strike laws, workers’ rights, and environmental policy will also figure heavily.

Labour women’s conference is on 7 October; we expect to see motions there for the decriminalisation of abortion, which could then go on to the general conference. □

• Links for campaigns, motions, etc. at workersliberty.org/agenda

Campaign continues to free Sarah Jane Baker

By Martin Thomas

Despite being acquitted in court on 31 August on Public Order Act 1986 charges about an outburst in her speech at Trans Pride on 4 July, Sarah Jane Baker remains in jail, and the [campaign](#) to free her continues.

Indefinitely, with no hearing until maybe March 2024. In terrible conditions: she, a trans woman, was in Wandsworth (male) prison which the Chief Inspector of Prisons has said “really needs closing”. Since 15 Sep she is in Isle of Wight prison, which is chiefly for male sex offenders. In induction she faced inappropriate comments from other prisoners; staff have taken away her female clothes and threatened to stop the hormone supplies she needs. A protest in the

Isle of Wight is provisionally planned for October.

The outburst was surely bad. But when the prosecution put all they could into convincing a court that Sarah Jane had created an actual danger of actual violence, the verdict was that she had not.

Sarah Jane received a life sentence for crimes committed over 30 years ago. 30 years on, in 2019 the authorities finally released her “on licence”, i.e. on a sort of parole. The parole authorities had no complaint until July.

A new prison sentence, and of indefinite length, has been imposed with no further court conviction, just by withdrawing the “licence”.

The injustice against Sarah Jane parallels that against people on [“Imprisonment](#)

[for Public Protection](#)”. The UK has more [life-sentenced](#) prisoners than anywhere else in Europe, even Russia – almost 200 times more in proportion to population than France, for example. In addition, IPP sentences, a new sort of life sentence but with a short minimum period, were introduced in 2005. After a European Court of Human Rights ruling in 2012, they were abolished, but as of 30 June 2,909 prisoners were still on IPP sentences from 2005-12.

More than half of those have been hauled back to jail after first release, for an average further 26 months in prison before being released on licence again. 461 of 625 recalls in 2022 involved no further criminal charge, however small.

Alice Jill Edwards, the UN’s special rapporteur on inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, has called for all IPP sentences to be reviewed. The latest official Prisons and Probation Ombudsman report, of September 2023, registers a record number of suicides in prison by IPP prisoners (nine) in 2022, and denounces the “recall merry go round”. “Following recall to prison, IPP prisoners are faced again with the uncertainty around their sentence and if they will be released”. Sarah Jane, like those IPP prisoners, is being treated worse than someone convicted of a new offence, who will at least have some certainty about their sentence and about procedures to appeal. □



Australia: fossil-fuel export profits or climate action?



Environment

By Janet Burstall

The political context for climate action in Australia appeared to change with the election of a Labor Government in 2022.

Labor campaigned on climate change as an economic opportunity, for exports and jobs in renewable energy. The ALP leaders framed climate action as new industries, new development and new employment. This approach is guided by Ross Garnaut (see his book *Superpower: Australia's low carbon opportunity*), who was a principal economic adviser to the Hawke Government.

The approach made the party more electable. But the combination with its commitments to market stability, and other election promises, particularly to retain the previous government's tax cuts for higher incomes, means the Government is neither mobilising the economic resources, nor cultivating popular support for the difficult but necessary measures to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

Climate measures so far are two-sided, recognising the need for emissions reduction, yet making significant concessions to investors who are responsible for emissions, meaning that Australia's domestic emissions will not fall nearly fast enough. For example:

- A 43% emissions reduction target by 2030 was legislated in March 2023. This is less than the Climate Council's recommendation in 2023 of 75% (an increase on its 2018 target of a 45-65% reduction by 2030, because of the lack of earlier emissions reduction).

- The new Safeguard Mechanism law requires the top 215 GHG polluting facilities to reduce (net) emissions annually by 4.9%. The "Net zero" allows for companies to use offsets and defer reductions.

- Environment Minister Plibersek



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

made a "zero new extinctions" pledge, and introduced the (now stalled) Nature Repair Market reforms amendments to the (Liberal) Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act of 1999. She said this "could turn Australia into a green Wall Street." This is similar to a failed NSW scheme. The amendments that are really needed in the EPBC Act are to include consideration of GHG emissions and climate change as reasons to reject mining and other development applications, but those have not been flagged by the Government.

NZEA

- A new Net Zero Economy Agency meets at least partially a union pre-election demand for a Just Transition Authority. The ACTU said the NZEA would "support workers and their communities and [...] deliver a just transition to a net zero emissions economy." The Authority is chaired by Greg Combet, who was Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions in 2000-7, and an MP and Labor Minister from 2007-13, but whose work since has included economic consultant with AGL Energy & Santos Ltd.

- Fossil fuel extraction and export account for a significant proportion of corporate and government revenue. The new Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia says that more than a third of Australian exports are from fossil fuels. "Australia is estimated to have made \$216 billion last financial year from exporting coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG)" according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Minerals Council of Australia and the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA) extol the employment benefits of their operations, but they employ only about 133,100 people, or around 1% of the workforce.

Whilst there are other sectors where emissions must also be cut, the fossil fuel sector is the most significant in Australia, because of the volume of its emissions, both in the extraction process in Australia, and when burnt whether domestically or as exports. (There are also emissions sources which the climate movement in Australia is quiet about. Aviation dependence inhibits any opposition at all on climate grounds to the construction of a new airport at Badgery's Creek).

CSIRO 2020 reports that "Australia is the world's 14th highest emitter, contributing just over 1 per cent of global emissions. More than 500 Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent is emitted

per annum in Australia". From fossil fuels alone, Australia's Scope 3 emissions (generated by consumption of exports from Australia) are more than double emissions produced directly within Australia. It is "the world's [third largest](#) fossil fuel exporter in CO2 terms. It is behind only Russia and Saudi Arabia."

Because exports are not counted in Australia's emissions, they are not in its reduction target. The fugitive emissions produced by fossil fuel extraction, whether for domestic consumption or export, are counted in Australia's emissions, but they have been underreported by over 80%.

The initial optimism upon the election of the Labor Government is being replaced by criticisms and agitation. "No new fossil fuel projects" is currently the most unifying demand of the climate movement in Australia. The Climate Council observes that "[e]ven the traditionally conservative International Energy Agency (IEA) has unequivocally said there can be no new coal, oil and gas projects if the global energy sector is to have a chance at limiting warming to 1.5°C."

Projects

Climate campaigns are highlighting the need for the government to refuse approval, pointing out:

- There are "currently more coal projects proposed for this country than anywhere else on the planet – 69 to be exact, with 25 of them sitting on Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek's desk" (Move Beyond Coal). Tanya Plibersek has approved four new coal mining projects.

- There are "116 new fossil fuel projects on the Federal Government's annual Resource & Energy Major Project list, two more than at the end of 2021. If

all proceed as estimated, they will add 4.8 billion tonnes of emissions to the atmosphere by 2030."

A particular project that climate activists are opposing is by a company called Tamboran, which plans to frack and export gas from the Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory. Fracking Beetaloo is "projected to emit the equivalent of more than three times Australia's annual domestic emissions over the next two decades".

Rather than taking advantage of powers it could use to stop this, the government (with the support of the Coalition) blocked an inquiry (to which it had previously agreed) into the proposed Middle Arm precinct, spruiked as "a major manufacturing centre for gas, petrochemicals, blue and green hydrogen and critical minerals." Further it pledged \$1.5bn extra for the development of Middle Arm, which is to be an export point for gas from Beetaloo. Traditional owners are challenging Tamboran, with support from climate activists.

However, elements of the Middle Arm project do illustrate that even "green" industries, renewable energy, and critical minerals projects do have environmental costs that can be mitigated, but not eliminated.

The value of fossil fuel exports in relation to the Australian dollar stands in opposition to the imperatives of climate action, in the eyes of the Labor Government. This is a contradiction that cannot be resolved rapidly enough, without a climate movement that understands both the material processes causing climate change, and a labour movement with a perspective for overcoming capital's domination of the planet. A future article will discuss the climate movement, the labour movement and their connections. ☐



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TUC votes to back Ukraine

By Dan Katz

TUC Congress (Liverpool, 10 to 13 September) overwhelmingly passed a pro-Ukraine composite submitted by the GMB, the train drivers' union Aslef, and the miners' union, NUM.

The motion demanded that the British trade union movement, "send solidarity to all Ukrainian trade unionists who are fighting for workers' rights and against [Russian] imperialism."

The motion, carried overwhelmingly on a show of hands, advocated, "immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014."

Disgracefully, two unions opposed



the composite: the Bakers' Union, and the firefighters' union, the FBU.

The education unions UCU (university) and NEU (schools) abstained, and so did the rail union RMT.

AWL members in Unison played a

useful role in turning the Unison TUC delegation towards support for the GMB motion. The NEU delegation originally voted to oppose the GMB, but reconvened to abstain when they concluded they would be in an isolated minority.

Mark Serwotka of the PCS said, "We are with the Ukrainian people and for Russia out. Only the people of Ukraine should decide what the outcome looks like."

The wretched Socialist Workers Party (SWP) claimed the TUC "lined up behind Western imperialism," when, in fact, the TUC had just voted to stand up for Ukrainian self-determination and in defence of the unions in Ukraine, which would be smashed if Putin's Russia wins.

The contemptible "Stop The War" organisation (StW), which is very selective about *whose* wars it seeks to "stop", was outraged by the result at TUC.

StW demands the West ends arms shipments to Ukraine, which would inevitably lead to Ukraine's defeat.

The StW held a dispirited and tiny conference at NEU headquarters in London on 16 September. It was picketed by a lively pro-Ukraine protest. We urge trade union bodies to disaffiliate from StW, which has exposed itself as a reactionary, effectively pro-Putin, organisation.

The resounding TUC decision will provide momentum to the fights inside all the British unions to stand up for Ukrainian workers and the rights of the Ukrainian people.

Victory to Ukraine! □

TUC calls for action on anti-strike laws

By Mohan Sen

TUC congress in Liverpool (10-13 September) passed important motions on the anti-strike and anti-union laws. The TUC bureaucracy and many union leaderships will want to ignore those motions, but we must not let them. Delegates voted for:

- Three separate calls for repeal of *all* anti-union laws.
- A national campaign on this issue, including a "national march".
- Non-compliance with the Minimum Service Levels law,

including campaigning for relevant employers to refuse to issue work notices.

- Convening a special congress to discuss non-compliance and resistance broadly.

Several unions submitted text on the anti-union laws, but initiative on the issue came particularly from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack is the new TUC President (replacing another left-winger, Maria Exall) and that should help put the agreed policy into practice.

The Congress also passed

other important demands on a Labour government, including increased benefits, public ownership of energy, and large-scale public investment.

There was some echo of the strike wave. Strikers and references to strikes, however superficial, were more common at the Congress than in the recent past. A motion was passed calling for a Labour government to commit to at-least-inflation pay increases. It also called for "pay restoration", i.e. a timetable of large enough increases to reverse real-terms post-2008 pay cuts.

Much more than in individual unions, the TUC Congress agenda is controlled by national union leaderships, so, unsurprisingly, the Congress did not discuss the strike wave in any serious way, or talk about how to build on the 2022-3 strikes to win more in the coming years.

The Congress called not for the scrapping of the stitched-up system of Pay Review Bodies in the public sector and the restoration of genuine collective bargaining, but rather for tweaks to how PRBs function.

There was nothing on the formal agenda at the Congress about climate change, despite Tories' announcement about "maxing out" fossil-fuel extraction. Unison and PCS, in different ways, did raise climate change, but on a minor level.

There was no attempt to reverse the position adopted by a very narrow margin last year, on the initiative of GMB, for an increase in UK military spending. □

- Documents from the Congress: bit.ly/23-tuc

Rutherglen by-election: Vote Labour!

By Dale Street

The Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election will be taking place on 5 October. Although the seat is held by the SNP, it is a by-election which only Labour can lose.

The seat, and its pre-boundary-change predecessors, was a safe Labour seat from the 1960s onwards. Then, in the post-referendum Labour collapse of 2015, it went SNP. Won back by Labour in 2017, it went SNP again in 2019.

The by-election has been triggered by a constituents' recall petition, after the 2019 victor (Margaret Ferrier) was suspended from Parliament for 30 days when a court had found her guilty of culpable and reckless conduct. The

by-election comes at a bad time for the SNP.

Sturgeon has gone. Peter Murrell, its former CEO, has gone. Earlier this year, police raided the SNP headquarters and the Sturgeon-Murrell home. A smell of financial scandal hangs over the party.

But if the SNP loses the by-election, it has ready-made excuses. Scottish Labour, on the other hand, has no such excuse if it fails to win the seat.

If it fails to win the seat at a time when support for the SNP is nosediving in the polls, Scottish Labour's prospects for winning more seats in the general election – it has currently just one seat in Scotland – take a battering.

Scottish Labour needs to win over SNP voters. But the right wing now

firmly back in control of the party in Scotland has some very odd ideas about how.

The Labour candidate, Michael Shanks, was effectively imposed on the local Constituency Labour Party (CLP) as the candidate. The CLP passed a motion of no confidence in the selection process and sent a letter to Scottish Labour's head office. The office did not even bother to reply.

Scottish Labour has drafted in Labour "celebrities" who, it thinks, will pull the voters – such as Wes Streeting MP and, even more incredibly, Peter Mandelson.

The Scottish Labour right wing is at least smart enough to realise what an electoral liability Keir Starmer is. On being selected was Shanks pledged that he would oppose Starmer's poli-

cies on the two-child benefits cap, the bedroom tax, and gender reform legislation.

Scottish Labour's entirely justified fear is that the SNP will outflank Labour to the left. As a Scottish Labour spokesperson put it:

"The avenue of attack is that Labour is not progressive enough. There's a lot of apathy out there. They're saying there's no real difference between [Labour and the Tories]. If the SNP were suddenly to get their act together, it might be quite difficult."

Left-wingers will seek to use the by-election to help rebuild the Labour left, and on a much healthier political basis than under Corbyn. □

- Abridged: more bit.ly/r-lose

Against the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh

By Michael Baker

The situation in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) is growing increasingly desperate, as the Azerbaijan government's blockade of the region deprives its majority-Armenian residents of food, water, electricity and medical equipment.

The 2020 six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan ended in a peace treaty brokered by Russia. That treaty stopped open conflict while confirming Azerbaijan's recapture of the roughly 20% of Azerbaijani territory that Armenia had won in the first war, from 1988-1994.

The republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), an enclave of 120,000 ethnically Armenian citizens in Western Azerbaijan, has been a dangerous lynchpin throughout conflict between the two nations. The region is not self-sufficient, and is almost entirely dependent on Armenian deliveries and trade. Until late 2022, these had been guaranteed by the existence of the Lachin corridor, a single road connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh that was monitored by Russian peacekeepers.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 saw the majority of Russian military personnel otherwise occupied, and Azerbaijan took advantage. In December 2022, self-proclaimed Azerbaijani "eco-activists" staged a protest blocking the Lachin corridor over purported illegal mining in Nagorno-Karabakh. Given that Azerbaijan ranks lower than Belarus for its freedom of assembly and right to protest, it was immediately obvious that these "activists" were hired by Baku.



Azerbaijan's military checkpoint to the Lachin corridor

In April this year, Azerbaijan's army set up a military checkpoint on the Lachin corridor, and the protestors mysteriously vanished. Up to this point, the blockade had allowed Red Cross aid deliveries into Nagorno-Karabakh, and sick patients in need of urgent treatment in Armenia were being allowed out. Since April, neither of these things have been allowed to happen.

A convoy of lorries carrying aid including food and medicine from the Armenian government has been held at the checkpoint since July. Azerbaijan claims that the checkpoint is to prevent arms shipments into Nagorno-Karabakh.

While some rural areas have been able to provide small amounts of sustenance for themselves through local agricultural produce, this is not an option for the 55,000 (almost half the population) who live in Stepanakert, the de facto capital. On 15 August, officials in Nagorno-Karabakh reported the first death by starvation since the beginning of the blockade. Supermarket shelves are empty, public transport has stopped for lack of fuel, and the entire region faces rolling blackouts.

Nagorno-Karabakh is placed in an incredibly difficult geopolitical bind. It is entirely dependent on Armenian support and its population wishes to be recognised as part of Armenia, but relations between the two have been frosty since Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan suggested in 2021 that he would be willing to cede the territory to Azerbaijan as part of a broader agreement. Russia's role in mediating and peacekeeping has been entirely disrupted by its own colonial exploits, meaning Armenia is hard-pushed to find any way of enforcing a return to the 2020 peace agreement.

The broader geopolitical interests at play between Armenia and Azerbaijan are complicated.

Iran is also a Shiite-majority country and has a 20% Azeri population, but is concerned at growing ties between Israel and Azerbaijan, and worries that the former will use the latter as a launchpad to attack Iranian territory. Turkey has pledged to defend Azerbaijan in the event of an escalated military conflict, while Russia has a similar

agreement with Armenia.

Russia also, however, has a number of growing ties with Azerbaijan, and during the war with Ukraine, Azerbaijan has been caught red-handed passing off Russian oil as domestic product to help Putin to evade Western sanctions on Russian oil exports. Various elements of the American state have recently come out strongly in support of Armenia and called for an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh blockade, but the Ukrainian government stays staunchly anti-Armenia on account of the (shoddy and untrustworthy) Russian support for Armenia.

How all of these elements would play out were another open conflict to begin, particularly in the midst of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, is anybody's guess.

The Azerbaijani government claims to be providing Nagorno-Karabakh with alternatives: it has offered its own aid, and proposed a new, non-corridor, route through Azerbaijan for deliveries to be made from Armenia. Both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh have declined these offers, which have been deemed inherently untrustworthy by their respective populations.

Azerbaijan's end goal appears to be to threaten the Armenian people with another war and mass slaughter, perhaps as a means of forcing the hand of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh once the blockade is lifted. The long-term plan of assimilating the region into Azerbaijan, and forcing the population to take Azerbaijani passports, leave, or die, seems hard for any power to currently stop. Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's ruler, has been emboldened since Azerbaijan's resounding victory of the 2020 war, and now wishes to use international disarray to capitalise on the outcomes of that war.

Three separate sets of peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan were brokered in May: by the EU, the US, and Russia. Despite talk of "progress", no agreements were reached. Though Russia, the US and the EU all broadly wish for an end to the blockade and side broadly with Armenia, the chances of those three groups sitting together at a negotiating table and forcing Azer-



Blocked humanitarian convoy of trucks, sent to Nagorno-Karabakh

baijan to cooperate is slim, given how much they are at odds in the war in Ukraine.

The people of Nagorno-Karabakh have been made pawns in a very nasty geopolitical game. Our immediate demand must be for the blockade to be ended, and the right of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination to be upheld. How either of these things will be achieved under current circumstances, however, is not clear. □

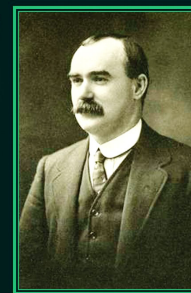
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“Shout her name: Jina Amini”

By Dan Katz

Protests were held across the world to mark the first anniversary of the murder in custody of Mahsa Jina Amini, killed on 16 September 2022.

Jina was beaten by Iran’s so-called morality police, the Guidance Patrol, after being detained for allegedly “improperly” wearing her hijab. Jina was a 22 year-old Iranian Kurd born in Saqqez, north-west Iran. She was killed in Tehran, Iran’s capital after travelling with her family to visit her brother.

The Iranian Islamic regime that killed Jina lied to cover up the crime, claiming she had died of an underlying health condition. Her parents insist that she had been perfectly healthy. And women who were with Jina in detention say she had been brutally attacked; she may have died from a stroke caused by head injuries received after her arrest.

The murder of Jina was the catalyst for a mass, women-led, street-protest movement whose main slogans are “Women, Life Freedom” and “Death to the Dictator [Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei]”. This movement was the biggest threat faced by the Islamic state, so far, in 44 years of its disgusting theocratic dictatorship.

Since September 2022 at least 550 anti-regime protesters have been killed, including 70 children. Seven young men have been executed, including one who was hung from a crane in public. Hundreds of students have been expelled from Universities. University professors have been sacked. Amnesty International believes at least 22,000 people have been arrested.

In Iran, due to a vicious wave of repression, ramping up as the anniversary drew nearer, anti-regime protests were often quite small. Nevertheless, activists demonstrated in Tehran, Ahvaz and Arak.

In the Kurdish town of Sanandaj shops were shuttered and the streets were largely empty. In Gohardasht area of Karaj protesters shouted, “We are a great nation, we will take back Iran!”

In Mashad protesters appear to have been shot at by the security services.

Inside Tehran’s notorious Evin prison four women activists, including the prominent campaigner Nages Mohammadi, burned their headscarves in a jail courtyard. This is an act of extraordinary bravery.

In Qarchak, 20km south of Tehran, women prisoners awaiting execution set fire to their clothes. Special forces apparently put out the fires and then beat up the women.

Iran extensively uses the death penalty and a method of terrorising and repressing the population. Between



NEU Newham on 16 September protest

September 2022 and September 2023 Iran has executed at least 697 people (Iran Human Rights), a 36% increase on the previous year. The sentence is disproportionately used against Iranian minorities, especially the Baluchi minority in south east Iran.

Jina Amini’s father, Amjad Amini, was detained early on 16 September to prevent the family marking the anniversary. Jina’s uncle, Safa Aeli, was also arrested and remains in detention. Jina’s family visited her grave on Friday 15 September, but on Saturday 16 September the cemetery appears to have been closed off by security services. Helicopters flew over the graveyard and military and police swamped the area to intimidate oppositionists.

The drive to prevent protests has been ongoing for several weeks. In August the daily paper *Etemad* reported that the lawyer for Jina’s family, Saleh Nikbakht, has been charged with “propaganda against the system”. Nikbakht, 78 years old and a well-known civil rights lawyer, faces between one and three years in jail.

To prevent reliable news being read in the country and to disrupt communications between activists Iran’s internet access has been severely restricted. And there has been a major attack on press freedom.

Since September 2022 79 journalists have been arrested, including 31 women. 12 journalists remain in jail, including Niloofar Hamedi, a reporter with *Shargh Daily*, who broke the news of Jina Amini’s death, and Elaheh Mohammadi, a journalist with *Han Mihan*, who was the only reporter to cover Jina’s funeral. Both women are in prison awaiting verdicts on very serious charges.

Nazila Maroufian, from Rouydad24 was pardoned in January after receiving a two-year jail term for interviewing Jina’s father. She was re-arrested on 30 August and was quickly jailed for another year for “publishing propa-

ganda”. She reports that she was sexually assaulted while being arrested.

Protests in solidarity with Iranian women took place on 16 September 2023 in many cities including Washington DC, Sydney, Paris, Rome and Toronto.

In London hundreds assembled outside the Iranian embassy in west London. 500 marched from London Eye, over Westminster Bridge, to a rally outside Downing Street. Unfortunately, a large number of Iranian monarchists held a rally in Trafalgar Square, flying their Iranian flag with a lion and sun in the centre. In front of the National Gallery Iranian socialists held their own event, flying our movement’s red flag.

Breaking codes

The BBC quotes a Western diplomat who estimates that 20% of Iranian women are now breaking the state’s strict misogynistic dress codes. In middle-class north Tehran the rates are higher. And the rebellion exists right across Iran, and predominantly amongst younger women.

Opponents of the regime are now more confident and bolder, despite the repression.

Less than a month after the Islamists came to power in Iran in February 1979, decrees were made by the religious leaders demanding women dress “modestly” and wear the hijab. From 1980 women could not go to work or enter public buildings without a hijab. In 1983 wearing the hijab in public was made mandatory, punishable by long jail terms or whipping.

These laws have always been deeply resented and opposed. After International Women’s Day on 8 March 1979 mass demonstrations took place against the repression of women’s rights.

More recently young women have protested in public, standing on street furniture and burning their headscarves, posting their acts of defiance on social media. The most reliable data

from Iran about attitudes to the compulsory hijab are from an independent poll conducted in 2020. That showed only 15% of the population in favour of the compulsory hijab, with 72% against.

Young people in particular object to the highly invasive nature of this religious state which aims to interfere and regulate every detail of their lives. Currently women face fines of up to 500,000 rial (about £10) or a prison sentence of between ten days and two months for not wearing the hijab.

The authorities have been shutting cafes and shops which serve unveiled women. Women have had their cars seized and been sacked for refusing to wear the hijab.

In one province alone, East Azerbaijan, 439 cars have been seized (up until 11 August, BBC).

The regime is now discussing a new law, the Hijab and Chastity Bill which will impose fines of up to 1bn rials (about £20,000) or a prison term of ten years for those “who do not comply [with dress codes]... in an organised way or encourage others to do so.”

The protest movements for women’s liberation are intersecting with widespread discontent with the economic situation. Inflation is running at 47%, by official figures, and a third of the population live on \$2 a day. Most Iranian workers have temporary contracts and precarious work-lives.

Many professionals have left the country in the last year, including an estimated 6,000 doctors.

Retirees regularly protest in public, demanding better pensions and access to health care. Strikes occur regularly despite regulations which ban them and repress all union organisation.

The teachers’ union, which exists in semi-clandestine form in every region of Iran, has had many activists jailed. LabourStart is running an [appeal](#) for them.

The regime now exists with a dangerously narrow base of support. It is manoeuvring to improve its position internationally, signing a strategic partnership agreement with China, re-establishing diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, and is aiming to negotiate better relations with the US.

Nevertheless, in recent years protest movements have become a regular feature of Iran’s political life. The next mass movement is certain to come. More than anything the mullahs fear the workers rising.

The mullahs’ state must be destroyed. Democracy and women’s liberation is impossible if the clerics remain in power.

Solidarity with Iranian women! Solidarity with the Iranian working class! □

Trump's White House: not yet lined up

By Martin Thomas

A dismaying factor for Donald Trump in 2017-2020, a mitigating factor for the USA, was his inability to cohere a team to push through what he wanted.

Unlike in other richer capitalist countries which have a more or less stable civil-service machine, in the US each president makes new political appointments to 4,000 top government jobs. Some appointments need Senate confirmation, but lacking that the president can appoint "acting" officials.

Trump's team was unstable. He ended up encouraging a mob to hang his own vice-president, Mike Pence.

Some former Trump White House officials have sent up an America First Policy Institute (AFPI). With plenty of money and 150 staff, it boosts itself as a "White House in waiting". It also says its work is for whoever wins the Republican nomination, and some Trumpists such as Peter Navarro have dismissed it as a bunch of has-beens.

Another think-tank, American Compass, a degree more distant from Trump personally, has much chewier output. We summarised its alarming policies on the unions in *Solidarity* 681, and an article below surveys it on other issues.

AFPI is very right-wing, but also very vague. Its economic policy is: cut taxes, prune federal spending, somehow move to a balanced budget (it doesn't say how: Trump increased the deficit hugely), rebuild infrastructure, deregulate, rely on the free market in the USA but use tariffs against selected imports.



It says nothing about worker-boss relations.

It wants to ease curbs on fossil-fuel growth, but does not commit to climate denialism.

It wants to make many thousand more federal government jobs subject to dismissal at will by the president, and to relocate some federal government departments outside Washington.

It wants to finish "the Wall". It wants federal legislation to license carrying arms (including semi-automatics), no federal funding for abortion providers, and a ban on "late-term" (undefined) abortion. It proposes a list of restrictions on voters. It rages about the supposed threat of trans people to women, but its specifics are all about

trans women in elite sport.

It doesn't oppose support for Ukraine, and says nothing about Trump's boast

that he could end the Ukraine war "in one day".

Generally, it is more muted than the demagoguery of Trump (or of DeSantis).

Trotsky remarked that "essentially, Mussolini never advanced any sort of ideology". Liberals such as Benedetto Croce and Vilfredo Pareto (a famous economist and critic of "demagogic plutocracy"), supported Mussolini for months (Pareto died only months into Mussolini's rule) or years on grounds (Croce) that Italy needed a "state with authority" or (Pareto) that Mussolini would extend free markets, reduce corruption, retain a free press and democracy. In fact Mussolini went for a "state-ist" approach, and depended on the old Nationalists (the theorists of Italy being a "proletarian nation") for much of detailed policy.

Trump does not want to be tied down to details, and it looks like the AFPI people do not want to be too specific for fear of losing favour. It looks like Trump has yet to cohere his new team. □

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A bold offer for US-nationalist economics

By Martin Thomas

American Compass (AC), a right-wing US think-tank, has [proposed](#) replacing workers' unions by joint worker-employer organisations.

Another think-tank, the Manhattan Institute, for which AC chief Oren Cass previously worked, proposes declaring public sector unions "unconstitutional" because of their capacity to influence public policy.

AC is less close to Trump than the [American First Policy Institute](#), but has leading Trumpists like Josh Hawley and J D Vance on board. Trump himself steers clear of detail, but will have to draw on such

people if he wins in 2024.

AC makes much of being "pro-worker", as European far-right movements of the past have done. It opens its 2023 "handbook", *Rebuilding American Capitalism*, by saying that in the last 50 years real-terms profits in the USA have risen 185%, wages only 1%. It indicts "financialisation", low levels of investment in productive equipment, falling manufacturing-labour productivity, and a US trade deficit in advanced-technology goods since 2002.

Besides its anti-union proposals, AC goes for a "global" tariff of 10% on imports, defying the USA's obligations to China under the WTO, a na-

tional development bank, a financial-transactions ("Tobin") tax, a ban on share buybacks, and capital controls (to curb money-flows into the USA rather than those out of it).

It reckons the consequences will fall short of "massive economic warfare", but does not explain how.

Migrants

It wants to restrict immigration and have "catastrophic" penalties for employers of illegal migrants.

Like the AFPI, it is vehement for "supporting families", and wants more parents at home doing full-time child-care. It proposes a sizeable child-benefit-type payment to

encourage that. Its handbook says nothing either way about LGBT rights, nor about care for the frail elderly.

Pointing out that schools have narrowed to university-preparation operations, though only 18% of young people filter through to finish university and get jobs which actually require university qualifications (i.e. 82% "fail"), it advocates measures to boost apprenticeships and a ban on jobs routinely requiring a (any) university degree.

It says nothing about making it easier for people to enter university studies older, and maybe for broader than job-access aims (in some very non-US-like societies, Iceland,

Sweden, Switzerland, New Zealand, over 25% of uni graduates are over 30).

It says nothing about health care, which the AFPI covers at length, though vaguely. Also nothing about climate change: Cass has argued that climate change, though real, is better dealt with by adaptation than by curbing emissions.

Trump's rise is not just an individual affair, but about a demagogue with sufficient outreach and indefiniteness being able to rally a long-brewing far-right ferment in US politics round a single leader. If Trump should win in 2024, American Compass policies will loom as greater dangers than they do now. □

Refugees under attack in Turkey

By Pete Boggs

The three to four million Syrian refugees in Turkey face increasing racist attacks and exploitative bosses. More and more refugees have been dying while trying to cross to Greece, and many fear forced repatriation to Syria.

In Turkey, a campaign on social media has offered bounties for maimed or killed Syrians, and there is a constant stream of videos of Syrians and Afghans being harassed and attacked in public. Last year a more consciously neo-Nazi group gained some attention, the Ataman Brotherhood (ATK). Their aesthetic borrows heavily from European and American neo-Nazi terrorist groups such as the Atomwaffen Division, and their graffiti tag of "Arabs Out" accompanied with a swastika is ubiquitous across big cities in Turkey.

Earlier this year a video emerged on Telegram of military border guards humiliating and torturing eight refugees at a border outpost in Hatay. They were beaten, electrocuted, and forced to drink diesel, and two of them died. This was raised in parliament months ago, and a fortnight ago the Ministry of Defence acknowledged the incident and said that the soldiers are now being investigated for "manslaughter". Last month, when a Syrian refugee was arrested for abusing a child in Urfa, mob violence in the city attacked Syrian businesses.

Refugees often have incredibly low-paid and unsafe jobs in agriculture and industry with no insurance or benefits. According to Health and Safety Labour Watch ([isig](https://www.isig.org)), in 2022 at least 90 refugees died in workplace incidents, and by May 37 refugees had been killed at work this year, including children. In July a 13-year-old Syrian child labourer died at work in Ankara when his head was crushed in a freight lift.

Forced repatriation is a constant

threat. In 2022 119,817 refugees were deported and 271,311 were prevented from entering the country (many of from Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Turkey). These repatriations may increase as Turkey and the Arab League continue to normalise relations with the Syrian government. In Lebanon, which has about 1.5 million Syrian refugees, the military recently transported hundreds of them to the border and handed them over to Syrian authorities, who promptly arrested and "disappeared" a number of them.

In Turkey's May 2023 presidential election, Erdoğan's main opponent was Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the nationalist and secularist CHP, at the centre of the Nation Alliance with the İyi Parti (an anti-Erdoğan split from the far-right MHP, the AKP's coalition partners) and some other smaller parties. Turkey has a runoff system for the presidency, so in the second round Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu competed for the votes of the far-right anti-immigrant candidate who was eliminated in the first round, Sinan Oğan of the Ancestral Alliance.

Kılıçdaroğlu pivoted hard towards those voters, promising to expel all Syrian refugees from Turkey, accusing Erdoğan of not protecting "the borders and honour of the country," and appearing on billboards with the slogan "Syrians will go".

Kılıçdaroğlu failed to win Oğan's backing, but he was endorsed by Oğan's junior partner in the Ancestral Alliance, Ümit Özdağ of the Victory Party. Özdağ has promoted the idea that Syrian refugees are part of a concerted plot by the imperialist powers to wage demographic war on Turkey (similar to the white-nationalist theory of the "Great Replacement"), and proposed an "Anatolian Fortress" security regime on the border with Arab countries, consisting of an increased military presence and anti-personnel mines.



Days before the second vote, Kılıçdaroğlu and Özdağ signed a joint pledge to repatriate all refugees and undocumented migrants to their home countries within one year (the Victory Party's flagship policy, though scarcely possible). Additionally, they pledged to continue the AKP policy of removing local elected politicians with links to "terrorism" and replacing them with state officials, which has been used to remove from office almost 90% of local politicians from the leftish pro-Kurdish-rights party HDP. After the election, Kılıçdaroğlu admitted he had made additional commitments to Özdağ, including promising the Interior Ministry and the leadership of MIT (the intelligence services) to Victory Party appointees.

Shift

Özdağ lost his parliamentary seat in the election, but he has succeeded in shifting Turkish political discourse on immigrants. As with Nigel Farage in the UK, he has made his political impact without getting the personal power he aimed for.

During the campaign, Erdoğan condemned Kılıçdaroğlu's attacks on Syrians as "inhuman and immoral, and more importantly un-Islamic", emphasising that some Syrian refugees are doctors and engineers. He contrasted the CHP approach with his own policy of gradual and "voluntary" repatriation, and the 100,000 houses that Turkey has built in occupied northeastern Syria.

Attacks on the AKP for supposedly

being too soft on refugees are commonplace in Turkey, even from those who purport to be left-wing critics of the party. In the first half of the 2010s, the government was attacked by secularists and nationalists for its rapprochement with Turkey's Kurds and for allowing millions of Syrian refugees into the country. Many progressives in Turkey have long associated Syrians with backwardness and Islamisation, and have no compunction about referring to the "Arab invasion".

In fact under Erdoğan many of the repatriations have been far from voluntary, with refugees rounded up on buses and ferried over the border. There has been a concerted effort to resettle Syrian Arabs in Kurdish areas as a form of demographic engineering, and the house-building project largely functioned as a boon to the notoriously corrupt Turkish construction sector.

Tens of thousands of Syrians are under immediate threat of deportation; they have been used as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the EU; the Turkish army along with its allied Islamist militias have carried out wanton murder, looting, and ethnic cleansing in occupied Northeastern Syria; the AKP economic model based on cheap manufacture for export relies on low-paid workers in unsafe conditions, many of whom are Syrians.

Kılıçdaroğlu presented himself as harsher on refugees than he would have been able to be, and Erdoğan has presented himself as a friend to them when he has in fact brutalised and exploited them. The rank-and-file workers' organisation [UID-DER](https://www.uid-der.org) (Association of International Workers Solidarity) has called for the Turkish state to grant Syrians in Turkey official refugee status immediately, and for Turkish workers to reject racist fearmongering that seeks to divide them from migrant workers, their class brothers. □

Australia's Voice To Parliament vote

By Janet Burstall

A referendum to "recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSIL) Voice" in the Australian Constitution will be held on 14 October.

Prior to January 1788, about 750,000 people in more than 500 First Nations groups lived on the continent. Then an invasion began, with soldiers, convicts, and settlers bringing disease, and driving First Na-

tions people off their ancestral lands, which had sustained their bodies, culture and spirits for over 60,000 years.

First Nations people never ceded their sovereignty. They resisted dispossession, massacres, separation of children from families, genocidal assimilationist policies, imprisonment on reservations, incarceration, racism, and all the consequences of poverty that capitalism brought.

Fast forward. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was

issued in 2017 after a series of indigenous regional Dialogues with the purpose of reaching "an agreement on how to formally 'recognise' First Nations people in the Constitution." The Uluru statement went further, calling for Voice, Truth, Treaty.

The Voice is to be made up of representatives of indigenous communities around the country, and to advise government "on matters relating to ATSIL peoples."

The Liberal and National

Parties in Opposition and the Murdoch and other right-wing media are spreading racist fears for a No vote. The Blak Sovereign Movement advocates a "radical No". They do not want to be in the colonisers' Constitution, and say the Voice is another assimilationist policy.

Over 80% of First Nations people support The Voice, and it is their organisations and leaders who devised it. The Australian Labor Party, the unions, and the majority of la-

bour movement linked groups are for Yes. Over 30,000 people have volunteered for the Yes23 campaign.

If No wins, it will be a brutal racist setback.

A Yes vote and a Voice will not solve all the problems of dispossession, but it is a democratic reform. There will be a First Nations forum for deliberation that will be heard by the whole country. "Yes" will also be a national gesture of inclusion and rejection of racism. □

Covid: isolation pay, ventilation, PPE, testing still needed!



By a health worker

Under the guise of “Living with Covid”, and at a time when a new variant (how consequential, no-one knows) is spreading, NHS England has watered down its already inadequate infection prevention and control (IPC) advice.

This puts both NHS workers and patients at unnecessary risk of harm and undermines the public health effort. Far from learning the lessons of the pandemic, NHS managers are reverting to the pre-Covid status quo.

For the first few years of the pandemic, NHS England advised that Trusts should ensure that all workers, including bank and subcontracted workers, could isolate on full pay. This was a tacit admission that decades of casualisation and outsourcing had created an infection control risk from sick workers who could not afford to isolate.

During the pandemic full isolation pay was usually not in fact made available for these workers. The advice has now been quietly dropped.

The task of keeping infectious NHS workers out of NHS hospitals is made more difficult by new guidance that advises against all staff testing. Even workers who are in regular contact with infectious patients and those with active symptoms are discouraged from testing. The advice is that any worker with symptoms should take five days

off and then return to work if they feel better.

Covid-19 is an airborne pathogen requiring airborne precautions. Airborne pathogens remain suspended in the air and require good ventilation and tight fitting respirator masks as PPE, not just the (cheaper) loose-fitting masks which will serve for droplet transmission. If you navigate your way through footnotes and appendices you can just about work out that the NHS England think Covid is airborne. But this does not translate into clear guidance for airborne precautions, which NHS England leave as a matter of individual choice.

In the NHS and in social care, this means that many staff caring for confirmed Covid-19 patients are still wearing only loose-fitting surgical masks. No work has been done to upgrade our inadequate ventilation systems or even invest in cheap air-cleaning units.

Throughout, the guidance has been written by work-from-home bosses and reflects their anxieties and priorities. For the first few years of the pandemic, NHS workers who cared for Covid-19 patients got no more protection than an office worker sat at their desk. Everyone was considered a potential source of infection, and no distinction was made between the infection risk posed by symptomatic and asymptomatic carriers. Only workers who were carrying out certain procedures (so-called “AGPs”) were officially sanctioned to wear the tight-fitting respirator masks. It was the procedure, rather than the Covid status of the patient that was the key determinant in PPE selection.

The latest guidance takes the com-

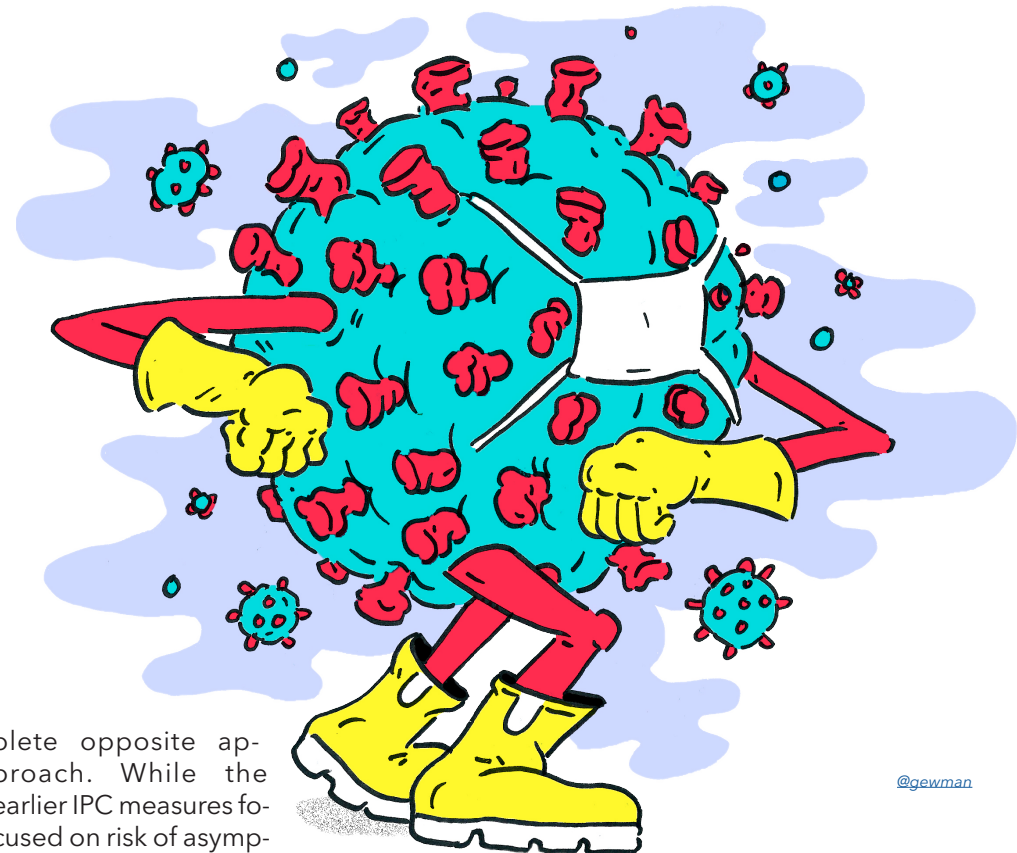
plete opposite approach. While the earlier IPC measures focused on risk of asymptomatic transmission and offered no additional protection for workers caring for Covid patients, the new approach – by discouraging all staff testing – presupposes no risk of asymptomatic transmission at all!

NHS workers can stop their employers implementing this substandard guidance by exercising our rights under Health and Safety law. Covid-19 is still killing people and leaving hundreds of thousands more with debilitating long term health conditions.

Employers have legal duties to minimise risks to our health and safety. NHS workers can use the laws to help win evidence-based infection control

measures such as full sick pay for all, clean air and testing after contact with a Covid-positive individual and when symptomatic.

As we go into this winter, with the many unknowns associated with the Pirola variant, NHS workers have a personal interest in exercising these rights. We also have a broader responsibility to our patients and a public health interest in ensuring the NHS sets the very best infection control. The NHS sets the gold standard for infection control, and our failures are repeated in other workplaces, not least in the social care sector. □



@gewman

Rustin, protest, and politics



Eric Lee's article in *Solidarity* 683 is rather misty eyed about the shift in Bayard Rustin's politics after the March in Washington in 1963.

Rustin's piece for *Commentary* came just before the start of another mass protest movement against the war in Vietnam which would bring millions into the streets. And

Rustin would eventually find himself on the wrong side of that movement.

One of Rustin's first manoeuvres as a political operator rather than as an organiser was to support the compromise of Johnson and Humphrey to seat only two of the Mississippi Freedom Democrat delegates at the 1964 Democratic convention. Rustin said that politics over protest meant compromise, but there can surely be no compromise with segregationists.

By the 1970s Rustin could say, “When we didn't have the ballot box, protest was the logical way. Once you have the ballot box, protest is useless”.

In Israel now the protest movement is clearly a vital part of any socialist agenda for bringing down the Netanyahu government. That movement doesn't have to end in order for the left to make new electoral efforts. □

Simon Nelson,
Southwark

Terfs, transphobes, and descriptors



Fionn Riley's article in *Solidarity* 683 introduced some views into the coverage of Sarah Jane Baker's case which I think require some clarification.

Sarah Jane's speech called for hypothetical violence against “terfs” but in Fionn's piece that is taken to mean women. It is inaccurate to suggest that this was a generalised call for violence against women. Legally it was not an actual call for violence against

anyone, as recognised by the court.

The problem with “terf” as a phrase is that most transphobes are not radical feminists, not that it has become a catch-all term for women. *Solidarity's* writers have generally avoided the term “terf”. I think that is sensible. A better descriptor is anti-trans activist.

Regrettably a lot of the discussion between pro and anti trans activists is online where Terf is a catch-all term for transphobes. The majority of transphobes or “terfs” in these scenarios are men. □

Keith Road, south London

Sheffield uni strike from 18 September

By Neil Laker

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at the University of Sheffield will take local industrial action for two weeks from 18 September, spanning the “Welcome Week” for fresher students and the first week of teaching.

The strike is in response to a particularly tough stance on the Marking and Assessment Boycott that was in place from April until recently, which resulted

in many striking markers losing their full pay for three weeks or more, and likewise for anyone who would not take on the refused marking, even if that was well above their normal workload.

UCU is demanding that members are returned this money. We want to be in position to take effective action through tactics such as the MAB in the struggles ahead. To do that, we need to make it clear that punitive measures on “partial performance” are not acceptable.

The local action is disconnected from

the national UCU strikes taking place in the week of 25 September, and for this reason there is some belief in the local branch that we might win on a simple concession. However Sheffield University management have so far been obstinate – offering nothing in negotiations to now, seemingly keener to undermine the union than to ensure that new students are able to start in the way all staff would like to deliver for them.

There are also growing doubts with

the effectiveness of the overall campaign due to how the dispute has been run at a national level by General Secretary Jo Grady. This is partly understandable and can only be remedied in the medium term by the resurgence of member-led actions and democratic initiatives across the UCU.

But in the immediate dispute – at Sheffield University as at nearby Halam, who will strike for eight days in a local dispute of their own from the 20th – we can win. □

Bristol campaign for buses

By Zack Muddle

On Saturday 9 September 150 people marched in Bristol to demand “Free and Fair buses” and “public control” from the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). Organised by Bristol XR Youth, the demo protested unreliable services, with regular delays and cancellations; the axing of dozens of routes which has left many without public transport; and high fares.

On Friday 8th, a dozen young people occupied WE-

CA’s offices around lunchtime, with another dozen supporting from outside. They were evicted late that night.

The demand is for free buses for under-25s, students, and apprentices. “Fairer” through reversing cuts to routes, improving services and working conditions. The demanded “public control” is actually only a step in that direction: “franchising” whereby local government decides routes, timetables, and fares, but private companies would



compete to meet them.

This limited demand seems motivated by more than alliteration. Some try to justify only partial public

ownership in terms of political realism.

Better and cheaper public transport is desperately needed for any ecological transition. This campaign has linked up with and catalysed wider campaigns over the buses – it is a longstanding issue which requires persistent campaigning.

The campaign must now do the harder work of building substantive links to bus workers – who hold power needed to force change. □



More online

Protest the barge

For migrants’ rights: bit.ly/p-barge

Expropriate housing

The Berlin campaign: bit.ly/berlin-h

John Keenan vs Pinochet

Boycott leader dies: bit.ly/john-74

Unite and Ukraine

Not good enough: bit.ly/unite-pc

Moody on US politics

Book review: bit.ly/k-moody

Glasgow care strike

The fight continues: bit.ly/s-care

Arms workers’ pay gap

Two week strike: bit.ly/b-munitions

Glasgow FE strike

Stop the cuts: bit.ly/glasgow-fe □

Scottish council workers to strike over pay

By Dale Street

Glasgow City Council workers are one of the council workforces due to strike on 26-28 September.

21,000 Unison members working in 24 of Scotland’s 32 local authorities are due to strike. GMB members will strike in ten local authorities; Unite members in eleven. Ballots in other local authorities had a majority for strikes, but not 50% turnout.

GMB members had been due to strike in mid-September, having been balloted earlier, but postponed so as to strike alongside other unions.

The demand is a pay rise for all council staff, but action specifically targets schools and early years centres.

Unison members to strike are cleaners, kitchen staff, admin workers and school support staff. GMB and Unite: cleaners, caterers and janitors.

The strike could lead to three out of four primary and secondary schools in Scotland being closed for the two days.

The unions have rejected a 5.5% offer. They are demanding a 12% pay rise, with a floor of £15 an hour.

Union publicity simply says “an im-

proved pay offer”. “We remain committed to engaging in negotiations with Cosla and the Scottish government at any point to try to resolve this dispute,” says Unison, and the GMB says: “Strikes are not yet inevitable but Cosla is running out of time to avert industrial action.”

They probably hope for an extra tranche of Scottish Government fund-

ing for local authorities. So far, the Scottish Government has refused to budge. But it may do, especially with a crucial Westminster by-election taking place just a week after the scheduled strike dates.

The three unions should put their actual pay demand centre-stage in their publicity and mobilise support for the strike on that basis. □

Fight needed on Elizabeth Line pay



Off The Rails

By an Elizabeth Line worker

Pay negotiations for 2023-4 drag on the Elizabeth Line. Customer service grades overwhelmingly rejected the current offer of a 5% pay rise, plus some tweaks to annual leave entitlement and a non-consolidated bonus for the CEA grade.

RMT gave no recommendation in this referendum. However when the same offer was put to control grades, they were recommended to accept. In the union’s eyes, this was the best offer they were likely to receive through negotiation.

To read such defeatism from one’s own union is shocking. On paper the union should reject any below-inflation pay offer. And the fact the union has no intention to escalate action is galling.

Control grade salaries are typically

in the mid-40s, so clearly 5% to them is worth more than to CEAs. Though there is little direct interaction between the control centre and the “frontline”, a division of the workforce is never a good thing. If control grades accept this offer, the company can use it against the rest of the workforce.

The plea from management is their hands are tied on the pay offer, with restrictions imposed by the parent company and Transport for London (TfL). But if we don’t fight then we’ll never know where it could get us. □



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- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
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- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
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- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
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If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! □

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

Wind-chill out on the track



Diary of a trackworker

By Matt Shaw

As always with this country, the weather is at the front of most people's chit-chat. When you work outside then it becomes a way of life. Even before your tea has hit the back of your throat, it's "what's the weather for today, then?", especially in winter.

The temperature may be a balmy 8 or 9 degrees in the city, but on top of an embankment with the wind rushing

over flat fields or open water, you soon get very sharp meaning for the phrase "wind chill". Some days you have literally taken two steps outside the van or cabin, and any residual warmth you've had disappears tout sweet.

I and others have cried with the cold on our fingers when handling concrete troughs that have been out all night and are freezing to the touch, or working with cable cores which are fiddly at the best of times but even more so when your hands are shaking.

Trying to keep warm was always on our minds and occasionally, we would start a fire and gather round for a while. At the end of the day, we put it out and

set off home. One time, however, it didn't go according to plan.

The road we left on doubled back on itself and overlooked our site of work. As we came round the corner most of the banking seemed to be alight and in the middle of that was the new cable which we had just run out. We leapt out, ran across the field and hastily divided in two groups, one to dig a fire-break and the others to hit the bushes with shovels until between, us we got it extinguished with little or no damage to the cables.

After that, everybody was a bit more circumspect in making sure the fire was properly out. □

Boycott off, new uni strikes planned

By a UCU member

The Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) in UK universities has been called off after an e-ballot of UCU members in which 60% voted to suspend the action.

With 27% of eligible members voting, the turnout was considerably lower than in postal ballots in which members and branches are given an opportunity to discuss the issues or campaign for a particular outcome.

Also, according to the UCU Left, 62.7% of those members voting who were actually participating in the MAB voted to continue the action.

At its last meeting the Higher Education Committee voted to stand by the outcome of the e-ballot but also to call

a further five days of strike action before 30 September, when the current mandate for industrial action runs out. So far there has been no information from the union's officers on when a re-ballot will commence.

This, despite clear policy from the union's May conference that it should have been called over the summer, and a Branch Delegate Meeting in August agreeing it should be called as soon as reasonably possible.

Five days

The five days' strike action would have made more sense if the reballot was already in train, as preparation for further action. As it is these strike days, although they were the only course the Higher Education Committee could

propose in the circumstances, will not be followed by further action soon.

The situation leaves members who have suffered punitive wage deductions for participating in the MAB in a vulnerable position; they will have to pursue local disputes to win back pay. Some (at the Sheffield Universities for example) will be taking local strike action alongside national action.

Many members are saying the way the Grady leadership has run this dispute has been run is a shambles; they have been outpaced by intransigent employers. The union has gained concessions on pensions but little else.

However the vote in the e-ballot over MAB is not necessarily representative of members' willingness to fight on in the dispute; whatever they think about the MAB they will be reluctant to throw in the towel when there is so much still to win.

We need a good turn out in the upcoming national and local strikes so we are in a better place to win in the ballot.

We also need to build solidarity with support staff in Unison striking for better pay on 2 and 3 October in England and other dates in September in Scotland – at 20 institutions in total. □

Fat Man and Little Boy



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

There is much talk at the moment about *Oppenheimer*. Let's rewind some 30 years to a previous film about the Manhattan Project (the development of the atomic bomb): *Fat Man and Little Boy* (Roland Joffe, 1989).

In the 1980s Ronald Reagan was increasing the US nuclear stockpile and the Cold War was at a new height. The film pits a gung-ho military establishment, personified by the Project supremo, the loudmouthed barrel-of-lard "Fat Man", General Leslie Groves (Paul Newman minus the girth) against the skinny, "head-in-the-clouds" intellectual, "Little Boy", J. Robert Oppenheimer (Dwight Schultz).

Those were the names given to the bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima respectively, thus the rather



clunky double-entendre.

Groves constantly bullies Oppenheimer, even threatening to expose his one-time lover Jean Tatlock as a member of the US Communist Party. Oppenheimer is portrayed as reluctant, working on the bomb despite severe reservations.

This is something of a travesty. The US military were all for the bomb, mainly because it gave them the edge over the Soviet Union, but most of the scientists involved were equally enthusiastic. *Fat Man and Little Boy* absolves the scientists of guilt and responsibility for this terrible weapon but the reality was more complex. □

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Unite strikes for NHS pay and staffing

By a Unite member

Thousands of NHS workers across East London struck for pay and safer staffing on 13-14 September. The Barts Unite branch has further dates from 16-21 September, coinciding with national walkouts of junior doctors and consultants. On both 13 and 14 September lively rallies made the explicit links between our industrial demands and the fight to save the NHS.

The Unite union has a patchy membership across the NHS. It has patchy areas of density for historic reason, either because of past campaigns or because of the way the Unite union formed through mergers with smaller unions and professional associations. Outside those areas of density, Unite branches are picking up individuals from across



the service who are disgruntled with the capitulation of the Unison and RCN leaderships earlier this year. To a large extent, 13-14 September was a strike of scattered individuals. Turning those minority strikes of ones and twos scattered across workplaces into bigger walk outs and spreading the strike movement to other Trusts will be key to success.

The strikes are aimed both at the government and at local management.

After 13 years of Tory underfunding, the NHS is now broken and needs to be restored with considerable investment in the workforce and our buildings. The BMA-led campaign for the restoration of the NHS is now being joined by a number of local disputes. Midwifery support workers organised by GMB struck in Bristol last week. Mental health social workers organised by Barnet Unison are preparing for an escalating programme of strikes in late September.

Those local disputes should seek to coordinate with the national walkouts from the BMA, BDA and Society of Radiographers. The next opportunity to do this is during Tory party conference: the BMA has planned a coordinated strike of both consultants and junior

doctors.

On a local level, a number of measures within the gift of Trust management could immediately ease staffing pressures. These include overtime payments, better treatment of bank staff (including the £1,600-£2,200 Covid lump sum payment), and an effective means to prevent shifts with only one qualified nurse.

Whilst maintaining a regular pulse of strikes alongside the doctors and other groups of workers, Unite activists have an opportunity to build union density and effective campaigns for safe staffing. This element of the dispute is something that can be developed following the model of the Berlin Hospital Workers movement. □

Camden strikers debate offer

By a Unison member

As *Solidarity* goes to press on 20 September, Camden's traffic wardens are debating a potential resolution to their powerful indefinite strike for a pay rise.

On 11 September they marked their 50th day of striking with a lively protest outside one of their workplaces in Kings Cross. Messages of solidarity came from reps among the council's in-house workers, other Unison and NEU branches, and the local Trades Council. The latter's speaker made an important appeal for Labour members to take the cause to local party branches and put pressure on the Labour-run council, which out-

sources the service to private company NSL.

Pickets shared their tough working conditions with *Solidarity*. They spoke of assaults and abuse – often racist – from members of the public, and inadequate support for their wellbeing during extreme heat and cold. Meanwhile, one steward explained how if workers had more democratic control over the service, they could prioritise pedestrian and road safety over generating profits.

Shortly after this milestone, the employer made an improved offer. While it wasn't judged sufficient to accept, it was substantial enough to re-enter negotiations, which took place at ACAS on Friday.

The workers will meet during the week of 18 September to discuss the resulting proposal, then vote.

Details of the offer won't be available until the workers have deliberated and voted among themselves. But it's right that the strike continues during deliberation and voting, maintaining momentum and pressure on the employer. It's also positive that a meeting of all members will enable the workers to discuss the offer collectively before they vote. These approaches contrast with more conservative and top-down practices that are all too common right now.

Pickets spoke to *Solidarity* on Friday 15 September while their reps were in the talks.

One member, J, told us that the company would likely need to give more in the talks before a majority would accept. "We know that they have got the money," he said, thanks to revelations about their big profits and directors' salaries.

Since the wardens have rejected previous lower offers, the increase on the table must be substantial, likely surpassing most recent public sector deals. The wardens are demonstrating the impact of all-out action, setting an example for the wider labour movement.

Should they decide the offer falls short and continue striking, it's important we redouble our solidarity. □



Strikes called for Tory conference

By Jay Dawkey

Aslef has called further strikes on Train Operating Companies (TOCs) on 30 September, and 4 October with a further overtime ban on 29 September and again on 2-6 October. As yet RMT has not announced any new strikes.

While hitting the first and last days of the Tory party conference will generate some headlines, with no real movement from the government or the RDG this cannot be a strategy to win. The rail unions, off the back of a successful public facing campaign about ticket office closures, should use that momentum to escalate the dispute.

Off the Rails has previously said, "that sporadic strikes of 24 or 48 hours will not be sufficient to win. We still believe

that a significant escalation, involving sustained strikes announced as part of an ongoing calendar of action, are necessary. Union officials have rightly called attention to the fact that the Tories are subsidising the TOCs to ensure their profits aren't impacted by lost revenue on strike days, but the wider economic disruption caused by shutting down, or severely restricting, the country's rail network means we still have enormous leverage.

"Our union leaders seem to be basing their strategy on two assumptions. One, that members aren't prepared to strike for more than a day or two at a time, every month or so. And two, that we can win the dispute by attrition, by grinding the employer down over the course of a "long-haul" dispute. There is no evi-

dence whatsoever to support the latter belief. In fact, we have over 12 months of evidence that it's not true; we've pursued that strategy more or less since the dispute began, and we haven't won.

"So what's the first step? RMT and Aslef branches must discuss what they think a winning strategy looks like. Off the Rails has previously suggested a month of consecutive Saturday strikes bookended by staggered strikes of at least three days (Monday-Wednesday-Thursday).

"A sustained campaign of pressure from branches could show the union Executives that there is a real will at the grassroots to intensify the action. Reps' assemblies could also be called to further deliberate on strategy". □

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Health workers strike for re-banding

By Jayne Evans

Clinical support workers in Unison at Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge hospitals on the Wirral struck for another 72 hours on 11-13 September, with a claim for re-banding back pay.

A number of trusts including Manchester University Foundation, Pennine Care and Stockport NHS Foundation, have re-banded their Cases and Health Care Assistants from Band 2 to 3 and paid back pay to 1 April 2018. This dispute is to win the same for workers on the Wirral.

Strikes this week have been well supported and the picket line has been lively. More strike days are planned. Organisers

are making sure the workers are involved in the negotiations. Workers have gone to negotiating meetings, much to the annoyance of management, and decisions on the conduct of the dispute have been taken at member meetings.

Disputes like this show that health workers are underpaid, but also that workloads have increased and the work has become more complex.

During this dispute more people have joined the union and already the discussions on the picket line are turning to next year's pay claim. Activists will demand all the health un-

ions call for pay restoration and call for joint action locally and nationally.

Unison health conference this year voted to withdraw from the official Pay Review Body and instead seek direct negotiations with the government. The unions need to decide on deadlines for when negotiations and ballots should begin as well as the pay demand itself – and soon, so we can begin to campaign. □



Doctors step up pay action

By Sacha Ismail

On 20 September, junior doctors and consultants will strike together for the first time in the history of the NHS, in a significant escalation of their pay disputes.

NHS consultants strike 19-20 September; junior doctors 20-22 September; and consultants and junior doctors together 2-4 October, plus radiographers on 3 October. (For picket lines: bit.ly/sm-pl). The British Medical Association has also called a [rally](#) in Manchester on 3 October outside Tory party conference.

The government continues to say the doctors' demand for "pay restoration" – an above-inflation pay rise this year, and a timetable to reverse real-terms pay cuts since 2008 – is unaffordable. It has written off [£15 billion](#) for various forms of fraud by companies contracted to provide PPE and other supplies during the pandemic – many times what it would take to meet the doctors' demands. Junior doctors have taken 17 days of strikes since March. Junior doctor activists have fought hard to get their union in motion, to win



it to "pay restoration", and to popularise the demand more widely. To win they need a still higher level of action, and greater support and solidarity.

There are discussions in the BMA about an intervention at Labour Party conference (8-11 October, Liverpool). Labour has refused to back the doctors, and an effective campaign for its union affiliates and members to exert pressure is much needed. □

MARION LLOYD FOR GENERAL SECRETARY
JOHN MOLONEY FOR AGS

The Broad Left Network is
standing on a joint ticket
with the Independent Left

#ACTION
NOTWORDS



PCS: nominate Lloyd and Moloney!

By a PCS member

Many firebrands who have no political foundations drift or accelerate to the right as they get older or get power. Such is the case with Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS civil service union.

When young, he genuinely was a militant, leading strikes. He was an inspiring speaker and a good organiser. That said, he never had a solid political foundation in Marxism or even social democracy or any other form of organised socialist thought.

Our predecessor, Socialist Organiser, supported him in his bid to become the General Secretary. It was a breakthrough that a rank-and-file activist got the top job. Very rapidly though, he abandoned the people who had got him elected and instead embedded himself into the then Broad Left (now Left Unity), the dominant grouping inside the union.

In his 23 years of being General Secretary, he has consistently opposed full-time officials being elected and there being a closer link between the pay of full-time officials and that of members. In his time the union has gone from a peak of over 320,000 members to now under 200,000. In many areas the union now has densities of 50% or less. Certainly in practice the PCS is a typical top-down-led, middle-of-the-road TUC union; occasional bursts of left wing rhetoric cannot disguise that.

It is no surprise that as Mark Serwotka gets closer to his announced retirement date of 31 January 2024 he has started to attack the left in the PCS. This is partly to boost the campaign of the candidate he wants to see replace him, partly because the left in the union irks him as they dare to show to him, and the wider union world, that

the emperor has no socialist clothes. You can find the latest attacks in [Tribune](#) and the [Morning Star](#).

Leaving aside the multiple inaccuracies in both articles, here we want to concentrate on his claim that his opponents are sectarians. There is undoubtedly sectarianism on the left. However, to characterise as sectarianism differences of opinion concerning strike tactics, or as to the evaluation of a sub-inflation pay award, or on where next over pay, is to misuse that term.

In fact Mark Serwotka's remarks are identical to those made by right wing General Secretaries over the years. The claim that the left was "out of touch" was regularly aimed at him and others when he was an activist.

He now claims that to disagree with him is equivalent to people "putting the interests" of their left-wing organisation before those of the members. For Mr Serwotka the notion that you might have principles that you articulate seems alien.

The irony is that when he was an activist and a member of a small left wing organisation, conferences were very fractious, not only because there was a vicious, active and organised right but also because there were differing left approaches to the industrial issues of the day. The fractiousness was a sign of life in the union – a life now largely missing in PCS.

Because they recognise the problems with the union, and agree that by mobilising activists and members those can be solved, we are supporting Marion Lloyd and John Moloney for General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary respectively. The nominating period for those positions has started (closes 16 October) and we urge PCS members to nominate them. The vote will be 9 Nov to 14 Dec. □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

AUTOWORKERS STAND UP STRIKES AT THE BIG THREE

By Lewis Joyes

United Auto Workers union members at three production plants in the USA walked out on Friday 15 September following the expiration of a national contract with General Motors (GM), Stellantis (formerly Chrysler), and Ford (collectively, the Big Three).

This is the first time the union has ever struck at all three companies simultaneously. Strikes in Missouri, Michigan and Ohio saw just 13,000 of the unions near-150,000 members at the Big Three walk out at midnight. The union leadership strategy is one of escalating action, that threatens to bring more shops out one-by-one for as long as it takes to win.

The union is calling the action the "stand up strikes", playing on the name of the 1936-37 Flint Michigan "sit down strikes" that birthed the union during the depression era. A much larger number of plants were put on standby notice that they may be called on to strike, and with just a few hours notice, told if they were go/no-go. This resulted in the three Toledo (Missouri; Stellantis) St Louis (Ohio; GM) and Detroit (Michigan, Ford) plant strikes.

It is unclear publicly when the



union will bring in more plants, but assuming the Big Three management doesn't buckle soon, we should expect many more, very soon. Importantly, to sustain striking workers, the union is providing \$500/week strike pay, paid from the union's \$800 million strike fund.

The plants that walked out fully shut down production. And even plants where strikes weren't called were disrupted. In a panicked scramble to keep up production, management ordered parts to be shipped between production lines, only to find on Friday morning that they'd wasted their time when workers showed up for their shifts.

Whilst the tactic is less powerful than actually halting vehicle manufacturing and places less control over the dispute in the hands of workers, it's a tactic

that in the escalation stages of a dispute will hit company profits hard (and has provided workers with some humour, seeing their bosses in a frenzy).

The union has a raft of demands, mostly centred on economic matters, such as ending the tiered wage system, a 40% raise, cost-of-living raises pegged to inflation, a shorter working week, a faster track to offer temporary employees permanent positions (within 90 days), and more. In the first half of 2023 alone, Big Three profits were \$20 billion, sums that can easily afford all the UAW demands.

Solidarity with every UAW member fighting for new, decent contracts, and with the union for opening up the possibility for resurgence in union militancy in the manufacturing industry! □

The ideas that Starmer wants to ban