

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

FOR LABOUR AGAINST STARMER



Organise Left in the Labour Movement

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Vote Labour but fight for a workers' government



We want the Tories out, a Labour government – and a labour movement mobilised to impose our demands on the Labour leaders.

That mobilisation – by strikes, demonstrations, and use of the political say that unions have in Labour conferences and committees – will help revitalise the labour movement. We aim to make the movement capable of winning a workers' government, a government accountable to the labour movement and acting decisively for working-class interests against capital.

Dismal

The official Labour election campaign has been dismal. Activists are dejected. Many had already dispersed. Many of the now-gone "Corbynites" had already scattered once in the 1980s, and now they look unlikely to "return" again



after dispersing again at age 60 or so.

The Labour right wing doesn't mind. It rejoices. It thinks that social media, mailings, and TV appearances alone can win the election, and that's enough.

But think a few steps ahead. Look at the collapse of the Labour Party base during the Blair-Brown governments, of the Socialist Party base in France during the Hollande government, or of the Workers' Party base in Brazil when it governed from 2003-15 (despite the Workers' Party government, unlike Blair or Hollande, introducing serious

reforms).

Since the class-struggle left was too weak and diffuse to rally the dispersing base – with a very partial exception for PSOL in Brazil – the collapse paved the way for Tory austerity and Brexit, for Bolsonaro,

and for the RN in France.

If a dispersed left spends itself on trying to elect right-wing demagogues, packaged as "pro-Gaza", like George Galloway or Akhmed Yakoob, then the anger sure to come against Starmer and Reeves being "pro-business" in office is likely to dispel into passive resentment, or move to "the real thing" of right-wing politics, with Reform UK or similar.

Remember UKIP, a forerunner of Reform UK, got 12.6% of the vote in the 2015 general election, 27.5% in the

2014 Euro-election, and 15.6% in 2004. It faded only when Labour moved left with Jeremy Corbyn.

The left-wing "independents" in this election, like Jeremy Corbyn, are better than the Galloway types. But many on the left, like the *Morning Star* and the Socialist Party, are backing both indifferently. And electing this or that congenial "independent" (unaccountable) individual on a vague platform to a few more years in Parliament will not build a movement.

Rebuild NHS

Vote Labour, but fight for a workers' government and for immediate demands including:

- Tax the millionaires and billionaires
- Rebuild the NHS and public services
- Scrap all anti-strike laws
- Build council houses
- Reverse Brexit
- Socialise energy and push through green conversion. □

Housing and the socialist future



Socialism vs Capitalism

By Martin Thomas

Frederick Engels was the first to investigate and denounce the squalid housing of the working class in early-fac-

tory-industry capitalism. His 1844 *Condition of the Working Class in England* had much more about housing conditions than conditions inside the workplaces.

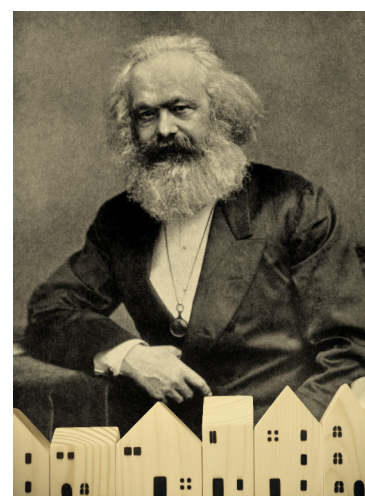
Scorning a special "housing policy" fix, he argued for the working class to take control of the means of production and quell the exploit-for-profit

drive. In an 1872 pamphlet, *The Housing Question*, he was equally brisk: "There is already a sufficient quantity of houses in the big cities to remedy immediately all housing shortage... through the expropriation of the present owners by quartering in their houses homeless workers or workers overcrowded in their present homes".

Mostly *The Housing Question* dissected the "Proudhonist" (early anarchist) scheme to "solve the housing question" by market quick-fix – bringing all working-class households to own their own houses by making what had been rent payments into purchase instalments.

If this had any practical effect, it would be to push some workers out of big-city life, where they organised and discussed, back into isolated domestic industry, or to tie them (until purchase payments were complete) to employers who built housing near their workplaces.

For venturesome young workers it would be no use. A worker with employers who fail, with strikes not always victorious, and with a look-out for better jobs, would end up owning a tiny fraction of a house in Berlin, another fraction in Hamburg, another in Hanover, another in Munich...



Proudhon, as Marx had put it earlier, sang "the glories of the lower middle class and of the miserable patriarchal amorous illusions of the domestic hearth". His vision was also one of subordination of women, children, and young people to "heads of household".

Engels argued, by contrast: "With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private house-keeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all children alike".

Engels was adapting ideas from earlier socialists, which he endorsed:

"The population should be scattered through the country in groups of 1,600 to 3,000

persons; each group... to occupy a gigantic palace, with a household run on communal lines, in the centre of their area of land".

Engels and Marx gave no time to speculating what might become possible if capitalism survived longer than they thought, and developed technologies beyond their imagination.

By now, the early 19th century idea of socialism as a world of small half-agricultural settlements has become untenable.

For ecological, cultural, and economic reasons, concentration of the population in big cities, with a sharp divide between dense cities and extensively-reforested countryside, is desirable.

From after World War One, technologies – electricity, fridges, washing machines – have enabled a warped sort of "socialisation" of housework. And the labour movement has been able to win advances in public health (sewage, clean running water) and in "housing policy" – council housing, and even, occasionally and in some places, council housing with good built-in social amenities and children's daycare centres.

A socialised, cooperative vision, not an atomised one, remains valid. □

Challenge Labour on housing

The number of people sleeping rough in England has increased at least 120% since 2010 when the data started being collected – up 120%.

Over 100,000 households are "statutorily" (i.e. legally recognised as) homeless and in temporary accommodation. It is a record high, as is the number of children homeless, 140,000.

Some 8% of households who rent from councils or housing associations are officially "overcrowded" (according to a standard set in 1935). That's up from 5% in 1995-6. Private renter overcrowding has gone up from 3% to 6%. Meanwhile about a million

dwellings are empty or being used as second houses.

On an official [estimate](#), two million people in England are in damp or mouldy housing.

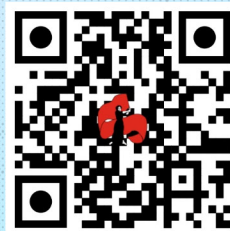
Demands

The Labour Campaign for Council Housing has made a [call](#) to Labour parliamentary candidates to support:

- The building or buying-up of 100,000 social rent council homes a year
- Ending "Right to Buy" (subsidised selling-off of council homes)
- Secure tenancies for all council tenants
- Retrofitting and decarbonisation of council housing
- Stop above-inflation rent increases. □

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

20-21
JULY
2024



A weekend of socialist discussion, debate, and education hosted by Workers' Liberty: bit.ly/ideas24

Why we say “two states”

By Ira Berkovic

Two national communities, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, inhabit the territory of Israel-Palestine. The immediate source of the conflict between them is that the state based one of those peoples suppresses the national rights of the other, via a 57-year-long military occupation of the West Bank, blockade and sieges of Gaza, and discrimination against the 20% Palestinian minority inside Israel. Those who believe in equality and democracy must support a settlement guaranteeing equal rights to both nations.

The implied first step for that is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, alongside and with the same rights as Israel, in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, with full civil and national equality for Palestinians inside Israel.

Workers' Liberty is internationalist. We are generally hostile to nationalism, and see appeals to national unity, even amongst oppressed peoples, as inimical to class politics. In general, we favour fewer borders rather than more. Ultimately, we aim for a future beyond both “two states” or “one state”: a federal republic across the wider region, which is majority-Arab but includes many other national groups, including Kurds, Israeli Jews, and others.

But there is no likely way to get to such a future from today's scenario in



a single leap. Neither Palestinians nor Israeli Jews are likely to voluntarily dissolve their distinct national claims into a unitary state or multinational federation without a period in which both peoples feel their right to self-determination is secure and mutually-acknowledged. We admire the struggle of binational movements in Israeli-Palestinian civil society such as A Land for All, which sees two states as a step towards confederation, rather than a “separation” with the two nations living in walled-off enclaves. But winning a sovereign, independent state of Palestine alongside Israel is a necessary prerequisite to any kind of binational confederation.

Some on the left argue two states, or any formulation acknowledging Israeli Jewish national rights, is an unacceptable compromise with the historic misdeeds of the Israeli state, including the dispossession of Palestinians that took place in the process of its foundation. But many processes of national and state formation throughout history have involved similar injustices and brutalities.

The Israeli Jews are not a narrow layer like the white South Africans, a 13% minority when apartheid fell, exploiting the labour of an indigenous majority. Nor are they a colonial bureaucracy like the British in India, administering territorial control on behalf of an imperial metropole. They are a fully class-differentiated populace, of equal size to the Palestinian Arabs. They are today, and have been for generations, a “nation” by any operable definition of the concept. Either the left is for the right of nations to self-determination, or it is not. Such rights cannot be viewed as rewards for a people's good behaviour. They are only meaningful if they are universal.

Workers' Liberty's support for Palestinian rights stems from this universalist belief. We support the struggle for Palestinian self-determination not because

Palestinians are “good” and Israelis are “bad”, or because we see something especially romantic or totemic about Palestine in particular. We support Palestinian rights because we are consistent democrats who believe in universal entitlement to democratic rights. For this same reason, we also acknowledge Israeli Jews' right to self-determination. Hence, we support “two states”.

Others on the left reject two states because they say Israel is unlikely to concede an independent Palestine. But the same trends which make Israel unlikely to concede Palestinian independence make any other democratic solution even more remote. An equalisation of the basic right to national self-determination, up to and including an independent state, remains the

most achievable “next step” towards any confederacy or unity.

Despite low Palestinian confidence in the likelihood of winning an independent state, and despite a majority of Palestinians taking a dim view of “the two state solution”, seen as a failed diplomatic instrument tied to an extinct “peace process”, polling shows that 47% still believe that winning a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem should be the “most vital goal” of Palestinian national struggle – a higher percentage than any other aim.

But it is not, ultimately, the level of support a particular settlement has at a given moment that determines what position democratic internationalists should take. There are principles involved. Only a framework that guarantees both people, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, full equality, including equal national rights, is consistent with a belief in the right to self-determination.

In the words of Palestinian socialist Ayman Odeh, “The truth must be told to the citizens. There are two peoples here, two peoples will remain here, and both have the right of self-determination.” □

UK Friends of Standing Together

Standing Together, Israel's fastest-growing grassroots movement over recent years, unites Jews and Palestinians within Israel to fight for an equal and just society, for peace, and against the occupation.

UKFoST promotes their work in the UK: for peace, justice, and equality for Israelis and Palestinians – Jews and Arabs – including an equal right to self-determination, and for the full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

UKFoST promotes the benefits of joint struggle by Jews and Palestinians to this end. • ukfost.co.uk

• [@omdimbeyachaduk](https://twitter.com/omdimbeyachaduk)



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Sat 29 June: Workers' Liberty will be at London Pride. The parade assembles noon at Hyde Park Corner.

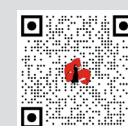
Fri 5 July: Workers' Liberty will be at the “15 years since the Urumchi Massacre” protest, 6pm, Chinese Embassy, 49-51 Portland Pl, London, W1B 1JL

Sat 13 July: Workers' Liberty will be at the [Durham Miners' Gala](https://www.durhamminersgala.co.uk).

At work or on campus

We organise: among health and local government, school and education workers, on the railway and London Underground, in the civil service, on uni campuses, and more. See workersliberty.org/work-unions,

Insta [@workerslibertystudents](https://www.instagram.com/workerslibertystudents), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.



Scan the QR code to see our events & meetings page.

Template motions

Texts: to adapt for union branches and Labour Parties: bit.ly/mo-pe

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs
1 July Sheffield, 4 August London

Campaigns

For: UK Friends of Standing Together, Labour Left Internationalists, Workers Against the CCP, Free Our Unions, Solidarity With Iranian Workers, Neurodivergent Labour, India Labour Solidarity, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, Labour Campaign for Free Movement – contact details, activities, template motions, etc. – see workersliberty.org/agenda. For environmental campaigning, including mobilisation for Reclaim the Power at Drax in August, email awl@workersliberty.org. □



Yakoob and his jokes about domestic violence



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Regular readers may remember this column's [exposure](#) of Akmed Yakoob, the independent candidate standing in Birmingham Ladywood, backed by George Galloway and the *Morning Star*. We noted that Yakoob had used social media to spread a false allegation of racism against an entirely innocent young teacher, resulting in death threats against her (he belatedly retracted the allegation and issued a half-hearted apology).

We also noted that his participation in a misogynistic podcast that was exposed by the website Roll On Friday (ROF: bit.ly/tiktokl). In an episode of the Minted Minds podcast Yakoob appeared with five other men saying disgusting things about women, praising the misogynist Andrew Tate and extolling "the essence of true manhood."

It now turns out that the podcast was even nastier than we reported. The *Guardian* of 20 June has published a transcript of the podcast that we had not located with content edited out of the final cut put out by Minted Minds. Apart from Yakoob, the participants were Shakeel Ahmed, now running as

an independent candidate in Birmingham Hall Green and a leading protester against LGBT teaching in Birmingham schools; Dr Asif Munaf, presently suspended by the General Medical Council over allegedly antisemitic posts on social media; and restaurant owners "Sunny" Sarnwal and "Vic" Mohammad.

Podcast transcript:

Dr Asif Munaf: From a Muslim point of view, Dajjaal [a false messiah who leads people astray] and all this, we know the majority of his followers will be women. If you empower women so much, when they start following him, society will start following him as well.

Akhmed Yakoob: 70% of hell is going to be women.

Speaker off camera: We don't want to get cancelled! [...]

Yakoob: Look, as I said, I've got nothing against women, I love women (men laugh and Sarnwal says: "Yeah, I bet you do"), I love my wife. But everyone has got a role in society, everyone has got a role in the household. In my household, I'm the man, I'm the king. I call the shots, and my Mrs, Alhamdulillah listens to me and is appreciative

Munaf: Because women want men. Women want men.

Yakoob: Women want real men who go out and provide so she can be the queen, and she can look after the children and look after our kids, the house-



hold as well [...]

Yakoob: How much can you lower your gaze? If any one of us was to come with our wife who is tarted up to the nines, it's natural for a male to look at her and think: "She looks all right."

Munaf: And if you don't, you're not a man, you're a eunuch.

Yakoob: It's natural for men to be attracted to females, so keep our queens at home. [...]

Sarnwal: The mothers need to worry about their daughters. Because if she is dressing like a slut, your daughter is going to dress like a slut. The man needs to understand his daughter is going to be the production of his wife. So if he doesn't control his wife, how is he going to make sure his daughter is safe? [...]

Mohammed; [talking about women

making money from TikTok]: Getting back to masculinity, I personally would give her a backhand. I'm not joking.

Afsar: We do not advocate any physical violence against anyone.

Sarnwal: He's right though, what he's saying.

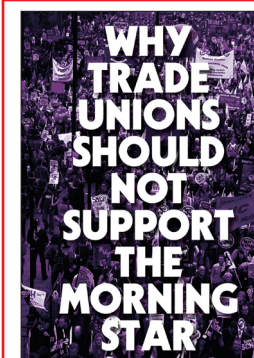
Yakoob: Brother, are you saying if she comes up in your personal space you will defend yourself?

Sarnwal: If she throws a punch, you can defend yourself.

Off camera, one of the men quotes Yakoob's professional tagline: There's a defence for every offence, bro.

The *Morning Star* of 1-2 June carried a fawning little article by former Corbyn adviser and leading member of the Communist Party of Britain, Andrew Murray, giving Yakoob uncritical support.

Will Murray and the *Morning Star* continue to back this unsavoury shyster now the full depth of his misogyny has been exposed? □



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Obvious lies used for Ukraine debate



Eye on the Left

By Darren Bedford

Sharp criticism of one's political opponents, including within one's own movement, is an inevitable, even necessary, aspect of political discourse.

What is neither inevitable nor necessary is telling outright lies about those one disagrees with.

In a leaflet distributed to delegates at the recent conference of the public sector union Unison, a Socialist Workers Party [leaflet](#) described Workers' Liberty, the group which publishes *Solidarity*, as "pro-NATO". No evidence is provided to substantiate this; it is simply asserted.

This is perhaps just as well, as no evidence exists, since Workers' Liberty is not "pro-NATO". A cursory search on our website can find articles such as ["Why we oppose NATO"](#), ["Internationalists must](#)

[oppose NATO"](#), and ["Defend \[within the Labour Party\] the right to criticise NATO"](#).

The latter article states plainly: "NATO remains far from a benign force. It is imperialist. We oppose NATO expansion, call for British withdrawal and advocate the organisation's dissolution."

The SWP's claim is not a serious political critique. It is a verifiable falsehood, a fabricated slander functioning as a substitute for engagement with the substance of an issue.

The same SWP leaflet claims Standing Together, the left-wing Arab-Jewish social movement organising both Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel, is "Zionist". If by "Zionist" the SWP means "accepts the right of Israeli Jews to self-determination in some form", then Standing Together is "Zionist". So, by that definition, is the Palestine Liberation Organisation. So was Mahmoud Darwish. So was Edward Said.

The composite resolution on Palestine at Unison con-



ference, which all SWP-supporting delegates voted for, included a commitment to a two-states settlement in the form of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. By the SWP's presumable definition, this is considerably more "Zionist" than Standing Together's actual position, which says only that both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs should have equal rights, including national rights, without prescribing a constitutional form for realising that.

Here, again, we encounter not a serious critique but political swear words the SWP uses as slurs against opponents to avoid having to engage with their arguments.

Even more risible, but equally mendacious, was the

Morning Star's description, in its coverage of the same conference, of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign as "NATO-backed". Here the "pro-NATO" slur is taken up a notch – again, without a shred of evidence. Anyone who has not entirely surrendered their critical faculties might demand evidence before believing that NATO, the world's most powerful military alliance, chooses to operate via a visibly shoe-string activist network. But the *Morning Star*, the "daily paper of the left", does not stoop to such quibbles. Throw enough shit – "pro-NATO", "Zionist", "NATO-backed" – and enough of it will stick to ensure those trained in a culture of slander will seek to ostracise those targeted. The SWP and

Morning Star are entitled to attack Workers' Liberty's positions, as vigorously as they wish. Indeed, we would welcome more direct polemical exchange with other currents on the left. Workers' Liberty is one of only a very few socialist groups internationally that makes a point of seeking direct debates, in print and publicly, with our political opponents – on the right, but also, and perhaps more importantly, within our own political milieu.

Sadly, many of those opponents prefer to proceed by fabrication and slander rather than actual debate.

Democratic socialism requires a culture that educates and empowers workers to take ownership not only of economic production, but of collective political deliberation and discourse – the production of ideas. That requires a basic commitment to telling the truth.

What would a "socialism" built through the left's current culture, of heresy-hunting and outright lying, look like? □

Women's protests against Le Pen



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

Thousands of women have joined demonstrations in cities around France to protest against Marine Le Pen's far-right Rassemblement National (National Rally). Organisers claim more than 10,000 women joined in Paris alone. Hundreds of trade unions and women's rights groups backed the demonstrations.

The reformist electoral coalition New Popular Front (NPF) were visible on the demonstrations with Mathilde Panot of La France Insoumise and Shirley Wirden of the French Communist Party joining high profile women carrying the NPF banner.

Shirley Wirden warned the far right party were a threat to abortion rights France which were enshrined into the constitution earlier this year.

"During the debates around making abortion a constitutional right, we could well observe how the far-right deputies were very uncomfortable with the subject, they were calling for filling the cribs with French babies,"



Le Pen has done much to rebrand herself and the French right. She ousted her father from the party, and describes herself as a "feminist who isn't hostile toward men." She has reversed her position on abortion, and backed putting abortion rights into the constitution.

Her deputy Jordan Bardella has followed suit:

"I'll be the prime minister who unfailingly guarantees the rights and freedoms of every girl and woman in France... Equality between women and men, the freedom to dress as you please, the fundamental right to con-

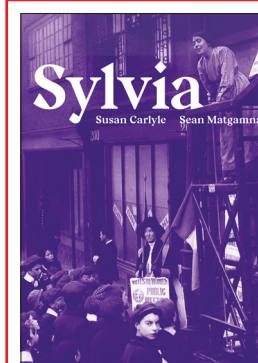
trol your own body – these are non-negotiable principles."

In April this year National Rally MEPs abstained on the right to abortion in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. They also opposed a resolution condemning Poland for its almost total ban on abortion. As with their secularism, much of their feminism focuses on threats from Islam and migration whilst ignoring other misogyny in French politics.

The Ipsos survey conducted for *Le Parisien* newspaper and Radio France on June 19-20 June showed the New

Popular Front (NPF) alliance in second place behind the National Rally with 29.5% of the vote and president Emmanuel Macron's centre right alliance knocked into third, polling 19.5% of votes. Revolutionary left organisations Lutte Ouvrière and NPA (Révolutionnaires) will stand their own candidates offering a left voice in the elections are unlikely to get beyond the 30 June first round and into the 7 July run-offs.

It seems unlikely that there will be a direct attack on legal right to abortion in France even if, as predicted, National Rally top the vote, but with a rising far right in the chamber and on the streets, a working-class women's movement is essential to defend and extend rights for women in France, French-born or migrant. □



The story of Sylvia Pankhurst including her working-class organising in the East End of London. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

"Fare free" works, but isn't enough



Environment

By Owen Flood

Fare Free London is [campaigning](#) for free public transport for all in London. Over hundred cities and towns around the world have some form of free public transport, though mostly its restricted to certain groups (e.g. the elderly, transport workers, young people).

Luxembourg is the first country to roll out free public transport across a whole country. Other countries, such as Germany, have experimented with reduced fare schemes.

Historically free public transport has been introduced with the aim of reducing congestion and improving air quality. More recently, environmentalists have also been calling for free public transport as part of a set of social policies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Free public transport is good regardless of its environmen-

tal impact. People have a right to free public transport and we should champion it in the same way as with healthcare, education, and housing. Free public transport has led to improved health outcomes, better air quality and reduced social isolation.

In March 2020 Luxembourg became the first country to introduce free public transport. Car use fell by 11% and public transport use increased by 25%. However, free public transport has incentivised relatively few people to stop using their cars. Many new users of public transport previously walked or cycled, and more leisure journeys are made than when fares existed.

Besides, over 200,000 commuters come into Luxembourg from France, Germany, Belgium, every day, so the impact of free public transport or other measures within Luxembourg will be limited if there is no change in border countries. Luxembourg is pursuing policies to improve public transport and reduce car

use, which include expanding capacity on public transport, increasing train frequency particularly between Luxembourg and France, electrifying buses, and extending tram services.

Public transport was made free (for the city's residents) in the Estonian capital, Tallinn, in 2013. The policy came into effect after a public referendum in 2012 and is funded through income tax. Public transport use increased 6.5% from 2012 to 2014, but since then has risen only about 1% per year. The policy has been effective and financially feasible enough that most counties in Estonia have made bus travel free.

Most of the increase in public transport use has been from people who would have made journeys on foot or by bicycle choosing instead to take public transport.

The same year Tallinn introduced free public transport, Hasselt in Belgium abandoned it. Hasselt (around 80,000 residents) introduced free public transport and restricted car use in 1997. That led to a 1,300%

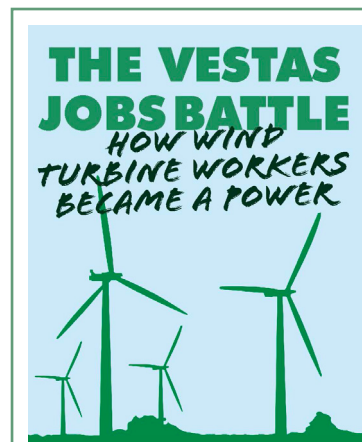
increase in public transport use, but a higher proportion of people switched from walking and cycling to public transport than from cars. Due to issues in financing the scheme and disputes in the wider region around Hasselt of how to finance it, the scheme was finally abandoned in 2013.

So free public transport is possible and overall has positive impacts for public transport use, air quality, and

health. However, its impacts on reducing GHG emissions is mixed. To maximise the positive effects, fare-free needs to be coupled with improved service quality and policies to reduce car use. □

Supreme Court rules on oilfield

The Supreme Court has quashed planning permission to extend the Horse Hill oil field in Surrey. The court found that the County Council should have considered the emissions from burning the extracted oil in their environmental impact assessment, not just those generated in the extraction. The ruling over the 2019 licence sets a precedent that may have far-reaching consequences for other projects like Whitehaven coal mine and the Rosebank oil field. □



The 2nd edition contains new material, plus photos from the campaign and occupation. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Trump and the Teamsters



Eric Lee

On 21 June Donald Trump made an extraordinary announcement on his Truth Social platform. Trump was announced that Sean O'Brien, president of the 1.3 million member Teamsters union, had agreed to address the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee next month.

Any initial doubts about the veracity of Trump's statement – and one should never trust the former US president with telling the truth – were dispelled with an announcement from the union itself. The Teamster president, it said, had asked to speak at both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, and the union was "very happy former President Trump has extended this invitation." They were happy because members of the union "represent every political background, and their message needs to be heard by as wide an audience as possible."

Union leaders are sometimes given access to the stage at party conventions in the US. In 2016, at the Democratic National Convention, I got to see a number of top elected union officials paraded out on stage – though none of them were given the chance to speak.

But this is different. Donald Trump is anti-union, pro-capitalist, corrupt,

racist, sexist and is someone who conspired to violently overturn the results of the last Presidential election in 2020. Of course he wants leading figures from the unions to appear on stage with him. Trump is keen to win over the votes of union members, young people, women, Hispanics, Blacks and other ethnic minorities. Polls show that he is having some success with that already.

Obviously, trade union leaders should have nothing to do with Trump or the party he now leads and certainly should not help him win votes among their members. And let's not forget that while not perfect, Joe Biden is by the far the most pro-union president in many decades.

What on earth was Sean O'Brien thinking?

Actually, his position – which sounds completely crazy – has deep roots in American labour history. Samuel Gompers, who died a century ago, was the

leader of the American Federation of Labor for decades. He took the view that union members' votes should not be taken for granted. Unions would reward their friends and punish their enemies.

This meant that many unions, including the Teamsters, not infrequently supported Republican candidates for higher office. The Teamsters supported Richard Nixon, an anti-labour, conservative Republican when he ran for president in both 1960 and 1972, the year of the Watergate break-in and subsequent scandal. They supported Republicans even when they were up against liberal, pro-union Democrats like Senator George McGovern. And it was not just the Teamsters – the AFL-CIO, the national trade union centre in the US, remained neutral in the 1972 elections. Its president, George Meany, was a strong supporter of the Vietnam War and detested McGovern and his backers.

Gompers' position in the early years of the 20th century was wrong – even then. Many union leaders challenged that view and encouraged support for the Socialist Party, which was winning more and more elections. But Gompers wanted nothing to do with the Socialists, and his view prevailed.

The Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) website hasn't published a response to the news about O'Brien's speech to the Republicans. Maybe this was because the TDU supported O'Brien's election. In 2021, O'Brien headed up a "Teamsters United" campaign which was seen as representing the reform wing of the union. He won two-thirds of the votes cast against a candidate linked to the previous Teamster president, James Hoffa Jr.

Which goes to show just how messy and complicated internal politics are in the Teamsters.

But the issue of whether or not union leaders should appear on the same platform as Trump is not complicated at all.

O'Brien needs to reverse course and members of the Teamsters as well as other US trade unionists need to send a clear message demanding just that. If the Teamsters truly want their message to be heard by the widest possible audience, there are surely better ways to achieve that. □

• Eric Lee writes here in a personal opinion column. He is the founder editor of Labour Start

Free JSO activists!

On 20 June [Just Stop Oil](#) supporters painted private jets at Stansted airport to publicise the demand that the incoming UK government commit to working with other governments for the end the extraction and burning of oil, gas and coal by 2030. Jennifer Kowalski and Cole McDonald were arrested on suspicion of

"criminal damage and interference with the use or operation of national infrastructure", charges which can bring heavy penalties. The charges should be dropped, and private jets should be banned. And we work to mobilise the labour movement for more effective, worker-based action on the environment. □

Manifesto is a disgrace on disability

By Janine Booth

Labour's general election Manifesto offers little more than vague mentions to disabled people, and drops many of the party's specific pledges.

A thorough assessment of the manifesto by the Disability News Service website notes the absence of pledges to:

- end care charges
- make disability-related policy in conjunction with disabled people and their organisations
- incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) into UK law
- take action about the many deaths linked to the harsh benefits regime of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- review and improve Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

- apply the social model of disability

- do anything about the lack of provision of accessible housing.

The previous Labour leadership had promised an inquiry into DWP-related deaths, but this has now been dropped.

Last year's National Policy Forum report, hardly a radical document, did include some positive wording, but that has not appeared in the manifesto. This included commitments to "ensure that respect and dignity are once more at the heart of our social security system", to make "every stage of the social security system ... supportive and accessible", and to overhaul "the current unfair and punitive Tory system and end punitive Tory sanctions which strip away people's dignity".

Of the ten mentions of dis-

ability in the manifesto, the majority are related to work. Although better rights and pay at work is important for many disabled people, the emphasis echoes the Tory narrative that "work is good for disabled people", their pretext for forcing disabled people into unsuitable work.

The manifesto promises equal pay and statutory disability pay gap reporting, and to deal with the backlog in Access to Work payments.

On several issues, the manifesto promises to "do something", without specifying what that something will be. A Labour government will "review" Universal Credit, carry out "deep reform" of the care sector, and "build consensus for the longer term reform needed to create a sustainable National Care Service". The manifesto states that the

treatment of autistic people and people with learning difficulties is "a disgrace", but does not set out what a Labour government would do about it.

Other than that reference to autism, there is no mention of neurodiversity in the manifesto, despite a clear vote at 2021 Labour Party conference to include it in the policy review.

The Labour leadership is probably hoping that by mak-

ing no promises, it has provided nothing for campaigners to hold it to, and that disabled people will be grateful for any little measure it does take in government. The tenacity of disabled activists means that more likely it will prompt anger and determination to make Labour deliver more than it promises, and carry out the pledges made by the Corbyn/McDonnell leadership. □

Assange freed at last

After many years taking refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy, and then in jail, Julian Assange has got a deal with the US government to plead guilty to one of the charges against him under the Espionage Act and go free. In poor health after his jail years, Assange will now return to his native Australia. Trump's former vice-president Mike Pence has denounced the deal. If Pence had his way, Assange's work with WikiLeaks to expose state machinations could have left him in jail for life. Despite Assange being no sort of political hero, we opposed extradition and welcome his freedom to return home. □

The turning points in July 1984

Adapted from the Workers' Liberty book, [Class against class: the miners' strike 1984-5](#)

The Battle of Orgreave of 18 June 1984, with the biggest and most violent police mobilisation against pickets for decades, perhaps ever in Britain, was a big turning point in the 1948-5 miners' strike.

But probably the biggest turning point came in July. Or, at least, that is how we can see it hindsight.

It wasn't and couldn't be seen as such a turning point then. The TUC congress opening on 3 September voted for a union boycott on coal, coke, or substitute fuel moved through the miners' union (NUM) picket lines -but union leaders did not implement it. On 28 September the pit deputies voted 82.5% to strike, but then did a rotten deal. Through to November, as winter came and demand for coal increased, the strike remained solid, and then shrank only slowly until mid-January.

Dockers

But the most dramatic point in the struggle to broaden the front had been when dockers struck on 9 July.

Dockers struck against the use of non-dockers to unload iron ore for Scunthorpe steelworks at Immingham. The fire had jumped from the miners to the dockers.

Britain's dockers were in trouble. Shifts in trade patterns had redirected traffic away from the old ports and to new ones where dockers did not have the job security long ago established in the older ports and enshrined in the National Dock Labour Scheme.

One Tory minister said openly in mid 1984 that the Dock Labour Scheme should be scrapped, as it would be after the miners were defeated. The jobs of many dockers were under threat.

On the docks, as in the mines, the basic issue was jobs. Here were ready-made fellow-fighters for the miners. And dockers had the power to close down Britain very quickly. Within weeks of a solid docks strike the Tories would either have to surrender or use troops – and that would have escalated the conflict further.

Competent leadership could have welded the dockers to the miners in a common fight for jobs. The dockers'



leaders, whatever good intentions they may have had, bungled it.

The dockers' union (TGWU, a forerunner of Unite) did not even formulate clear demands for the strike. The basic demand should have been extension of the National Dock Labour Scheme to the new, unregistered ports.

When the strike was on, *Socialist Organiser*, the forerunner of *Solidarity*, called for the creation of joint action committees of dockers and miners. But the NUM did not make much initiative to link up with the dockers. It was difficult for the NUM. The leaders of the TGWU were protesting that their dispute was quite separate from the miners', and would not have welcomed any such initiative.

On 19 July anti-strike lorry drivers threatened violence against dockers in Dover, where the strike was shaky anyway, and the dispute collapsed.

The press that had been screaming against "violent" miners either gloried in the threats against the strikers or reported this in a matter-of-fact way: the police had no comment! Instead of organising flying pickets, the mighty TGWU crumbled.

Steel

Solidarity also failed in the steel industry. The steel unions had been unresponsive from the start. When the NUM and the rail unions applied their blockade in June, Tommy Brennan, convenor at Ravenscraig, said he would work with scab deliveries of coal and iron ore. Peter McKim in Llanwnern said the same. ISTC [steel union] general secretary Bill Sirs, according to the *Financial Times* (2 July), "sounded almost like a British Steel spokesman".

From late June British Steel started running huge convoys of scab lorries into Ravenscraig and, especially, from Port Talbot to Llanwnern. Miners' picketing in Port Talbot soon tailed off, and was token at Ravenscraig. The steelworks kept running at full, indeed increased, production.

Many miners were critical of the area

NUM leaders on this. In South Wales, for example, where area president Emlyn Williams had publicly criticised Arthur Scargill's effort to mobilise for Orgreave, Mark Thomas of Penrhiwceiber NUM told us:

"The leadership [of South Wales] – or the majority of them – are failing to give us a determined lead. This comes out most notably in the way they have handled the steelworks situation and the scab miners at the Point of Ayr colliery in North Wales. Increased picketing is not only essential to win the dispute but key to keeping the membership involved. Many people have drifted off, not because they have lost interest, but because of the token nature of the activity we are involved in.

"There are 4,000 steelworkers at Llanwnern. Not all of them can be Bill Sirs fans. [There should be] a regular bulletin attempting to speak inside the plant, leafleting of the pubs and clubs in the area..."

Stopping steel would have been difficult with the best tactics from the NUM, given the steel unions' attitude and the steel workers' broken confidence after their long 1980 strike. But some of the NUM leaders were so overwhelmed by the difficulties that they practically gave up.

In rail and docks, too, problems of leadership had combined with problems of confidence among the rank and file.

Having seen the miners on strike for four months, railworkers, dockers and steelworkers knew what was involved in a serious battle with the government – the risk of months of deprivation, legal threats, police violence. The prospect was especially daunting in the steelworks, where the workforce was a shattered remnant, reduced in numbers by a half since 1980.

Railworkers and dockers were still often willing to take a stand for principle: to show solidarity when they were asked to handle coal. But to link their fate more fully with the miners in an indefinite strike? There was, in a Notts

striker's words, "a natural reluctance". London dockers, for example, told us that they just did not believe that the extension of the Dock Labour Scheme could be won under a Tory government.

Labour

In addition to all this there was the deadening effect of the Labour Party's role in the strike. The Party rank and file were with the miners. Labour Party activists, premises and equipment were involved in the miners' strike to a degree probably not seen in any dispute since the 1920s. The National Executive Committee backed the miners and called for a levy to support them. Labour conference condemned police violence and defied Kinnock's request to condemn pickets' violence.

But what most people saw, courtesy of TV, was the public weaseling of Kinnock, Hattersley and others. We should not underestimate the role played by this in dampening the spirits of the labour movement.

Another possibility of broadening the front fell on 11 July. Liverpool's Labour council, where the Militant group (forerunner of today's Socialist Party, RCP, and Socialist Alternative) had hegemony, had been talking since spring of defying the government over cuts. The council unions were up for a fight, and polls showed support for a general strike across Merseyside.

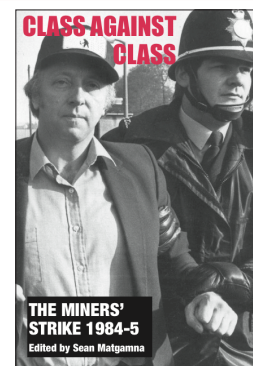
But the talk remained talk. Workers became less and less convinced that the council leaders would actually defy. On 11 July, the council leaders announced a deal with the government, essentially, to postpone budget-balancing until the next year, until after the miners' strike. The following year, having defeated the miners, the Tory government would come after Liverpool council and defeat it.

On 31 July the High Court seized the assets of the South Wales NUM, and – conditioned by the dockers' and Liverpool council's backing down – calls for a general strike to resist failed.

There would be many twists and turns yet, but crucial chances to broaden the front had been lost for lack of adequate leadership in the Labour left and the unions, and lack of a strong rank and file movement in the unions to take the initiative when the leaders failed. □



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By Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky advocated independence for Ukraine in 1939, and defended his call against other anti-Stalinist Marxists who argued that Ukrainian separation would weaken Russia against Western imperialist powers. This article is a follow-up to the one we reprinted in *Solidarity* 712. "Western Ukraine" then was then "eastern Poland", Polish-ruled since after World War One and with sizeable Polish and Jewish minorities.

Ukraine: national question cannot be bypassed

My statement to the effect that workers and peasants of Western Ukraine (Poland) do not want to join the Soviet Union, as it is now constituted, and that this fact is an additional argument in favor of an independent Ukraine, is parried by our sage with the assertion that even if they desired, they could not join the Soviet Union because they could do so only "after the proletarian revolution in Western Ukraine" (obviously Poland). In other words: Today the separation of the Ukraine is impossible, and after the revolution triumphs, it would be reactionary. An old and familiar refrain!

Luxemburg, Bukharin, Piatakov and many others used this very same argument against the program of national self-determination: Under capitalism it is utopian; under socialism, reactionary. The argument is false to the core because it ignores the epoch of the social revolution and its tasks.

Independent Soviet Ukraine

To be sure, under the domination of imperialism a genuine stable and reliable independence of the small and intermediate nations is impossible. It is equally true that under fully developed socialism, that is to say, with the progressive withering away of the state, the question of national boundaries will fall away. But between these two moments – the present day and complete socialism – intervene those decades in the course of which we are preparing to realise our program. The slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine is of paramount importance for mobilising the masses and for educating them in the transitional period.

The sectarian simply ignores the fact that the national struggle, one of the most labyrinthine and complex but at the same time extremely important forms of the class struggle, cannot be

suspended by bare references to the future world revolution. With their eyes turned away from the USSR, and failing to receive support and leadership from the international proletariat, the petty-bourgeois and even working-class masses of Western Ukraine are falling victim to reactionary demagoguery. Similar processes are undoubtedly also taking place in the Soviet [Eastern, i.e. Russian-ruled] Ukraine, only it is more difficult to lay them bare.

The slogan of an independent Ukraine advanced in time by the proletarian vanguard will lead to the unavoidable stratification of the petty bourgeoisie and render it easier for its lower tiers to ally themselves with the proletariat. Only thus is it possible to prepare the proletarian revolution.

"If the workers carry, through a successful revolution in Western Ukraine ..." persists our author, "should our strategy, then be to demand that the Soviet Ukraine separate and join its western section? Just the opposite." This assertion plumbs to the bottom the depth of "our strategy." Again we hear the same melody: "If the workers carry through ..." The sectarian is satisfied with logical deduction from a victorious revolution supposedly already, achieved. But for a revolutionist the nub of the question lies precisely in how to clear a road to the revolution, how to render an approach to revolution easier for the masses, how to draw the revolution closer, how, to assure its triumph.

"If the workers carry through ..." a victorious revolution, everything will of course be fine. But just now there is no victorious revolution; instead there is victorious reaction.

Reaction to Revolution

To find the bridge from reaction to revolution – that is the task. This is the import, by the way, of our entire program of transitional demands (*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*). Small wonder that the sectarians of all shadings fail to understand its meaning. They, operate by means of abstractions – an abstraction of imperialism and an abstraction of the socialist revolution. The question of the transition from real imperialism to real revolution; the question of how to mobilise the masses in the given historical situation for the conquest of power remains for these sterile wiseacres a book sealed with seven seals.

Piling one dire accusation indiscriminately on top of another, our critic declares that the slogan of an independent Ukraine serves the interests of the imperialists (!) and the Stalinists (!!) because it "completely negates the position of the defence of the Soviet Union." It is impossible to understand just why, the "interests of the Stalinists" are dragged in. But let us confine ourselves to the question of the defence of the USSR. This defence could be menaced by an independent Ukraine only

if the latter were hostile not only to the bureaucracy but also to the USSR. However, given such a premise (obviously false), how can a socialist demand that a hostile Ukraine be retained within the framework of the USSR? Or does the question involve only the period of the national revolution?

Yet our critic apparently recognised the inevitability of a political revolution against the Bonapartist bureaucracy. Meanwhile this revolution; like every revolution, will undoubtedly present a certain danger from the standpoint of defence. What to do? Had our critic really thought out the problem, he would have replied that such a danger is an inescapable historical risk which cannot be evaded, for under the rule of the Bonapartist bureaucracy the USSR is doomed. The very same reasoning equally and wholly applies to the revolutionary national uprising which represents nothing else but a single segment of the political revolution.

Economics

It is noteworthy that the most serious argument against independence does not even enter the mind of our critic. The economy of the Soviet Ukraine enters integrally into this plan. The separation of the Ukraine threatens to break down the plan and to lower the productive forces. But this argument, too, is not decisive. An economic plan is not the holy of holies. If national sections within the federation, despite the unified plan, are pulling in opposite directions, it means that the plan does not satisfy them. A plan is the handiwork of men. It can be reconstructed in accordance with new boundaries. In so far as the plan is advantageous for the Ukraine she will herself desire and know how to reach the necessary economic agreement with the Soviet Union, just as she will be able to conclude the necessary military alliance.

Moreover, it is impermissible to forget that the plunder and arbitrary rule of the bureaucracy constitute an important integral part of the current economic plan, and exact a heavy toll from the Ukraine. The plan must be drastically revised first and foremost from this standpoint. The outlived ruling caste is systematically destroying the country's economy, the army and its culture; it is annihilating the flower of the population and preparing the ground for a catastrophe. The heritage of the revolution can be saved only by an overturn. The bolder and more resolute is the policy of the proletarian vanguard on the national question among others, all the more successful will be the revolutionary overturn, all the lower

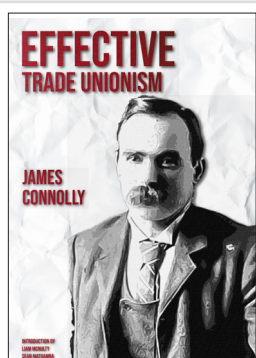
its overhead expenses.

Independence

The slogan of an independent Ukraine does not signify that the Ukraine will remain forever isolated, but only this, that she will again determine for herself and of her own free will the question of her interrelations with other sections of the Soviet Union and her western neighbours. Let us take an ideal variant most favorable for our critic. The revolution occurs simultaneously in all parts of the Soviet Union. The bureaucratic octopus is strangled and swept aside. The Constituent Con-



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national n cannot passed

sections of the Ukrainian people become free and enter into negotiations to join the Soviet Ukraine. At the same time they all express the desire to have their say on the question of the interrelations between a unified Ukraine and the Soviet Union, with Soviet Poland, etc. It is self-evident that to decide all these questions it will be necessary to convene the Constituent Congress of Unified Ukraine. But a "Constituent" Congress signifies nothing else but the Congress of an independent state which prepares anew to determine its own domestic regime as well as its international position.

There is every reason to assume that in the event of the triumph of the world revolution the tendencies toward unity will immediately acquire enormous force, and that all Soviet republics will find the suitable forms of ties and collaboration. This goal will be achieved only provided the old compulsory ties, and in consequence old boundaries, are completely destroyed; only provided each of the contracting parties is completely independent. To speed and facilitate this process, to make possible a genuine brotherhood of the peoples in the future, the advanced workers of Great Russia must even now understand the causes for Ukrainian separatism, as well as the latent power and historical lawfulness behind it, and they must without any reservation declare to the Ukrainian people that they are ready to support with all their might the slogan of an independent

Soviet Ukraine in a joint struggle against the autocratic bureaucracy and against imperialism.

Democracy

The petty-bourgeois Ukrainian nationalists consider correct the slogan of an independent Ukraine. But they object to the correlation of this slogan with the proletarian revolution. They want an independent democratic Ukraine and not a Soviet Ukraine. It is unnecessary to enter here into a detailed analysis of this question because it touches not Ukraine alone but rather the general evaluation of our epoch, which we have analyzed many times. We shall outline only the most important aspects.

Democracy is degenerating and perishing even in its metropolitan centers. Only the wealthiest colonial empires or especially privileged bourgeois countries are still able to maintain nowadays a regime of democracy, and even there it is obviously on the downgrade. There is not the slightest basis for hoping that the comparatively impoverished and backward Ukraine will be able to establish and maintain a regime of democracy. Indeed the very independence

of the Ukraine would not be long-lived in an imperialist environment. The example of Czechoslovakia is eloquent enough. As long as the laws of imperialism prevail, the fate of small and intermediate nations will remain unstable and unreliable. Imperialism can be overthrown only by the proletarian revolution.

The main section of the Ukrainian nation is represented by present-day Soviet Ukraine. A powerful and purely Ukrainian proletariat has been created there by the development of industry. It is they who are destined to be the leaders of the Ukrainian people in all their future struggles. The Ukrainian proletariat wishes to free itself from the clutches of the bureaucracy. The slogan of a democratic Ukraine is historically belated. The only thing it is good for is perhaps to console bourgeois intellectuals. It will not unite the masses. And without the masses, the emancipation and unification of the Ukraine is impossible.

Centrism

Our severe critic flings at us the term "centrism" at every opportunity. According to him, the entire article was written so as to expose the glaring example of our "centrism." But he does not make even a single attempt to demonstrate wherein precisely consists the "centrism" of the slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine. Assuredly, that is no easy task.

Centrism is the name applied to that policy which is opportunist in substance and which seeks to appear as revolutionary in form. Opportunism consists in a passive adaptation to the ruling class and its regime, to that which already exists, including, of course, the state boundaries. Centrism shares completely this fundamental trait of opportunism, but in adapting itself to the dissatisfied workers, centrism veils it by means of radical commentaries.

If we proceed from this scientific definition, it will appear that the position, of our hapless critic is in part and in whole centrist. He takes as a starting point the specific (accidental – from the standpoint of rational and revolutionary politics) boundaries which cut nations into segments, as if this were something immutable. The world revolution, which is for him not living reality but the incantation of a witch-doctor, must unequivocally accept these boundaries as its point of departure.

He is not at all concerned with the centrifugal nationalist tendencies

which may flow either into the channels of reaction or the channel of revolution. They violate his lazy administrative blueprint constructed on the model of "first" and "then." He shies away from the struggle for national independence against bureaucratic strangulation and takes refuge in speculations on the superiorities of socialist unity. In other words, his politics – if scholastic commentaries on other people's politics may be called politics – bear the worst traits of centrism.

Sectarianism

The sectarian is an opportunist who stands in fear of himself. In sectarianism, opportunism (centrism) remains unfolded in its initial stages, like a delicate bud. Presently the bud unfolds, one-third, one-half, and sometimes more. Then we have the peculiar combination of sectarianism and centrism (Vereecken); of sectarianism and low-grade opportunism (Sneevliet). But on occasion the bud shrivels away, without unfolding (Oehler). If I am not mistaken, Oehler is the editor of *The Marxist*. □

• *Socialist Appeal*, 18 Sep 1939. Georges Vereecken was a Belgian Trotskyist who split from Trotsky in opposition to the French Trotskyists' 1934 move to work within the Socialist Party. Later he sided with the POUM in Spain against Trotsky's criticisms. Henk Sneevliet was a Dutch one-time ally of the Trotskyists who also parted ways over Spain. He played a heroic role in organising a dockers' strike against deportation of Jews under the Nazi occupation in Germany, and was captured by the Nazis and killed in April 1942. Hugo Oehler was an American Trotskyist who parted ways over the French Turn and then refused to side with the Spanish Republic against Franco in the civil war.

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Trumpite rollback is already happening



Debate

By Claireen Ryan

Last week (*Solidarity* 713) I may have misled some people by emphasising what may be to come in Trumpite harm.

The Trumpite reaction has happened already, though worse may come. The breakdown of the American system has already happened. Trump standing in the presidential election is one of proof of it.

Legislation was already in place to bar those who have engaged in insurrection against the US government. It was passed more than a century and a half ago at the end of the Civil War.

When Colorado tried to invoke that ordinance to stop Trump standing in the Republican primaries, the Supreme Court overruled them. The Supreme Court declared that Donald Trump, the man who tried to stop the inauguration of Joe Biden as president, who engaged in insurrection to retain the presidency after he had lost the election for it – that Donald Trump is fit to be the next president.

If he doesn't win, he will again say the election has been a fraud.

Judge Aileen Cannon (despite what her name suggests, she is of émigré Cuban extraction) has ensured that Trump won't stand trial over keeping classified documents before he stands for president, that is, that another court conviction will not be on his record before the election.



Trump has been convicted on 34 felony charges because in 2016 he conspired to keep quiet his payments of money to Stephanie Clifford, to stop the electorate hearing about his involvement with her at a time that might impact on the 2016 presidential election. The holding-up of that and other criminal Trump trials, so that voters in the 2024 presidential election will not have vital information when the vote – that is exactly the same service that Trump was convicted of criminally arranging with Stephanie Clifford. No one will be even charged.

Delaying

Trump's delaying tactics looked a very unheroic rich man's option, but they have worked.

Trump is being sheltered in the election by judges he appointed. That includes three Supreme Court judges.

The Supreme Court, with nine members, is one of three sovereign bodies charged to run the USA together with the legislature (Congress) and the executive (the presidency).

Supreme Court judges are little kings and queens, appointed for life by the then president. They do rule for progress sometimes – the Supreme Court ruling against segregated schools in 1954 was a deed of immense progress.

But the present Supreme Court justices are in their majority Republicans and Trumpites. They have been acting like a government of the most unenlightened forces in America.

Their outlawing of abortion by way of rescinding the Roe v Wade decision was a plain piece of Supreme Court Republican governance that certainly did not have the support of a majority of Americans. They have governed despite the US people and the Biden ad-

ministration. The system has not been able to hold Trump to account for trying to subvert the last presidential election.

As bourgeois-democratic presidents go, at least those blocked on main policies by Congress, and despite his ban on a rail strike in December 2022, Joe Biden has been a good president. No other president has ever joined a picket line of striking workers. But he is not a good candidate.

Aside from anything else, he looks much older than Trump – in fact he is three and a half years older – and walks with the short, careful steps of an old man.

Much of the US media pretends – sometimes by distorting camera work – that it is Biden and not Trump who shows signs of senile dementia. Much of the media, and many of the rich, are hostile to Biden and back Trump.

In November Trump could win in the electoral college while losing the popular election, as in 2016. If anything in the election should go to the Supreme Court, it is almost a foregone conclusion that they would back Trump.

The Republicans are on the offensive everywhere where they are strong enough. They are now completely Trumpite in all that matters.

Biden may not go on the offensive against the Right if he wins. But if Trump is not defeated at the upcoming election, it will be an immense defeat for the left on a world scale.

And, Biden or no, the US needs working-class forces to organise with a positive campaign for democracy, to get rid of the rule of the Supreme Court and the Electoral College for a start. □

Sanders, Trump, Biden, and DSA



Letter

Since *Solidarity* 711 printed the [exact words](#) of the decision from Workers' Liberty conference to favour a vote for Biden against Trump on 4 November – "in the context of a political perspective emphasising the need to build a working-class political pole independent of the Democrats" – Katy Dollar's [idea](#) (*Solidarity* 713) that we "drifted rightwards" by adopting instead Bernie Sanders's take on it seems odd.

We often publish, in addition to our own stuff, output by people "on the spot", and/or whose words may attract wider attention than just ours, where it goes in a similar direction.



We've done that often with Bernie Sanders. We applauded his campaigns for the 2016 and 2020 Democrat presidential nomination, and often then printed what he had said. I don't think we were wrong then.

Back in 2016 there was a revolutionary socialist organisation in the USA of some consequence – the ISO – and in those days we would sometimes print comments from them, although we had great differences from them. But the ISO disbanded in 2019. Their

floundering on whether or how to intervene in the Sanders movement was not a guarantee against "rightward drift", but rather a sign of a liquidationist drift.

Yes, Sanders is, as he was in 2016, a reform socialist, not one of us. But as far as the words printed in *Solidarity* 711 go, he is in the right direction.

He advocates a political movement autonomous from the Democrats. The trouble behind that generality is that "Our Revolution" is more like an NGO than a worker-ori-

ented activist organisation. The DSA, which in its modern form also comes from the Sanders campaigns, is also NGO-ish, and increasingly "kitsch anti-imperialist", criticising prominent members of their own like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) primarily for backing "two states" in Israel-Palestine.

Surreally, the DSA now says more or less nothing about Trump. As with the ISO, the stand-offishness is not an antidote to "rightward drift", but a signal of demobilisation.

Sanders wants people to elect people like himself (he's an Independent Senator, not a Democrat) and AOC (a DSA member but one who won her Democrat primary). We can dislike the vague term "progressive", and worry that Sanders allots it too liberally, but I don't see how we can think we

were right in 2016 and 2020 and yet denounce backing candidates like Sanders and AOC as a "rightward drift".

Martin Thomas, London

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Beware excessive or narrow realpolitik



Debate

By Simon Nelson

Clareen Ryan (*Solidarity* 713) remains unconvincing in their case that Trump is a fascist and that socialists should advocate a vote for Biden in the 2024 election. Unlike Ryan, I believe there is still a high chance that Trump will win the 2024 election, despite or even because of his current legal difficulties.

It would be unwise to speculate, as Ryan does, about the mental acuity of either candidate. Still, as far as you can, it is dubious to portray only Trump as betraying any signs of cognitive decline.

Ryan has repeated their assertions from *Solidarity* 710 about the immense privilege and wealth that Trump has benefited from. As Katy Dollar said in *Solidarity* 711, these are hardly the markers that make Trump unique in American politics. At Workers' Liberty conference in April 2024, a section of a motion that was not voted on said; "the current US political system means that voting for the Democratic candidate is always the only direct electoral mechanism for preventing a Republican presidency." The implication is that if you refuse to call or endorse one of the given outcomes, you eliminate the difference between Trump and Biden or minimise the threat of a second Trump term.

Ryan is keen on his absolute-monarch depiction, which suggests a level of stability that isn't found with Trump. The President with the highest turnover

of senior staff and cabinet members of any modern US President. He said, "You're fired" more often than his last five predecessors. But there is a danger, common in much of the leftish and liberal commentary on Trump to highlight Trump as a mobster, conman, deeply unpleasant and privileged individual shorn away from the political context in which he exists. Our revulsion from Trump's personality should not get in the way of analysis.

Those traits are not alien to US politics or against the founding principles of the increasingly shaky US democracy. So how has Trump managed to subvert US democracy so that now it is in a much weaker position to stop him, and where have those same institutions and security establishments just accommodated him? The fascistic overtones in Trumpism are surely there. As Dollar says, his threat comes from the fact that "he heads a large and militant collection of right-wing forces, both organised and unorganised, which is trying to roll back limited gains made by women, black and LGBT+ people in the US".

Those forces of chauvinism are deep-rooted in US politics. Alongside the reactionary isolationism coupled with a conspiratorial outlook, the strength of White Christian nationalism and the preponderance of firearms make a potent mix. As an aside, it should be noted that the regulation on "bump stocks", which Ryan refers to not unjustifiably to as the legalising of over-the-counter purchases for machine guns, is the Supreme Court overturning a Trump-era ruling.

In the 1960s, Barry Goldwater couldn't turn this mix into a winning formula, but Reagan could. However, that

was not considered an existential threat to US democracy, so what has changed with Trump? That bears further investigation. There is not a simple answer.

But trusting the centre to hold on again, and for how long, cannot be our strategy. As large as it is, Trump's popularity should also be seen in the context of the increasing lack of trust in US politicians, parties and institutions. Most of the electorate do not want a Trump and Biden rematch. One poll estimated that 69% of voters are unenthused by either candidate. And 25% of the electorate live in States where Biden will win by a large margin. And large numbers of young people have turned away from Biden, particularly since 7 October and the war on Gaza.

Distrust of "Genocide Joe" is not our starting point, but it is real. The sizeable numbers that voted "uncommitted" in Democratic primaries can be rallied come November, but is that the task the left should set itself?

Bernie Sanders, republished in *Solidarity* 710 says that while he strongly disagrees with Biden that Israel can utilise its right to self-defence to go to war against the entire Palestinian people, the only choice that Americans face on 4 November is to vote for Biden. Ryan says that we can choose either a sectarian or class line. If the class is to "see what the workers are doing and get in on it", then the result is to herd people with a real and justifiable hostility to the Democrats into voting for Biden.

To quote Sean Matgamna on the debate on the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, "[T]o ensure continuity of method, politics, and tradition... with only case-by-case decisions on issues as they come up, there can be neither political consistency, nor organic and stable tradition, nor the thoroughgoing education of cadres – which is the practical political purpose for which we build up, and where necessary criticise, revise and rectify our tradition". So far, this is lacking, with a shift from a position of never advocating a Democratic vote to what is now edging to a wholesale endorsement in all partisan elections.

Ryan writes: "The Republican Party, where it has local power, is changing voting laws to make it more difficult for Black people to vote – that is, to cheat

the Democratic Party." The Supreme Court, acting as a sovereign executive, has crossed out 50 years of advance for women by abolishing the right to abortion. The Trump counter-revolution has been sweeping across the USA for the last four years, in which Biden has been in office." So, even with four years of a Biden Presidency, some of the worst aspects of Trumpism have not been held back.

We have to face facts. The only notable real success of the protest movements during the Trump presidency was the election of Biden. There were women's marches against Trump's misogyny, and then under the Biden Presidency we have had Roe vs Wade torn up, an increasing number of states trying to ban abortion outright. Florida's Don't Say Gay Bill, the banning of the Rail strike.

There were more deportations of undocumented migrants by Obama in 2012 alone than there were under Trump. Biden plans to reinstitute Section 212 (f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which was previously invoked by Trump, to block asylum at the border, but this was stopped in the courts. In doing so, Biden will be backed by many of his party in Texas and border states.

A Democratic President is not a guarantee or a safeguard against the most illiberal of policies and positioning. Even the modest proposals of Build Back Better were thwarted by a Republican legislature. Ryan can only really propose that we now make our propaganda while advocating a wholesale Democratic vote in every partisan election.

In a period where we acknowledge the weakness of the labour movement and socialist left, it is a mistake to junk the role of our ideas. Our own and the left's shortcomings should not see us accept the bourgeoisie's terms of the debate and dissolve what makes us distinct in favour of an excessive or narrow realpolitik.

We all acknowledge the tremendous danger a second Trump term would mean for the US and globally. But we risk seeing ourselves as just left-wing journalists rather than propagandists to accept the ultimatum of a Trump vs Biden vote. □

Starmer fails the litmus test



Letter

Eric Lee's column on the New Popular Front says the "NFP, thanks to Glucksmann and his allies, sounds a lot more like Keir Starmer than Jean-Luc Mélenchon, or Jeremy Corbyn, and that is a very good thing."

I know Workers' Liberty has its own article on the NFP and Eric's is a "personal opinion column". However I'd like to remind Eric that he is writing for a periodical whose supporters who have been proscribed by Starmer and his allies.

Lee says that the NFP joint programme has passed a litmus test for political decency because it's in solidarity with Ukraine and rejecting Hamas. The implication is that Starmer

has passed a similar litmus test of political decency.

Well, there should be more than those two tests. In terms of political decency Starmer comes up short:

In terms of failing to pushing back against the right wing demonisation of migrants and refugees.

In terms of tackling anti-black and anti-Muslim racism in the Labour Party.

In terms of opposing recognising Palestinian statehood.

In terms of caving to the culture-war attacks on trans people.

And in terms of dismissing basic democratic principles in the Labour Party and chronic dishonesty in his political positions. Workers' Liberty is right to call for a vote for Labour but also to say we need to fight against Starmer. □

Luke Hardy,
Leeds

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Glasgow marches against school cuts

By Ann Field

Over 500 people took part in the 24 June March for Education in Glasgow city centre.

Initiated by the umbrella Glasgow City Parents group, the march was also backed by the NASUWT, the AHDS (Scottish head and deputy-head teachers union), the GMB, Unison and the EIS (the main teachers' union in Scotland).

The trigger for the demonstration was the decision of the Glasgow City Council SNP-Scottish Greens coalition to cut teacher numbers in Glasgow by 172 this year, and by a further 450 over the next three years.

But the demonstration also raised broader demands, directed primarily at the Scottish Government: an effective GIRFEC (getting it right for every child) plan for all children, enhanced teacher recruitment and retention, improved Additional Support for Learning, and increased investment in support services.



The demonstration's demands overlapped with the current EIS campaign against planned education cuts by Glasgow City Council.

Apart from the cuts in teacher numbers, the EIS is also campaigning against cuts to the MCR Pathways Programme (which supports care-ex-

perienced young people), cuts to the Additional Support Needs budget, cuts to DYW (Developing the Young Workforce) coordinators, and increased workloads for teachers.

All the main political parties were invited to provide a speaker for the demonstration's concluding rally. Ini-

tially, only Labour responded. Being in opposition in both Holyrood and Glasgow City Chambers, Labour leaders found this too good an opportunity to miss.)

The Scottish Greens subsequently also provided a speaker. Their ability to vote for council funding cuts in Holyrood and for education cuts in Glasgow City Council, and then to promise to work tirelessly to prevent the cuts from having an impact is never to be underestimated.

The demonstration took place only two days before the end of the school term. But with the AHDS and EIS pledged to ballot on industrial action at the start of the new academic year, it provided a solid basis for joint campaigning between parents and trade unions after the summer break.

The National Education Union (NEU) is running a [school cuts campaign](#) in England and Wales, but so far more low-key. □



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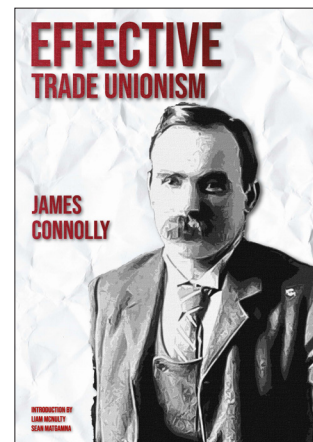
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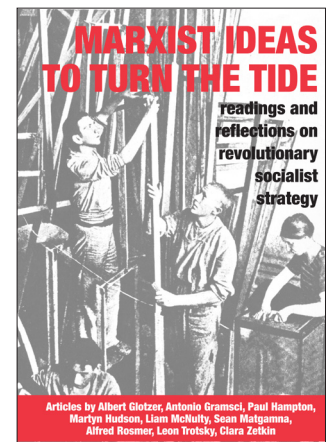
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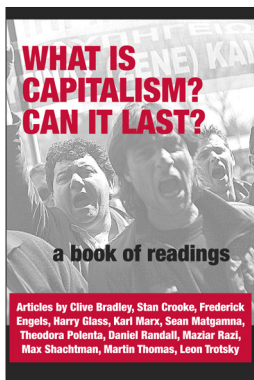
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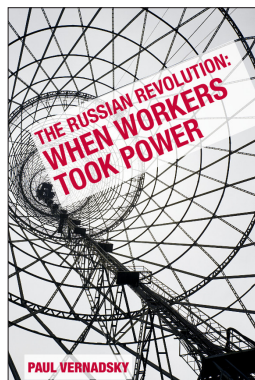
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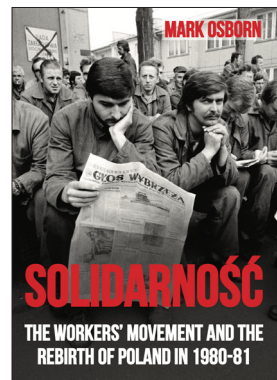
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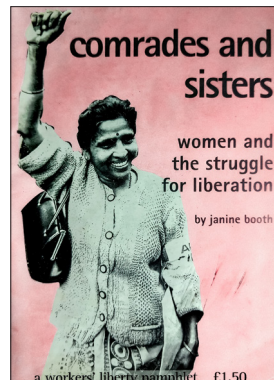
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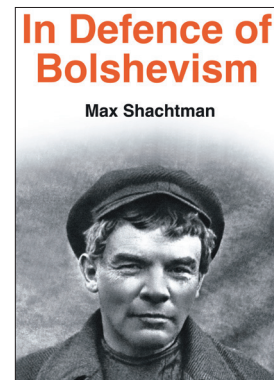
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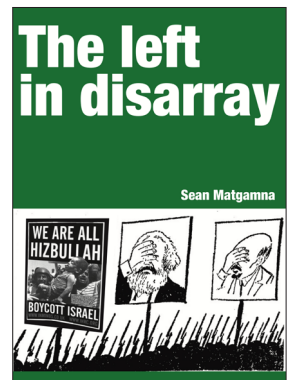
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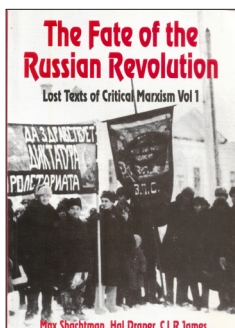
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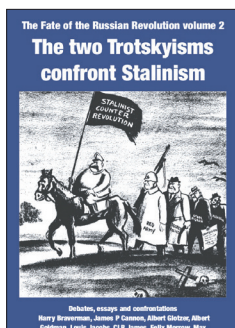
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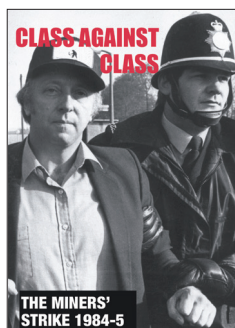
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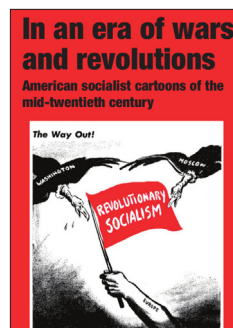
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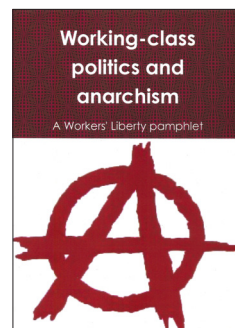
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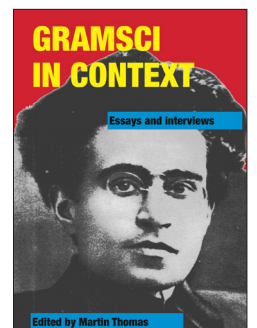
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Hard line from Scottish FE colleges

By Ann Field

Balloting of members of EIS-FELA (Scottish Further Education union) for a renewed mandate for strikes and action short of a strike continues (to close 22 July) after no progress was made in 21 June negotiations with Col-

lege Employers Scotland (CES).

Scottish FE lecturers have not had a pay rise since 2021. The CES offered a single £5,000 pay rise for 2022, 2023 and 2024, but this was rejected by EIS-FELA.

A rolling programme of escalating strike action culminated in four days of strikes in each of the last two weeks of the academic term, which finishes this week. EIS-FELA members have also refused to upload students' marks into their college IT systems.

After officials representing the Scottish FE section of Unison accepted the CES offer, the EIS-FELA changed its position to acceptance of £5,000 for the three years 2022-24, plus a pay rise of over 5% for 2025/26.

At last Friday's talks EIS-FELA made a further concession and reduced their pay claim for 2025/26 to 5%. CES still refused to increase their offer of 3%.

CES calculates that EIS-FELA will fail to secure the 50% turnout required by the Tories' anti-union laws in the re-ballot now underway, given that it is being held during the holidays. (Scottish college summer holidays are usually earlier than English, often late June to mid-August).

In some colleges management has been "advising" EIS-FELA members



who are hesitant about supporting further strikes not to vote at all, in order to increase the chances of the 50% threshold not being met.

CES has also announced that colleges will be docking full pay in response to the refusal of EIS-FELA members to upload student marks.

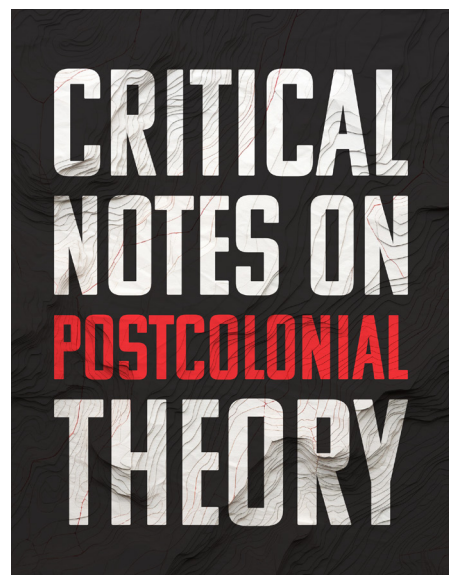
In fact, a few colleges have said that they will not dock pay at all. Some will be docking two days' pay on strike days, when union members would not be paid anyway. And no colleges will dock pay over the holiday period.

In some cases, the recent succession

of strikes means that some union members have no marks to upload, and can therefore hardly be penalised. But the lack of clarity about pay-docking adds to the pressure on members.

CES is emboldened in its hard line by the shameful willingness of Unison officials to accept the CES's 5% offer.

A 50% turnout in the re-ballot is vital. Pressure also needs to be increased on the SNP Holyrood Government to improve funding for the Scottish FE sector, which has been subject to successive cuts in recent years. □



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Barts workers win new offer

By Todd Hamer

Healthworkers at Bart's NHS Trust are voting on a new offer to settle their long-standing dispute. The Unite branch at Bart's has organised over 40 strike days since September with a central demand that the Trust pays the £1,655 Covid bonus payment that was awarded to other NHS workers

following the 2023 pay dispute.

The action has been led by porters, domestics and other facilities staff who were denied the lump sum payment on a technicality that they were employed by Serco on 1 April 2023. The workers were brought back in-house in May 2023 following successful strikes in 2021.

Initially Bart's managers refused to negotiate with the striking workers and wasted a large amount of taxpayers' money attempting to break the strike with agency staff. Unite responded by escalating the action and lively demonstrations.

The dispute is one of a number of local NHS strikes. Theatre staff organised in Unite

often holds up GSTT's high intensity theatres as the model for how a Labour government will reduce waits for NHS treatment. The response of these nurses demonstrates the pressure that frontline staff are under and are an appropriate response to management attempts to pile on more work to overstretched frontline staff.

The strikes take place while the NHS suffers the biggest real terms loss of funding since the 1970s. The Spring budget cut £2 billion from the NHS budget and Labour has so far refused to voice even a murmur of protest.

A Guy's and St Thomas's theatre nurse said: "Staff in the day surgery units at Guys and St Thomas's hospitals are striking because they are tired of having their concerns over burn-out and patient safety repeatedly ignored by managers. The situation has now reached crisis point, with nurses feeling like they have no option but to strike to protect themselves and their patients."



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Mark Boothroyd, A&E nurse and Unite branch secretary at Guy's and St Thomas's, said: "We need the government to put more investment into the NHS, and to NHS staff wages. They can't keep pushing NHS workers to do more with the same meagre resources."

Starmer's and Streeter's commitment to Tory spending plans can only lead to further deterioration of services, unnecessary suffering of staff and patients and avoidable deaths. □



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"There was talk of striking"



Diary of a trackworker

By Matt Shaw

Last week I described how I was sacked some 30-odd years ago for leaving work early on a Sunday after the job was completed. I had an appeal, but, unconfident, went drinking almost every night and used my annual leave to put off the appeal, as I was still being paid and expected to attend work.

The union divisional organiser, Roy Trench, was going to be my rep. A nice enough bloke but he didn't inspire much confidence.

At work, however, there was talk of striking in protest. If they sacked me, then even the older more established team leaders felt threatened. Meanwhile my supervisor was in the shit for not giving us enough work.

At the appeal, to be fair, Roy came up trumps, reiterating the "job and knock" custom and the fact that we had only a

limited amount of work. The area engineer was an old-school railway worker, but he denied job and knock even existed. After a short recess he said he was minded to let the punishment stand.

Roy pointed out that we could provide retired supervisors to back up what we claimed. The engineer said he would make some calls and let us know his final decision.

After about an hour, he called me back, with Roy, and admitted that there was some truth in what I was claiming. He would rescind my termination and instead suspend me for two weeks at the pleasure of my supervisor. The other guys in my team had their five days' suspension reduced to three.

The two weeks' suspension without pay would still hurt. As we left the building we saw my supervisor, and his response was "why didn't he downgrade you?"

I thanked my union rep Rob, who had taken time off to see what happened, and Roy who really had done far more than I expected.

I got back to my depot to a mixed reception as I'd blown the whistle on job and knock quite loudly, but I didn't really have much choice and I didn't grass up the other teams that had left earlier than me that Sunday.

The final little kick in the pants came in late November. At that time we were still allowed to work seven days.

My supervisor had decided that my suspension would take place in such a way that I would only have two weeks' pay to last the four-week period over Christmas. I thought at least at least I could use the Saturday and Sunday overtime usual over Christmas as a bit of cushioning. The supervisor then pushed the start date of the overtime back a week so that I would be on my suspension and unable to take it. □

• Last week's column, as edited, suggested that the supervisor who started the action against me had just come back from the pub. Most of the supervisors did go to the pub Sunday lunchtime, but probably not that one, that Sunday.

Taking over the docks



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

To coincide with the 40th anniversary of the 1984 occupation of the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead, here's *The Big Flame*, a TV drama written by Jim Allen and directed by Ken Loach for the BBC Wednesday Play in 1969.

Under the threat of redundancy a group of Liverpool dockers plan and then carry out an occupation and work-in on the docks. Their leaders are arrested and stand trial. Mary Whitehouse, the right wing president of the National Viewers and Listeners Association, in a bizarre outburst, described it as "...a blueprint for the communist takeover of the docks". Back on Planet Earth the Labour Government had just issued its proposals for an overhaul of "industrial relations".

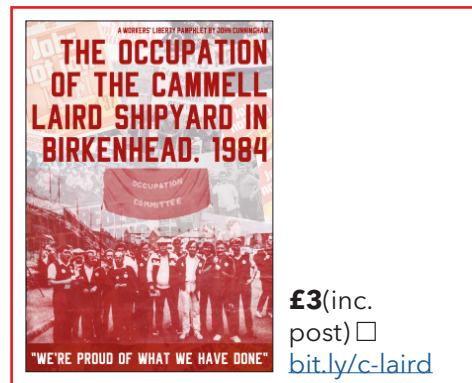
Their document, *In Place of Strife*, which proposed a ban on unofficial strikes, never became law and the trade union movement entered into one of its most militant periods since the end of the Second World War.

The Big Flame captured the spirit of



the time and even inspired the name of a left group which was formed in 1970 (it soon acquired the nickname "Little Flicker" and was wound up in 1984). Check out the British Film Institute DVD boxset: *Ken Loach at the BBC*. □

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Steel strike from 8 July

By Matt Dunn

The first strike in the steel industry in over 40 years is now on from 8 July, following a meeting of Unite union reps at Tata in south Wales last week.

In response to a limited campaign of industrial action short of a strike, and urging from the Labour Party to hold back until the election, and negotiations on a new deal, from shutting down parts of the Port Talbot and Llanwern steelworks and cutting jobs, Tata Steel management have upped the anti – calling workers in for one-to-one meetings, pressuring them into signing to say if they intend to strike or not, and threatening redundancy packages. The voluntary redundancy scheme opened on 15 May. The owners have been bullish in their rejection of Labour's calls for restraint.

Unite threatened to escalate their campaign in the light of these actions. They have now made good on that threat.

Scandalously, officials from the other



two unions at Port Talbot and Llanwern – Community (which organises most of the direct production workers) and GMB (which has a small membership) – have ignored their mandates for action and are standing by. They should join the dispute alongside Unite. Members

should respect Unite picket lines, argue for their unions to change line, and “dual-card” (join Unite as well as Community and GMB).

When steel workers last struck in the UK, in 1980, they were met with a determined attack from the new Thatcher

government. They have not recovered the confidence and militancy to strike since, despite huge job losses and site closures over the four decades that have passed.

The facing-down of the steel workers was a prelude to what Thatcher had in store for the miners. As with the steel workers since 1980, the trade union movement as a whole has still not fully recovered from the defeat of the NUM in 1985.

With the 2022-3 strike wave and now this, are we witnessing the start of a recovery in industrial militancy at last? □

More left-wing young delegates at Unison



By Katy Dollar

No emergency motions were allowed onto the agenda of the National Delegate Conference, 18-21 June, of the public services union Unison.

That meant all discussion of cuts, pay and services had to be on motions submitted before the general election was called.

The conference was still far more lively and left wing than previous conferences, with big applause for calls for militant action. The conference was dominated by calls to ensure the union is ready to fight Labour when they take office. Younger delegates were both more visible and more left-wing than previous years.

There were low points. Though some policy in support of migrant workers was passed, an amendment to support free movement was defeated. A motion on “respecting police staff” brought in response to criticism of the police at previous conferences was overwhelmingly passed with one black delegate being heckled whilst trying to discuss her experience of police racism.

A right-wing motion on speaking in a “personal capacity” attempted to prevent elected reps saying anything that isn’t exactly official Unison policy. Its defeat was an indication that conference had moved on from the time that performative attacks on the National Executive Committee would be prioritised by delegates over political and industrial strategy.

The Tories are continuing their culture war by attacking trans rights as part of their election campaign, after blocking gender recognition legislation in Scotland and issuing dangerous

guidance to schools regarding young people and their rights. Conference discussed a fightback, with many delegates bemoaning Labour’s repeated failure to stand up for trans rights.

Several motions on the year of the LGBT+ worker passed, with much discussion on trans rights. An informal caucus began mobilisations amongst union members for Trans Pride on [27 July](#).

Two significant international motions were passed. One backed Ukraine and its labour movement and “actively support[ed] Ukraine’s struggle for liberation from Russian imperialism”.

Speakers against painted the motion as pro-NATO and said to support Ukrainian self determination was to support a Western proxy war.

A member of the Socialist Workers Party from Barnet speaking against the motion said: “If we voted for a ceasefire in Gaza, we should vote for a ceasefire in Ukraine.”

Delegates rejected support for a ceasefire on Russian terms and voted for the motion.

The motion on Gaza called for an immediate ceasefire and access to humanitarian assistance, and for an end to Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip. The motion also condemned Hamas’s murderous 7 October attack on civilians in southern Israel that prompted Israel’s current assault on Gaza, and it called for the release of all hostages.

The motion reiterated Unison’s position of supporting “two states” as a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians: “Only an internationally supported, just political solution... which provides for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state, alongside Israel, where both states live side by side within secure and recognised borders, will achieve justice and rights for the people of Palestine and Israel.”

The prospects of achieving two states seemed remote even before the as-

sault on Gaza, with “the continued de facto annexation of the West Bank, particularly under the Netanyahu led government”. Nevertheless, “two states” remains the only just way the national rights of the two peoples in the area can be met, and it is an ever-more urgent necessity for the Palestinians.

The motion urged the union to work with Israeli and Palestinian unions in the West Bank. In 2021 a message of support to striking hospital workers – many of whom were Palestinian – was [blocked](#) at the Unison National Executive on the grounds of BDS, because the workers were organised by the Histadrut, Israel’s TUC.

Workers Liberty supported the motion although we [oppose BDS](#) and especially oppose it being used as a blanket ban on all people, organisations and things Israeli.

Unison should push against the right-wing drift of the Labour Party and fight for a government accountable to the working class and working in our interest. This will mean passing better policy, but also getting Unison to stick to what it passed this year.

Last year’s conference called for a demonstration for the NHS. It has still not been called. Even Unison fighting for its existing policy would be a step forward for our union and the labour movement. □

GMB in run-up to Amazon ballot

By Satya Pine

On 19 June the GMB union brought its union recognition campaign inside BHX4 in Coventry. Six years of management propaganda can finally be countered on the ground, with posters and slideshows showing the benefits of joining the union, and, importantly, workers themselves leading the multiple sessions the union can now run under an access agreement.

Balloting begins on 8 July, and runs through to the 13th. Postal ballots begin a bit earlier, on 3 July. Results should be in by 15 July.

Despite the meetings inside BHX4 going well, it will continue to be an uphill battle against a likely increase in disgraceful union-busting from Amazon management.

First

If the union wins, it will be the first time Amazon has recognised a union in Europe. The BHX4 fulfilment centre is a crucial part of the giant’s infrastructure, one of a handful of major suppliers to the smaller warehouses throughout the UK.

Those wanting to help secure this victory can sign a [petition](#), and, better, get involved in helping in Coventry – leafletting is taking place every Wednesday from 5:30-7:30pm – and getting as many others involved as we can. □

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France: action committees, not people's front?



By Martin Thomas

Opinion polls have budged little since French president Emmanuel Macron called a snap general election after the success of the far-right Rassemblement National (RN) in the 9 June Euro-election.

The RN is ahead, but looks unlikely to get an absolute majority, even with the Ciotti wing of the mainstream-right party Les Républicains (LR). Ciotti has done a seat-sharing deal with the RN, while the majority of LR still oppose the RN.

Jordan Bardella, Marine Le Pen's deputy and RN leader in the Assembly, says he will not become prime minister without an absolute majority in the Assembly.

The RN is busy, Starmer-like, with boasting about how it is now in harmony with big business and postponing social promises like restoring pensions at 62. It is even adjourning nationalist-racist promises that will disrupt the EU (though some of those remain).

However, that does not mean that it has tamed itself other than tactically. And the experience with far-right prime minister Giorgia Meloni in Italy suggests that expectations are low enough that if Bardella gets his majority, and forms an RN government, he can survive to the 2027 elections with little discredit for himself (and much for Macron). Meloni did well on 9 June although, after her election in October 2022, and despite some showy viciousness, "irregular" immigration to Italy rose 50% in 2023. She has liberalised legal immigration. Inflation has slackened but was already low. Unemployment is still at 7.2%. By early 2024 GDP per capita was up only 0.7% on a year before. Her voters are patient.

The Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP, New Popular Front), a new version of the 2022 NUPES alliance of La France Insoumise, Socialist Party,

Communist Party, and Greens, has improved a bit on the component parties' total score on 9 June, but not much. Macron's Ensemble and LR lag way behind.

If Macron hoped that people who had voted RN on 9 June as a "fed-up" vote, and those who abstained then, would rally to the centre and save his government (which has lacked an Assembly majority for two years), he was wrong. The exact outcome is made more unpredictable by the two-round system (30 June first round, 7 July run-off), but that much is clear.

The revolutionary socialist groups Lutte Ouvrière and Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (Révolutionnaires) are standing candidates on 30 June which will enable workers to send a clear signal for a class fightback. After their scores on 9 June (0.64% between them), they are unlikely to get into the 7 July run-offs.

If there is no Assembly majority, then, journalists speculate, Macron might appoint a "technocrat" prime minister, like Mario Draghi in Italy in February 2021 to October 2022. (In France it is usual, but not compulsory, for the prime minister to be an Assembly member). But which such technocrat can command an Assembly majority?

The Assembly cannot remove Macron, but he may be forced to resign. In that case, both his designated successor Gabriel Attal (Macron himself cannot stand again), and any "left" or "centre-left" candidate, look like losing to the RN's Marine Le Pen for president.

It is not impossible to turn round this political spiral. The RN is still a small party. It has only 800-odd local councillors out of the 223,000 in other-than-tiny municipalities. France's trade unions are still strong compared to most countries. 250,000 marched in Paris against the RN on 15 June.

In November 1935, as the French left's alarmed response to the fascist march on Parliament of February 1934 morphed into the (first) Popular Front, Leon Trotsky [called for](#) "Committees Of Action, Not the People's Front".

He called for an active united front in workplaces and on the streets, rather than a passive parliamentary combination which subordinated the Socialist Party and Communist Party to the Radicals, then the biggest of the bourgeois parties.

A similar idea – changing, no doubt, much that needs to be changed in light of new conditions – may be relevant today. □



Support the junior doctors!

By Sacha Ismail

Junior doctors, members of the British Medical Association (BMA), will begin their new round of strikes for "pay restoration" with a mass rally on Whitehall on the first strike day – 2.30pm, Thursday 27 June, outside Downing Street.

Striking from 27 June to 2 July, by the election the junior doctors will have struck for 44 days since March 2023, causing huge disruption in the NHS and extracting repeated concessions from the Tories.

Their demand for pay restoration – restoration of real-terms pay to the level of 2008, before huge real-terms cuts, starting with a substantial increase this year – has struck a chord in the wider labour movement, with the idea now being discussed in other unions.

Meanwhile junior doctors are the central force in a continuing transformation of the growing BMA from being a conservative professional as-

sociation (it campaigned [vehemently](#) against the start of the NHS) towards militant trade unionism. The BMA's Annual Representative Meeting (24-25 June) had just started as *Solidarity* went to press – more soon.

The junior doctors' tenacity and determination – and willingness to strike in the run up to the election – displays a spirit sorely needed in the labour movement.

Trade unionists, socialists and supporters of the NHS should:

- Attend the BMA's London rally and other picket lines and demonstrations.
- Donate to the strike fund: bit.ly/doc-f
- Sign Merseyside Fire Brigades Union's statement in support of the junior doctors: bit.ly/fbu-m
- Invite a striker to your union branch or other organisation.
- More on the strike: bit.ly/ju-doc and [@ERunswickBMA](https://twitter.com/ERunswickBMA) □

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Solidarity

For a workers' government

Gaza, Lebanon-Israel: Ceasefire now!

Israel out of the West Bank! Two states, equal rights!

By Ira Berkovic

As the death and destruction caused by its war on Gaza mounts, Israel is also continuing its clampdown on the occupied West Bank.

Israel has now transferred certain powers from the military to a unit of the Israeli civil service attached to the government department headed by far-right minister Bezalel Smotrich. This could indicate moves towards de jure annexation and further dispossession of Palestinians. On Saturday 22 June, footage emerged of Mujahed Azmi, a Palestinian injured in an Israeli raid, strapped to a jeep by Israeli soldiers.

West Bank Palestinians also face 32% unemployment, with thousands of workers who previously worked in Israel now refused entry. Israel is also withholding an estimated \$1.61 billion in tax revenue from the Palestinian Authority.

As Gazans face bombardment, famine, and health crises,

indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas over Biden's proposed ceasefire deal continue. Qatari mediators said on 21 June there had been "progress", but a deal remained some way off.

Lebanon

Meanwhile, Israel and Hezbollah continue to exchange fire across the Israel-Lebanon border. 60,000 Israelis and 90,000 Lebanese have been evacuated. An Israel-Hezbollah war would have devastating consequences for civilians on both sides. Warmongers in Israel claim Jewish Israelis can only ensure their safety by "eliminating" military opponents such as Hamas and Hezbollah. But the horrific devastation of the Gaza war shows both the unacceptably high cost, and near impossibility of success, of attempting to destroy Hamas militarily. Even some senior Israeli military figures have seemed to acknowledge this recently, earning them rebukes from

Netanyahu. Hezbollah is a far stronger enemy. And even if Hamas and Hezbollah were "eliminated", what then?

The warmongers would call for invasions of Iran, Yemen, and elsewhere, which would wreak havoc on civilian populations. Their mindset shackles Jewish Israelis to a future in which their "safety" is somehow only guaranteed by a permanent state of war.

In reality, as the slogan of the left-wing Arab-Jewish social movement Standing Together puts it, "only peace will bring security." A recent statement from Standing Together said: "We brought thousands of Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel from all over the country to join mass protests demanding a hostage release deal and an end to the war in Gaza. Time is running out, and the government is continuing to jeopardise the lives of both Palestinians and Jews. This horrific war needs to come to an end now!" □