



For social ownership of the banks and industry

TAX THE MILLIONAIRES



» Left policies needed against far-right

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Far-right violence on the streets

An organised labour-
movement response is
needed

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Reeves and the £22 billion

Go for the wealth held
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Trump vote conundrum

Trump says he doesn't
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And more debates

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Threat from the far right



According to the anti-fascist organisation Hope not Hate Tommy Robinson (real name Stephen Lennon) mobilised 20-30,000 people to march in an anti-establishment, populist “patriotic celebration” in London, on Saturday 27 July. Since then dozens of far-right anti-asylum-seeker mobilisations, often violent, have sprouted. A hotel housing asylum-seekers has been set on fire in Manvers, a police station torched in Sunderland, house and car windows smashed in Middlesbrough.

Robinson is a former member of the fascist British National Party and a founder of the anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant street-protest movement the English Defence League.

The 27 July short march, from the Royal Courts of Justice down the Strand to Trafalgar Square, was followed by a six-hour rally.

Marchers carried English flags, Union Jacks and, occasionally, Trump banners, or pro-monarchy flags. The overwhelming majority of marchers were working-class men and chants included “Who the Fuck is Allah?” and “England ‘till I die!”

The themes of the rally were opposition to immigration, transphobia, anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, opposition to “two-tier policing” and “Muslim grooming gangs”. Speakers included Christian ministers and armed forces veterans.

The biggest cheer came when Robinson did a survey of the crowd’s support for the main political parties. The big majority seem opposed to Labour and the Conservatives and pro-Reform. Robinson told the rally that he had invited Nigel Farage, Reform’s leader to the protest but Farage had said he “couldn’t make it.”

Reform took 14% of the vote in the re-



cent general election and we now have the prospect of a violent Robinson-led street movement linking up with Reform MPs who are able to amplify the xenophobic message in Parliament and right-wing media.

Half a million people followed Robinson’s livestream of the protest. Robinson has had his social media account on X reinstated and now has 700,000 followers.

Several people were arrested following the Robinson march, including some for an attack on a Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) supporter.

SUTR organised a much smaller counter-demonstration in protest against Robinson’s right-wing rally. Many of the SUTR rally speakers focussed on Palestine and failed to give clear answers about what could be done to confront the far-right.

On Sunday 28 July Robinson was arrested under the Terrorism Act.

On Monday 29 July he was due to attend a court on a charge of contempt, for producing a film, *Silenced*. *Silenced* repeats lies he made about a Syrian refugee that led to him to lose a libel case in 2021. Jamal Hijazi, a schoolboy, sued Robinson for the claim that Hijazi was “not innocent and he violently attacks young English girls in his school.” In 2021 the libel court judge said that Robinson’s falsehoods had been “particularly severe” for Hijazi, to who was awarded £100,000 in damages. In a provocation, *Silenced* was shown in full, on massive screens, in Trafalgar Square.

Before his court hearing, Robinson fled the country. His whereabouts are unknown.

On Tuesday 30 July, Robinson’s supporters protested in Southport, based on seemingly erroneous information about a stabbing that had taken place. A mosque was attacked during the protest.

Conclusions

The left and labour movement needs to draw some conclusions.

SUTR is a thin, inadequate organisation which functions as a front for Socialist Worker. The SWP is clearly out of its depth, completely outpaced by the scale of the far-right mobilisations and the prospect of a Reform-Robinson alliance.

SUTR has been repeatedly out-organised by recent EDL-Robinson protests and if the police had not prevented confrontations between far-right activists and anti-Nazi protesters on recent London demonstrations the left would have been violently driven off the streets.

SUTR has a bourgeois-liberal approach to anti-fascism. It generally looks to avoid confrontation with the right, does not organise to defend anti-fascist protests, does not advocate policies that could form the basis of black, Asian and white workers’ unity. It does not advocate a working-class based response at all.

The British unions fund SUTR and effectively “contract out” anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigning to an organ-

isation which gives trade union General Secretaries platforms at rallies and gives the union leaders an excuse to say they are “doing something”. Union members must lead a change of orientation. The trade unions must begin to mobilise the mass of their members, in organised groups, behind union banners to confront the far-right and fascists.

Politically the left must advocate workers’ unity against all forms of racism, and for jobs and decent housing for all workers; for taxing the rich to pay for free education, for rebuilding the NHS and welfare state. We must clearly state we are for migrants and refugees. They are our brothers and sisters, not our enemies or a threat.

The Labour Party in office will fuel the growth of the far right if it fails to end poverty, attack inequality, and fight for workers’ rights. The Labour Party must end its anti-immigrant policies, close asylum detention centres, allow refugees to work, and stop the deportation raids. Labour should seek to negotiate free movement across Europe.

We can expect an increase in attacks on Muslim-Asian people, probably including threats to mosques, as a direct result of the Reform-Robinson bigoted agitation. The left should say clearly that oppressed and threatened communities in the UK have the right to organise self-defence. We should begin to discuss the need for labour movement self-defence in our unions, here and now.

We cannot trust the police to defend us from the far right. Increased police powers are likely to rebound on us. In Bristol on 3-4 August, where anti-fascists outnumbered the far right but only slightly, they were heavy-handed against the anti-fascists. Defence of anti-racists, minority communities and the left is our job.

Workers, unite and fight the far right! □

Defend the people targeted by far right!

By Thomas Wright

The mobilisation of anti-fascist protestors at Manvers on 4 August, where far-rightists set fire to a hotel housing asylum-seekers, was a very last-minute effort by local groups, including the Rotherham TUC and Stand Up To Racism. We amassed some 100-200 people to counter the far-right presence targeting asylum seekers at a Holi-

day Inn.

We arrived earlier than the far right, before midday, but we did not outnumber them. By 1pm, the fascist mob was up to 1,000 people. Violence from this overwhelming mass towards us, including the throwing of projectiles such as eggs and glass bottles, forced stewards and the police to escort us away from the hotel and from Manvers.

The far-right mob only grew from there, attacking the hotel directly, breaking police lines, entering the building and trying to set it alight, a blatant attempt to murder innocent people.

While this was happening, other anti-fascists were organising against a planned rally in Sheffield. Up to 400 people attended that one in opposition to a comparatively small

far-right crowd of around 20, which was prevented from causing any disorder.

The events last Sunday in Sheffield and Manvers must serve as lessons to all involved in organising counter-protests about where and how we prioritise our actions. The Sheffield rally targeted our city centre, while the Manvers rally explicitly targeted a location known to house migrants,

people who we knew would serve as targets to the far right and whom they ultimately tried to burn alive. If we want to be effective as anti-fascists, we must prioritise countering the far-right when they target the most vulnerable locations and people. We mustn’t make the same mistake as in Sheffield, where we failed in prioritising protecting those in direct danger in Manvers. □

Palestinian-Jewish movement starts new peace drive

By Ira Berkovic

The most hopeful force in Israeli society seeking to break out of the spiral of war and build an alternative future is Standing Together, the left-wing social movement which organises both Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel against war, racism, and occupation. On 25 July, an anti-war march in Tel Aviv called by Standing Together mobilised 2,000 people. Three days prior, the movement launched its new campaign, “Yes, Peace”, calling for a comprehensive political settlement based on recognition of a Palestinian state.

The recent Knesset vote shows how far there is to go to build a substantial force within official national politics that supports that aim. Standing Together’s campaign aims to build political consent for that horizon within Israeli society, to build grassroots pressure from below.

Our duty as internationalists is three-fold: to provide whatever direct, practical solidarity we can to the Palestinian people themselves, including via promoting humanitarian aid projects within the labour movement. To continue pressuring our own governments to increase diplomatic pressure on Israel to end war and occupation. And, crucially, to amplify and support the struggles of those in Israel seeking to build co-resistance between Jews and Palestinians towards a shared future and equal rights.

Workers’ Liberty members work within campaigns including [UK Friends of Standing Together](#) to develop that solidarity; please join us.

Socialists struggle towards a future in which all peoples have peace, freedom, and equal rights, including self-determination. The Netanyahu government in Israel represents a grave threat to all these aims. Along with his fascist allies Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, Netanyahu sees Israel’s ongoing brutal war in Gaza as part of a conscious po-



litical project to permanently suppress any assertion of Palestinian national rights. The direct opposition to Palestinian self-determination was clearly illustrated recently by the overwhelming vote in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, against the establishment of a Palestinian state. The vote was purely declarative and has no binding effect, but even symbolic gestures have intent and meaning.

Israel’s military opponents – both state forces such as Iran, and non-state paramilitary movements such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad – are also obstacles to peace, freedom, and equality. Much of the global radical left sees in these forces some “anti-imperialist” or “anti-colonial” essence, but their opposition to Israel is not merely a reflexive “resistance” but part of their own political and social projects. These projects aim for the imposition of ultra-conservative Islamic religious states, with “Zionist usurpers” (that is, all Israeli

Jews) driven out or killed. They are a fascist force within their own societies.

There is no symmetry of power between the Israeli state, as an occupying force, and the Palestinian people. But there is a certain political symmetry between Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad, and far-right religious nationalist movements in Israel, such as Ben Gvir’s Jewish Power party and Smotrich’s Religious Zionism party. On 29 July, parliamentarians and supporters from those parties stormed the Sde Teiman military base in an attempt to prevent military police from arresting soldiers accused

of torturing Palestinian detainees.

In response to the deaths of Druze children in Majdal Shams, members of the Knesset from the Labour Party, which has recently merged with the left-Zionist Meretz to form a new social-democratic party, the Democrats, moved a bill to amend Israel’s Nation-State Law. The law, passed in 2018, legally codified Jewish supremacy, explicitly relegating non-Jewish national and communal minorities, including Arabs and Druze, to secondary status. Arabic was relegated from an official state language to a “language with special status”. The Labour MKs’ proposal would see the law amended to acknowledge the state’s responsibility to act “for the benefit of all citizens and residents”, and restore Arabic’s status as an official language. Similar proposals to amend the law have been made in the past, without success.

The truth of Karl Marx’s adage that “a nation which oppresses another forges its own chains” is reaffirmed daily in Israel. The principal victims of the state’s 57-year military occupation of the Palestinians of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, its former occupation and ongoing blockade and siege of Gaza, and its discrimination against the 20% Palestinian minority within its borders are, of course, the Palestinian people themselves. But the logic of these policies has also trapped Jewish Israelis in a spiral of chauvinist militarism which tells them their safety and security can only be maintained by the permanent subjugation of another people. □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Thu 15 August: 7:30, Menard Hall, 14 Galway St, London EC1V 3SW: Trotsky on Ukraine. More events at [workersliberty.org/events](#), or scan QR code.

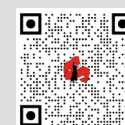
At work or on campus

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](#), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

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



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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

[workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs](#)
14 August online

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 8-13 August, email awl@workersliberty.org. □

SOCIALIST SUMMER CAMP 2024

23-26 August
Haslemere,
Surrey



Join Workers’ Liberty for our annual Socialist Summer Camp.
Come along for a weekend of fires, partying, nature, good food and socialist education.

Morning Star praises Farage on Ukraine



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

In general, the *Morning Star* and its political masters at the Communist Party of Britain, don't much like Nigel Farage. They frequently point to his racism and a host of other reactionary positions. Even when they actually agree with him (over the EU) they tend to avoid pointing this out, presumably because it's a tad embarrassing.

But on one question, the MS has no such compunction: Ukraine.

Following Farage's remarks blaming Nato and the European Union for (supposedly) provoking the Russian invasion, the paper leapt to his defence. The front-page headline on 24th June was "PM AND STARMER UNITED FOR WAR" below which "political correspondent" Andrew Murray condemned Sunak and Starmer for (allegedly) supporting a "drive to a wider war in Europe" and backed up Farage's line (which is, indeed identical to that of the MS and CPB, including the backside-covering disavowal of the invasion and of Putin). It's worth quoting at some length:

Reform Party owner Mr Farage has been the first to break through the wall of silence surrounding British policy towards Russia and Ukraine during the election. Mr Farage said: "The West's er-



Ukraine Solidarity activists protest outside REFORM UK Head Office

rors in Ukraine have been catastrophic. I won't apologise for telling the truth."

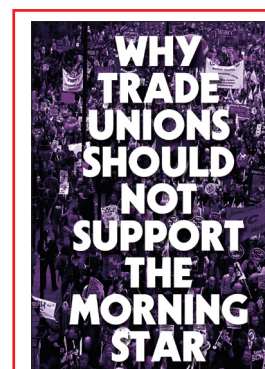
He had told the BBC that "the ever-eastward expansion of Nato and the European Union was giving this man a reason to say to Russian people, 'they're coming for us again' and to go to war," referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Making it clear that he did not support Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, he added: "I am not, and never have been an apologist or supporter of Putin. As a champion of national sovereignty, I believe Putin was entirely wrong to invade the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

"What I have been saying for the past 10 years is that the West has played into Putin's hands, giving him the excuse to

do what he wanted anyway."

Murray then went on to quote some other leftists who essentially agree with Farage when it comes to Ukraine: Stop the War's Lindsey German ("he was pointing out a fact: one reason



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for Putin's invasion... was because of relentless EU and Nato expansion eastwards"), CND general secretary Kate Hudson ("unrestrained NATO expansion up to Russia's borders has played a significant part in triggering the war on Ukraine"), and last but not least Murray's pal and hero George Galloway: "The absolute hysteria over Nigel Farage telling the truth about the Ukraine war is the shape of things to come".

Space does not permit a detailed refutation of why the Farage/MS-CPB/ Stop the War/ CND claim that Nato's "relentless expansion" was the cause of the invasion, but it's worth noting that the two decisive waves of Nato expansion were in 1999 and 2004: it is simply not plausible that events of 17 or 22 years earlier could suddenly become the cause of an invasion in February 2022.

But never mind: the important message from all these characters is that Ukraine's military resistance should not be supported and that "peace" on terms acceptable to Putin (i.e. Ukraine giving up territory) must be forced onto Ukraine.

This was not the first time that the MS has applauded an extreme right-winger opposing support for Ukraine. Back in February the paper reported, with evident approval, a "Republican opponent of US aid to Ukraine" calling for "negotiated peace with Russia": it was a (then) little-known senator called J D Vance. ☐

Serbia: Stop union-busting at Yura



Eric Lee

At first glance, Serbia seems like a great place for trade unions. Under the country's labour law, a union need only sign up 15% of the workforce in order to compel employers to bargain collectively. But the problem is that some unions open negotiations from a position of real weakness in the workplace, and wind up with poor contracts.

Similarly, the law in Serbia guarantees workers the right to things like sick leave (including leave to care for children who fall ill).

But there's a loophole in the law that has been exploited by a South Korean-owned firm, Yura, whose customers include car manufacturers such as Kia, Hyundai, Jaguar, Porsche, Audi, and Mercedes. That

loophole means that many workers are paid the minimum wage. Workers who report to work every single day, without exception, who work when they are ill, or when asked to come in on weekends, get "bonuses" which raise their wages considerably. Workers who miss a day are penalised for at least six months, or up to a year. As a result, workers know they have to report to work even when ill, injured, or with kids in hospital. This is the situation for Yura's more than 7,000 workers across Serbia.

The union says that Serbian law considers the minimum wage as a temporary measure for companies to overcome difficulties, for up to six months. But Yura has kept all of its shopfloor workforce on minimum wage since its establishment in Serbia over 13 years ago.

And it gets worse. When workers complained about

price increases in the company's cafeterias, the company agreed to roll back the prices. But they drastically cut down on portion sizes at the same time. They also allowed the company's sanitary facilities to deteriorate. Working for Yura has turned into a nightmare for thousands of workers.

By early June this year, the workers had enough. The Autonomous Metalworkers Trade Union of Serbia led a series of warning strikes in their fight for better wages and dignified working conditions. These were the specific demands of the strikers:

- A 20% pay raise from the current Serbian minimum wage.
- The cessation of the punitive attendance bonus policy.
- An increase in meal allowance from 250 RSD to 400 RSD.
- An additional 5 million RSD per month to improve condi-

tions in the company's sanitary facilities.

Those strikes prompted the company to begin a union-busting campaign while at the same refusing to negotiate with the union – in violation of the labour law.

During the strike, all workers faced constant intimidation and threats by the managers and team leaders. Yura is putting more and more pressure on workers to leave the union, by ostracising the workers who went on strike and dismissing a handful of workers on trumped-up charges, to serve as scapegoats.

The union has lodged a formal complaint with the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA), which is responsible for the German supply-chain due diligence law.

The union is also requesting international solidarity to pressure Yura to end un-



ion-busting activities and to responsibly conclude the negotiations moderated by the Serbian labour ministry. IndustriALL Global Union and IndustriAll Europe have been supporting the union and strikers in their struggle. Together with the union, they have launched a campaign on LabourStart to demand that the company respect workers' rights – and obey the law.

You can show your support for those workers by going to bit.ly/yura-strike ☐

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

Iran: arrested for singing



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

Iranian security forces have arrested Zara Esmaeili, a performance artist whose videos singing in public without hijab went viral.

Esmaeili has built a solid following performing without the mandatory hijab in public spaces including parks. Shas been taken into custody, with her family unable to get any information

available about her whereabouts or condition.

Iran prohibits women from singing or dancing in public, reflecting a broader repression against women's rights. Faravaz Farvardin, the founder of the Berlin-based Right to Sing Campaign commented:

"Iranian authorities often fabricate charges to justify their crackdown on female singers."

Several artists of all genders have been targeted by the repressive regime. Rapper Toomaj Salehi was recently arrested. Grammy Award-winning singer Shervin Hajipour is in jail.

Shervin Hajipour's song Baraye be-

came the anthem of the Women, Life, Freedom protests. Hajipour said on Instagram that his almost four-year sentence was upheld by an Iranian appeals court, which claimed the song incited people to "kill and fight." While Hajipour is no longer barred from leaving Iran, he said he will go back to prison rather than leave the country.

In July 2023, the Iranian government sentenced Salehi to six years in prison for participating in the 2022 Iran protests. On 24 April 2024 Salehi was sentenced to death for charges linked to Iran's 2022-23 Woman, Life, Freedom movement. That was overturned in June 2024.

There are also severe crackdowns on worker organising as strikes revive. Sharifeh Mohammadi, a education-worker trade unionist and former member of the Coordinating Committee to Form Workers' Organisations, was detained in December 2023 and sentenced to death on 4 July by the Revolutionary Court on charges of "rebellion."

Despite the heavy repression in rebellion against the dictatorship continues.

Solidarity with Iran's workers. Solidarity with Iran's women. For a constituent assembly and a secular republic. □

Labour: uphill fight to September conference

By Colin Foster

On 23 July Labour's National Executive withdrew the part of its reintroduced "contemporary motions" rule for Labour conference (22-25 Sep, Liverpool) which demands that conference motions from unions and local Labour Parties (CLPs) not be about matters "considered" by the National Policy Forum.

The rule that they must be about recent events (since 5 July) remains.

The stricter requirement had already been used by at least one CLP chair to exclude all motions submitted for conference. The looser rule has proved slippery in the past, debarring hundreds of motions in the Ed Miliband years but relatively few in the early Corbyn years.

In 2022 and 2023, the right-wing swayed the "priorities ballot" of CLP delegates so that left-wing motions failed to reach conference floor and blander topics were prioritised. The figures of CLPs nominations for National Executive candidates promise poorly this year: between 66 and 69 for the left; between 62 and 142 for right-wing candidates, although the right had to swap in new candidates late on when previous candidates became MPs).

The affiliated unions have pushed Labour on the "New Deal" for workers' rights, and seem relatively content with the King's Speech and a government call for disregard of the Minimum Service an-

ti-strike law until it is repealed.

Yet the unions have left other social issues, such as the NHS, in the "too hard" basket. Will they speak up at the September conference? Will they block [rumoured](#) even-more-restrictive rule changes?

Ten union general secretaries have [demanded](#) reinstatement of the seven Labour MPs de-whipped on 24 July for six months for voting for a King's Speech amendment to scrap the two-child benefit cap immediately, and the Labour left group Momentum is circulating a [template motion](#) against the cap for the September conference.

The ten include no Labour-affiliated unions other than FBU (though CWU has [protested](#) separately).

Starmer's suspensions were designed to scare rebels. In other parties too, suspending MPs from the whip has become routine. Boris Johnson de-whipped 21 Tory MPs in September 2019. Before the general election, 18 MPs sat as "independents" because suspended indefinitely by one party or another.

As far as I can see without days in a library, though, the vote of the seven was also the first vote ever by Labour MPs for an amendment to a Labour government's King's Speech demanding an "immediate" change. In November 1946 Richard Crossman got 57 MPs behind a mild amendment (suggesting a reoriented foreign policy) to the Attlee government King's Speech. Attlee backed a PLP motion

"forbidding" the amendment. Crossman disavowed the amendment and no Labour MP voted for it. 53 MPs voted for another amendment "regretting" the continuation of conscription, but that caused less fuss (20 Nov 1946).

Iraq

There have been much bigger Labour backbench rebellions. 89 Labour MPs voted against Blair on the Iraq war on 18 March 2003. Front-benchers were forced to resign, but MPs weren't suspended (maybe because the numbers were so high).

There has been harsher whipping in the past, too. In 1961 future Labour leader

Michael Foot, and four other MPs, lost the whip indefinitely for voting against the *Tory* Defence Estimates. Foot was reinstated only in 1963, after Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell died and the new leader, Harold Wilson, tried to broaden his base.

Should we have great hopes of Labour MPs' rebellions? Not without more push from CLPs and unions. Is everything absolutely sewn up in Labour? No.

The idea that it's all hopeless in the CLPs and the affiliated unions is dangerous, because it leaves leftists scrabbling to see hope in "local independents", "Gaza independents"

(including the Islamist-backed Shockat Adam), and the like.

Anger will develop against the Starmer regime. If the left in the labour movement cannot organise to express it, then it is likely to splatter in different ways: perhaps in some industrial militancy, perhaps in a boost for the Greens, but also in a rise of the far right, or in demoralised resentment.

It is unlikely that we'll see more than first beginnings in Liverpool of a labour-movement fightback. [Labour Left Internationalists](#) met on 4 August to relaunch its committee, plan for those beginnings – and ward off possible new clampdowns. □

Prisoner swap and its costs

By Michael Baker

On Thursday 1 August, a long-awaited prison swap took place in Ankara, Turkey, with Russia releasing 16 prisoners from Russian prisons in exchange for 8 prisoners held in prisons in Germany, the USA, Norway, and Sweden.

Among those released from Russia were a number of extremely big names: *Wall Street Journal* journalist Evan Gershkovich, leading liberal oppositionists Vladimir Kara-Murza and Ilya Yashin, even young artist Sasha Skochilenko. One can only hope that they are the first of the 1,304 political prisoners to be released, rather than the last.

The cost was considerable. Western governments approved the release of a number of high-profile Russian prisoners, most notably hitman Vadim Krasikov. The [Kremlin](#) acknowledged after his release that Krasikov is also an agent for the FSB, and will almost certainly be

put back to work training the next generation of Russian hitmen. This reinforces a dangerous pattern of behaviour that was last seen during the Brittney Griner case, when America exchanged the women's basketball star for Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout.

Krasikov's release may encourage the Kremlin to continue arresting as many political dissidents as possible, especially those with foreign passports. Once arrested, those prisoners can be swapped for one or another infamous Russian intelligence or arms figure.

As one Russian antiwar activist put it on social media: "When prisoners of war are exchanged for prisoners of war, that's an equal exchange. But when political prisoners who were put in prison for [placards](#), changing price tags, and giving speeches are exchanged for a murderer, that is not an equal exchange. I in no way condemn the political prisoners, nor the people who facilitated this process. I just urge you to keep in mind what freedom can cost." □

Trans rights revolt against Streeting

By Will Roberts

Health Secretary Wes Streeting announced on 14 July that the government would not be removing the Tories' temporary ban on puberty blockers for gender-questioning youth.

In a long [thread on X](#), Streeting explained that his primary concern was the distinction between puberty blockers being used to treat precocious puberty in younger people (long-established), and being used for young trans people to offset the effects of puberty (only 30 years of experience). The ban is in order to allow for further clinical trials to take place (although several papers reported that he was "minded to make the ban permanent").



Streeting says he is following the advice of the Cass report in taking this step. The report does not call for a ban on puberty blockers, although it does call for restricting the numbers receiving both puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones.

The [Cass report](#) had many flaws: it called for people to be required to take part in a research trial in order to access puberty blockers; it had no trans peo-

ple or gender-affirming practitioners in its governance bodies; it downgraded a large amount of existing evidence on the grounds that it was not from "Randomised Controlled Trials", though in this area as many other medical areas RCTs are difficult and maybe unethical.

However, the report's main recommendations were to vastly increase the provision of trans healthcare, in order to alleviate cruelly long waiting times and bring Britain in line with other countries for gender affirming healthcare provision. Streeting has taken no steps to implement these recommendations.

Several Labour MPs, including Nadia Whittome, Zarah Sultana and Stella Creasy, have criticised the decision

publicly, and a joint statement from the trans officers for both LGBT+ Labour and Labour Students urged Streeting to implement the actual recommendations of the review, and be clear about the length of the clinical trial for puberty blockers.

A protest by Trans Strike Back in London on 3 August had a simple message: "Fuck Wes Streeting, Protect Trans Youth".

[Pride in Labour](#), a new initiative by young activists in the Labour party, off the back of the anger at Streeting's announcement, is looking to organise a pro-trans rights grouping within the party ahead of the 22-25 Sep party conference. □

Starmer praises far-right Meloni on asylum

By Will Roberts

The first of two centres has been opened under the plan of Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to remove asylum seekers to two overseas sites in Albania.

No asylum-seekers will be moved there until both are operational. The project is scheduled to cost €650 million or more.

A number of European lead-

ers, including Keir Starmer, have praised the initiative, saying they will consider similar schemes.

There are differences from the notorious Rwanda plan, under which people would be dumped in Africa with no hope of an asylum hearing. The Albanian centres would, in effect, operate as if they were still in Italy, and process asylum requests for Italian asylum. Albania's European location

(only 100 miles from Italy) also provides some opportunity to "try again" should the asylum attempt fail.

The fundamental cruelty and false logic remains. "Offshore processing" is an attempt to disincentivise migrants from travelling to the country in question, by increasing the potential risk of being further displaced. This ignores the underlying fact that in the majority of cases, migrants

are forced to travel through dangerous and illegal routes in order to claim asylum wherever they can.

[Human Rights Watch](#) calls the scheme "a costly, cruel farce... A model of mismanagement and a blueprint for

abuse".

Our demands remain: free movement across borders. British and Italian workers have more in common with the migrants arriving at the borders than with the bosses profiting from their suffering. □



Corrections

Abel Harvie-Clark and Alex Cachinero-Gorman, elected student union sab-

baticals at SOAS University of London, were barred from taking office on 15 July by the largely self-elected [SU Board of Trustees](#). This is distinct from moves against Abel by SOAS management. Protest online: bit.ly/soas-r □

Reclaim the Power vs XR?



Letter

Sam Myerson's attempt ([Solidarity 715](#)) to counterpose Reclaim the Power's attitude to Extinction Rebellion and its spin-offs' "approach of self-sacrifice" is unconvincing.

The 2006-2010/11 "Climate Camp" movement was inspiring and valuable, but its direct action approach was one of comparatively small numbers of predominantly middle class activists taking daring direct action. This overwhelmingly was through individuals placing themselves in the way of polluting activities – power stations, airports, etc. – to prevent them going ahead until the activists were forcibly removed by police. More often than not, arrested. Climate Camp was the most prominent eco movement of its day.

From 2012, RtP has continued that approach, on and off. XR was founded in 2018, in many ways distilling that spirit of middle-class minority heroism. It was better in some ways. Where the previous "blockadia" direct action was

generally negative in demands and targets – stop this or that – XR demanded political, society wide changes. XR garnered mass support and coverage far beyond RtP or Climate Camp – and some jealousy and resentment from activists seasoned in the latter.

XR's demands were vague and insufficient. Initially at least, XR was undemocratic. RtP is more anarchist-influenced, is in many ways more democratically organised, and has more left-wing analysis and rhetoric. Much of the leadership of XR and spin-offs such as Insulate Britain and JSO have had overtly pro-arrest and early on sometimes uncritical of or even sympathetic to the police.

Roger Hallam, the most well-known founder of XR and of some of its spin-offs, is easy to hate. He's a crank. But he's not synonymous with those movements: indeed many within them are keen to distance themselves from him.

I refuse to believe that RtP activists would not support – and organise if they could! – blocking or spray-painting private jets, as JSO has faced state repression for. RtP surely supports JSO's extremely modest demands.

Roger Hallam and four others have, since Sam's article, been sentenced to

years in jail for never-executed plans to block the M25. They've been demonised by the right-wing media – including *The Sun*, who'd snitched on them – as "fanatics", "zealots", and as (potentially) causing disruption. Such reactionary criticisms are not shared by us, or RtP. Many in RtP celebrate "Reclaim the Streets", which blocked motorways three decades ago, and would not condemn JSO for that.

All these movements lack the necessary working-class orientation. We've been right to intervene in them, with that critique from the left. We established Workers' Climate Action and intervened in Climate Camp with it. Workers' Liberty activists have been involved in many Reclaim the Power events, organising for a working-class orientation. We've been involved in XR Trade Unionists, in XR "Rebellions", and local XR groups – many of which are still active, relatively open, and have dozens or hundreds involved. We've promoted class struggle politics in a youth organisation initially part of Just Stop Oil. We support daring direct action, but see mass and working-class organisation over ecological issues as indispensable. We should intervene

more. But to intervene most effectively we shouldn't excessively puff up, or off-handedly write off, parts of the existing movement. □

Zack Muddle, Bristol



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The Trump vote conundrum

By Tom Harrison

Donald Trump underlined his authoritarian Intent and dictatorial bent when he told a group of Christian conservatives (26 July) that if they vote for him this time they won't have to do it again, because in four years' time it will be "fixed." Meanwhile on Fox News the previous day, and elsewhere, Trump says: "My instruction – we don't need the votes."

The contradictory nonsense seems aimed to further discredit actual votes as a measure of who becomes president. MAGA has populated election boards with election deniers. It is reckoned that at least 70 election deniers hold election board posts in seven key swing states. They will seek to throw out votes and refuse result certifications causing (at least) substantial chaos on election night and the days that follow.

In his latest speech in Georgia, Trump pretty much boasted that the state election board was in his pocket. Various electoral challenges will be bound for the Supreme Court, and it's not hard to work out who they'll come down in favour of.

The one certainty in the event of Trump losing at the polls is that he won't be accepting the result. There will be blood. Weeks of electoral wrangling is bound to lead to outbreaks of violence fuelled by misinformation and

conspiracy nonsense spread on the internet. The scale of such violence can't be predicted. There's no doubt the far right in the USA are preparing for it and they've got guns.

Trump's new push to discredit voting may be stimulated by Joe Biden's exit from the US presidential race (21 July). Less than a month ago Trump looked unstoppable electorally. The attempted assassination, his crowning at the Republican National convention and favourable judgements from crony judges all suggested an electoral walk-over come November. With the entry of Kamala Harris into the race, all that has been thrown up in the air.

As opinion polls close the gap between the two candidates, the prospect of Trump losing becomes a realistic one. Vladimir Putin is hedging his bets! The recent prisoner swap must have peeved Trump, who expected this would be happening when he returned to office as one of the many issues he'd "solve" along with the Middle East, Ukraine, etc. If Trump ends up in the jailhouse rather than the White House next year, it's doubtful he'll be similarly exchanged for an American journalist held prisoner by the Kremlin!

Harris has clearly rattled Trump's cage. The age issue has been turned on its head. There is now focus on Trump's mental confusions. He's started lying



about his new opponent's age, saying that she's 60, which she won't be for another two months, as if that's almost the same as 78. In the countdown to election day attacks against Harris will become increasingly racist and misogynistic.

Those attacks have already started. Mini-me Veep J D Vance has denounced her as a "childless cat lady" and Trump has talked of Harris "turning black" and being "a low IQ individual". Knuckle-dragging Congressmen have called her a "DEI hire" (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), implying that Harris is in post only as a token for her race and gender.

Attacks on programmes to combat

discrimination in the workplace and wider society are very much part of the Republican right playbook and essentially derive from white-supremacist notions that non-white people are less intelligent and therefore can't possibly do "professional jobs". Their position in the labour market is to do menial and servile work at the behest of others – what Trump himself has no doubt always thought of as "black jobs".

This mindset was challenged when Trump appeared at the Black Journalists convention recently raising the spectre of "millions of migrants" crossing the border to take "black jobs". When asked, he was unable to convincingly define what constituted a "black job". US gymnast Simone Biles was to troll Trump on social media, displaying her latest gold medal alongside the words "I love my black job".

It has almost become a truism to say that if the Democrats put up a halfway decent candidate capable of holding Trump to account they'd beat him. That remains to be seen, but might account for Trump seeking to avoid debate with Harris on TV. His rants praising "the late great Hannibal Lecter" or on whether he prefers to be electrocuted rather than eaten by a shark, should serve as enough warning to the electorate, should the memory of his years in office not suffice. □

Reeves and the £22 billion "gap"

By Martin Thomas

Lots of big numbers in chancellor Rachel Reeves's speech of 29 July. The Tories were spending £22 billion more in 2024-5 than they had planned funds for.

Trouble is, she missed the bigger numbers. The [wealthiest 1%](#) of adults in the UK own [about 23%](#) of all wealth, or getting on for £3,000 billion; the richest 10%, the millionaires or near-millionaires, 55%, £8,000 billion or so.

The £22 billion gap could be fixed by a wealth tax of just 0.7% on the top 1%. And their wealth expands regularly by more than that anyway, with dividends, interest, and capital gains.

Instead Reeves chose to close the gap by curbing pensioners' winter fuel payments, demanding a 2% cut in "back office costs" in government departments, and adjourning the Tories' (notional) plans for 40 new hospitals and a start on social care reform.

The Tories blamed her for approving pay rises of 5.5% for teachers and NHS workers, a 5% remit for civil service workers, and a bigger rise for junior doctors. Though CPI inflation is now 2% year-on-year, and RPI 2.9%, those rises

do little to reverse the loss of public sector real wages since 2009. They do, however, show that the union action of 2022-3, patchy as it was, made a difference. They give the lie to those who say that it is no use pressing demands on the Labour leadership.

The left and the unions can push Reeves to raise taxes on capital gains, at least, in her 30 October Budget. [Tax Justice UK](#) reports that equalising tax rates on capital gains with those on income, a small wealth tax, and a bit more would raise £60 billion for public services.

It's better for the left to focus on taxing the rich than, as Sharon Graham of Unite has done, on scrapping "fiscal rules".

Even a workers' government would need to make revenues somewhere near match spending. Reeves's particular "fiscal rules" make little sense, but the most important reason is that they obscure other big numbers.

In 2024-5 the government will pay over three times the "gap", about [£73.5 billion](#), in interest on its IOUs (bonds). The figure is high because interest rates are high.

Just not paying would be tricky even

for a workers' government, unless it was ready to go into a "siege economy", because [31%](#) of the IOUs are held overseas. But almost all the rest are held by UK high finance, and 28% by the Bank of England.

The Treasury automatically scoops the BoE's profits and covers its losses. On balance that means Treasury payments to the BoE of [over £40 billion](#) a year, going forward, because of legacies of the "Quantitative Easing" programme (essentially, the government stuffing cash into the banks to keep

credit flowing smoothly).

Taking UK high finance into public ownership and democratic control, and reasserting democratic control over the Bank of England, would fix the bigger "gaps" here.

We seek to unite the left and the unions to campaign for taxing the rich to fund the NHS, social care, etc.; and to use that campaign as a springboard for demanding public ownership and democratic control of high finance. □

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/rv-22

Vance renews anti-union drive

By Rhodri Evans

Trump's candidate for VP, J D Vance has reintroduced his draft [legislation](#) for joint worker-boss organisations to replace unions. The proposal is also pushed by the [American Compass](#) think-tank and in the ["Project 2025"](#) plan for a Trump administration.

The Vance legislation would not ban unions. It aims to marginalise unions via the joint worker-boss forums. Whether the depleted unions would then be banned outright, or allowed a marginal existence, would depend.

"Project 2025" proposes to remove unions from specified sections of federal government, such as the Department of Homeland Security, and calls for "Congress [to] consider whether [any] public-sector unions are... compatible with constitutional government". □

We are not just th

The road to Bolshevism

This article continues an analysis of Vladimir Ulyanov's (Lenin's) famous 1902 pamphlet What Is To Be Done? Ulyanov argues that organised socialists can discharge our duties to the working class only by a fight for socialist ideas, not by just "building the movement" in a general way and hoping socialist ideas will evolve almost automatically. 17th in a series of articles around the 100th anniversary of the death of Ulyanov.

By Sean Matgamna

Ulyanov posed the conditions under which Marxism reaches workers with brutal bluntness:

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a 'third' ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology).

"Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology".

The falsifications of Marxism by different strands of Stalinism do and have done the same sort of thing, creating a sort of working-class "false consciousness". And so did and does "Orthodox Trotskyism". It sees socialist development as an allegedly mechanical process, and to a serious degree a spontaneous process (a quasi-automatic response to the supposed total impasse of capitalism), rather than the conscious process Ulyanov depicts here.

"There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology... for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.

"Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy [Marxism], is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy. The sentence employed by the authors of the Economist letter... that the efforts of the most

inspired ideologists fail to divert the working-class movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment is therefore tantamount to renouncing socialism".

For decades the Orthodox Trotskyists operated on the assumption that the changing and falsification of Marxism by Stalinism, on top of the falsifications in the Socialist (Second) International up to 1914, did not change the prospects of socialism. They had to do that or "despair and die". We can see the issues more clearly from our own situation.

"If these authors were capable of fearlessly, consistently, and thoroughly considering what they say, as everyone who enters the arena of literary and public activity should be, there would be nothing left for them but to 'fold their useless arms over their empty breasts' and surrender the field of action to the [bourgeois liberals, like the] Struves and Prokopoviches, who are dragging the working-class movement 'along the line of least resistance', i.e., along the line of bourgeois trade-unionism, or to the [attempt in Russia in 1901-3 to create police-controlled pseudo trade unions, with leaders like the Moscow policeman Zubatov]... are dragging it along the line of clerical and gendarme 'ideology'."

"It is often said that the working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism", writes Ulyanov, and continues: "This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily..."

But to assimilate a theory, you have to have it available. Ulyanov continues: "provided, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, provided it subordinates spontaneity to itself... The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree".

Arguing that the educational work of Marxists was essential if the "spontaneous" working class trade "unionist" movement were to become socialist, Marxist movement, Lenin cites the experience of the German labour move-

ment. "Recall the example of Germany. What was the historic service [the pioneer socialist] Lassalle rendered to the German working-class movement [in 1863-4]? It was that he diverted that movement from the path of progressive trade-unionism and co-operativism towards which it had been spontaneously moving..."

"A fierce struggle against spontaneity was necessary, and only after such a struggle, extending over many years, was it possible, for instance, to convert the working population of Berlin from a bulwark of the [bourgeois] Progressive Party into one of the finest strongholds of Social-Democracy."

German Social Democracy

Though he greatly admired German socialism, Lenin knew very well that the struggle he describes is never definitively won by the Marxists, never over and done with. The labour movement lives in a hostile capitalist environment, where bourgeois ideas are, so to speak, in the very air the workers breathe. Lenin knows that the class struggle on the ideological front takes place also within the working class movement, as the controversy between the Marxists and "revisionists" in Germany, to which he has already referred, testifies. He recalls:

"Even now the German working class is, so to speak, split up among a number of ideologies. A section of the workers is organised in Catholic and monarchist trade unions; another section is organised in the Hirsch-Duncker unions, founded [in 1865] by the bourgeois [liberal] worshippers of English trade-unionism [on the principle of the 'harmony of class interests']; the third is organised in Social-Democratic trade unions. The last-named group is immeasurably more numerous than the rest, but the Social-Democratic ideology was able to achieve this superiority, and will be able to maintain it, only in an unswerving struggle against all other ideologies."

Why?

"But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination."

Today variants of bourgeois ideology fill the social atmosphere even more, through schools, universities, social media, television, advertising, and much more.



Lenin now discusses more concretely the political characteristics of his opponents in the Russian socialist movement.

"*Rabochaya Mysl* does not altogether repudiate the political struggle; the rules for a workers' mutual benefit fund published in its first issue contain a reference to combating the government.

"*Rabochaya Mysl* believes, however, that 'politics always obediently follows economics' (Rabocheye Dyelo varies this thesis when it asserts in its programme that 'in Russia more than in any other country, the economic struggle is inseparable from the political struggle').

"If by politics is meant Social-Democratic [Marxist socialist] politics, then the theses of *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo* are utterly incorrect."

Varieties of labour movement

Ulyanov is writing long before such 20th century experiences as a Peronist labour movement in Argentina, but he understands how such hybrids could develop. The economic struggle of the workers can be linked to many variants of anti-Marxist, anti-socialist, bourgeois politics too. And after Ulyanov, there would be powerful Stalinist trade unions which advocated totalitarianism, that is, were politically reactionary even compared to liberals because they accepted the leadership of Stalinists and a Stalinist model of a desirable society.

the “best builders”



“The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (although not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have seen.

“*Rabocheye Dyelo*’s theses are [only] correct, if by politics is meant trade union politics, viz., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for alleviating the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labour to capital.

“That striving indeed is common to the English trade-unionists, who are hostile to socialism, to the Catholic workers, to the [police-run] “Zubatov” workers [organisation in Russia], etc. There is politics and politics.

“Thus, we see that *Rabochaya Mysl* does not so much deny the political struggle, as it bows to its spontaneity, to its [lack of scientific socialist] consciousness.

“While fully recognising the political struggle (better: the political desires and demands of the workers), which arises spontaneously from the working-class movement itself, *Rabochaya Mysl* absolutely refuses independently to work out a specifically Social-Democratic politics corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to present-day conditions in Russia...”

A critic had said of a leading article in *Rabochaya Mysl* that it had been written in a “sharp and fervent” manner.

“Every man with convictions who thinks he has something new to say writes ‘fervently’ and in such a way as to make his views stand out in bold relief.

“Only those who are accustomed to sitting between two stools lack ‘fervour’; only such people are able to praise the fervour of *Rabochaya Mysl* one day and attack the ‘fervent polemics’ of its opponents the next.”

Subservience

Ulyanov now discusses another “Economist”-leaning text, the *Appeal of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group* (March 1899).

“The authors of the ‘Appeal’ rightly say that ‘the workers of Russia are only just awakening, are just beginning to look about them, and are instinctively clutching at the first available means of struggle’.

“Yet they draw from this the same false conclusion as that drawn by *Rabochaya Mysl*, forgetting that the instinctive is the unconscious (the spontaneous) to the aid of which socialists must come; that the ‘first available means of struggle’ will always be, in modern society, the trade union means of struggle, and the ‘first available’ ideology the bourgeois ([narrow] trade unionist) ideology...”

“That the mass movement [the great strike movements of the 1890s] is a most important phenomenon is a fact not to be disputed. But the crux of the matter is, how is one to understand the statement [from *Rabocheye Dyelo*] that the mass working class movement will ‘determine the tasks’? It may be interpreted in one of two ways.

“Either, it means bowing to the spontaneity of this movement, i.e., reducing the role of Social-Democracy to mere subservience to the working-class [trade-unionist] movement as such (the interpretation of *Rabochaya Mysl*, the *Self-Emancipation Group*, and other Economists).

“Or, it means that the mass movement places before us new theoretical, political, and organisational tasks, far more complicated than those that might have satisfied us in the period before the rise of the mass movement.

“*Rabocheye Dyelo*... has argued constantly as though the ‘mass movement’ relieves us of the necessity of clearly understanding and fulfilling the tasks it sets before us.

“We need only point out that *Rabocheye Dyelo* considered that it was impossible to set the overthrow of the autocracy as the first [prime] task of the mass working-class movement, and that it degraded this task (in the name of the mass movement) to that

of a struggle for immediate political demands”.

In a footnote, Ulyanov says that the article by B Krichevsky in *Rabocheye Dyelo* repeats these mistakes.

“Krichevsky, protesting against what he regards as the absolutely unfounded charge of Economist heresy, pathetically exclaims: ‘What Social-Democrat does not know that according to the theories of Marx and Engels the economic interests of certain classes play a decisive role in history, and, consequently, that particularly the proletariat’s struggle for its economic interests must be of paramount importance in its class development and struggle for emancipation?’”

Ulyanov comments: “The word ‘consequently’ is completely irrelevant. The fact that economic interests play a decisive role does not in the least imply that the economic (i.e., trade union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the ‘decisive’ interests of classes can be satisfied only by radical political changes in general.

“In particular the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Krichevsky repeats the arguments... that politics follows economics, etc... of the Bernsteinians of German Social-Democracy [the ‘revisionists’, who formulated their idea as ‘the movement is everything, the end, nothing’]... that the workers must first of all acquire ‘economic power’ before they can think about political revolution”.

Tactics

Ulyanov then takes up an argument about “tactics as plan” and “tactics as process”.

The “Economist” journal *Rabocheye Dyelo* had seen a “diametrical contradiction” between two statements in *Iskra*, the Marxist newspaper which Ulyanov, with Plekhanov, Martov, and others had been publishing from exile since December 1900.

One: “Social-Democracy does not, tie its hands, it does not restrict its activities to some one preconceived plan or method of political struggle; it recognises all means of struggle as long as they correspond to the forces at the disposal of the Party” (*Iskra* no.1.)

Two: “Without a strong organisation skilled in waging political struggle under all circumstances and at all times, there can be no question of that systematic plan of action, illuminated by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name

of tactics” (*Iskra*, no.4).

Objecting to the “systematic plan of action”: “*Rabocheye Dyelo*... has made the remarkable discovery that ‘tactics-as-plan contradicts the fundamental spirit of Marxism’... that tactics are ‘a process of growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party’... This remark has every chance of becoming a celebrated maxim, a permanent monument to the *Rabocheye Dyelo* ‘trend’.

“To the question, whither?... [it] replies: Movement is a process of changing the distance between the starting-point and subsequent points of the movement.

“This matchless example of profundity is not merely a curiosity (were it that, it would not be worth dealing with at length), but the programme of a whole tendency...”, expressed also in *Rabochaya Mysl* as: “That struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is that which is going on at the given moment”.

Ulyanov comments: “This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity.”

Iskra and the associated journal *Zarya* have been working to a “systematic plan” of reorganising the existing Marxist circles into a coherent party around a newspaper published abroad and smuggled into Russia.

Now we hear: “Tactics-as-plan contradicts the whole spirit of Marxism!”.

Ulyanov responds: “This is a libel on Marxism. It means turning Marxism into the caricature held up by the Narodniks [populists] in their struggle against us [when the populists censured the Marxists as people waiting on a hypothetical mass workers’ struggle while they, the populists, went ahead with definite plans, e.g. to assassinate Tsarist officials].

The libel “means belittling and restraining the initiative and energy of class-conscious fighters, whereas Marxism, on the contrary, gives a gigantic impetus to the initiative and energy of the Social-Democrat, opens up for him the widest perspectives, and (if one may so express it) places at his disposal the mighty force of many millions of workers ‘spontaneously’ rising for the struggle.

“The entire history of international Social-Democracy teems with plans advanced now by one, now by another political leader, some confirming the far-sightedness and the correct political and organisational views of their authors and others revealing their short-sightedness and their political errors”. □

Call for a workers' par



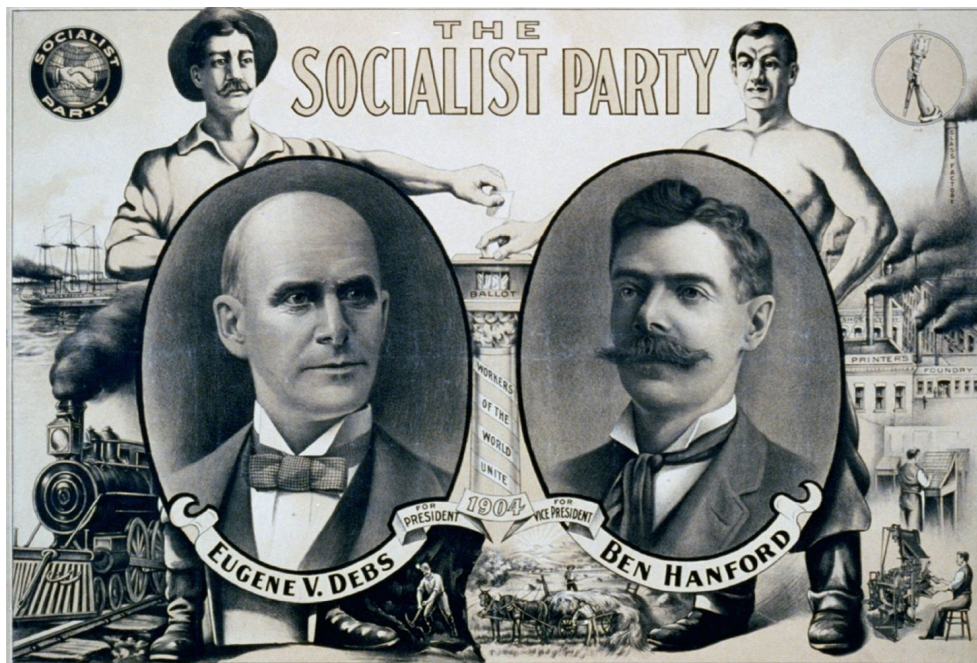
Debate

By Katy Dollar and Will Roberts

Our primary intervention into the political situation around the American election should be to point to the need for independent working-class political organisation, a social programme based on class interest. The American left and labour movement must fight Trumpism on a basis of working-class unity, including abortion rights, anti-racism, trans rights, and demands for radical social transformation on issues such as wages, housing, and healthcare.

Were we based in the US, that would include raising the call for an American workers' party. No matter how you characterise the Trump movement, all comrades should agree on the necessity to organise independently against the far right as a political force. This position is undermined by calling for a vote for a capitalist party. By calling, in the first instance, for a vote for the Democratic Party, comrades in the majority have initiated a substantial change in line with-out properly accounting for it.

The majority is not a homogeneous bloc, so positions will have to be dealt with separately. We do not wish to tar some with the poor arguments of others. One section of the majority say that there has never been a rule against voting for bourgeois candidates; this is a misreading of the history of Marxism. Others argue that there was a general



principle against supporting bourgeois candidates, which must be altered due to specifics of the current situation. A final group see attempts to rake over tradition as a quasi-religious practice, saying instead that the job of socialists is to assess the reality in front of us, and draw conclusions based on that assessment.

The tradition

Martin Thomas has presented his own former position on the Chirac/Le Pen election of 2002 as the primary example in our tradition of opposing a vote for bourgeois candidates. It is, of course, true that the majority of the history of independent working-class socialism cannot be neatly packaged under the label "don't vote for capitalists". Instead, at most points it has been expressed in positive terms: a duty to mobilise the working class as an independent force against the rule of the bosses, to convince workers to enact their own independent programme, organisation and mobilisation. If you wanted a pithy attempt to sum up the totality of our politics, that would be close.

Georgi Plekhanov puts it well, in his article *The Tasks of the Social Democrats in the Famine*, recently reprinted in *Solidarity* 706:

"A necessary condition for the victory of the proletariat is its recognition of its own position, its relations with its exploiters, its historic role and its socio-political tasks.

For this reason the new Socialists consider it their principal, perhaps even their only, duty to promote the growth of this consciousness among the proletariat, which for short they call its class consciousness.

The whole success of the socialist movement is measured for them in terms of the growth in the class consciousness of the proletariat. Everything that helps this growth they see as useful

to their cause: everything that slows it down as harmful".

In elections, this duty to working class independence is best expressed as standing independent candidates. As Karl Marx put it in 1850:

"Even where there is no prospect of achieving their election the workers must put up their own candidates to preserve their independence, to gauge their own strength and to bring their revolutionary position and party standpoint to public attention. They must not be led astray by the empty phrases of the democrats, who will maintain that the workers' candidates will split the democratic party and offer the forces of reaction the chance of victory."

Far before Martin Thomas, this has been expressed as a warning of the dangers of falling behind ruling class parties:

"A bloc of divergent political groups of the working class is sometimes completely indispensable for the solution of common practical problems... The joint force of such a bloc can prove far stronger than the sum of the forces of each of its component parts. On the contrary, the political alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, whose interests on basic questions in the present epoch diverge at an angle of 180 degrees, as a general rule is capable only of paralyzing the revolutionary force of the proletariat" - Leon Trotsky, *Lessons of Spain*, December 1937

Hal Draper put it most succinctly when discussing the "lesser evil" of voting for Lyndon B. Johnson to beat Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election:

"So who was really the Lesser Evil in 1964? The point is that it is the question which is a disaster, not the answer. In set-ups where the choice is between one capitalist politician and another, the defeat comes in accepting the limi-

tation to this choice."

Nobody is saying that any socialist or socialist group is duty bound to agree with Marx, Plekhanov, Trotsky or Draper. Nor that a position in one concrete situation can necessarily be used as a blueprint for contemporary politics. Our tradition and theory aren't a playbook with move for move plans for future struggle, but neither are they purely unique responses to unique events, with no relevance to the modern struggle. They are the distillation or debates and real-life experience of class struggle for over a century. Nobody should be dogmatically locked to tradition. But with no tradition, you lose your anchor. If comrades wish to make a turn, make an argument for it. Was Trotsky wrong in 1937 and Draper wrong in 1967? Or were they right at the time but the arguments are no longer relevant? If so, why?

On drinking poison

Some in the majority have use Trotsky's metaphor, from an [article](#) on the United Front in Germany, that you would rather drink small daily doses of poison (the slow death of run-of-the-mill bourgeois politics) than be shot (the sudden, painful death of fascism). What they fail to explain is that Trotsky's argument was both against Communists supporting the Hitler referendum, and the social democrats voting for liberals. He was not advocating that the German workers drank poison.

"The abstract question as to who is the lesser evil: Bruening or Hitler – is just as senseless. It is necessary to know which of these keys to strike. Is that clear? For the weak-minded let us cite another example. When one of my enemies sets before me small daily portions of poison and the second, on the other hand, is about to shoot straight at me, then I will first knock the revolver out of the hand of my second enemy, for this gives me an opportunity to get rid of my first enemy. But that does not at all mean that the poison is a 'lesser evil' in comparison to the revolver.

"The misfortune consists precisely of the fact that the leaders of the German Communist Party have placed themselves on the same ground as the social democracy only with inverted prefixes: the Social Democracy votes for Bruening, recognizing in him the lesser evil. The Communists on the other hand, who refuse to trust either Braun or Bruening in any way (and that is absolutely the correct way of acting), in the meantime go into the streets to support Hitler's referendum, that is, the attempt of the Fascists to overthrow Bruening."

Trotsky's article does, indeed, call for blocs with the social democrats against the fascists (though we note that the Democrats are a long way from social

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ty, not Biden or Harris

democratic). But Trotsky makes very clear that such blocs are for mass street activity, not electoral agreements:

"Election agreements, parliamentary compromises concluded between the revolutionary party and the Social Democracy serve, as a rule, to the advantage of the Social Democracy. Practical agreements for mass action, for purposes of struggle, are always useful to the revolutionary party."

The Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma

In the last several months' debate, much hay has been made of the line, shorn from all political context, that 'the Bolsheviks called for a Kadet vote against the Black Hundreds'. To respond fully to this claim would demand its own article, but comrades are encouraged to read the account of the Fourth Duma election campaigns by [Badayev](#), as well as [Lenin's writings from the time](#).

The difference between the two elections, in our opinion, makes reading the Bolshevik position off as a justification of the majority position extremely questionable. In the Fourth Duma electoral system, workers were only allowed to vote in certain districts. The Bolsheviks stood a candidate in every such district. They also stood candidates in village districts and the "second city curiae", where voters were mostly not workers. It is in this "second ballot for the election of electors in the city curiae" where, in order to give their own Duma representatives an easier time organising once the parliament had been elected, they called for a bloc with the Kadets against the Black Hundreds (or in some seats, a bloc with the Mensheviks and SRs against the Kadets).

In every seat where workers formed a majority of the electorate, the Bolsheviks stood their own candidate. The decision to form a bloc for some (not all) non-worker seats was based on improving the political situation for their own elected officials – the principle of independent workers' politics was entirely upheld. This principle was even used as a stick to beat the Mensheviks, who entered into much more restrictive electoral blocs with the Kadets. Responding to a Menshevik article that said "one cannot expect the Kadets to become revolutionaries", Lenin responded in no uncertain terms:

"Yes! But there is no reason why Social Democrats should declare themselves Kadets. [...] By refusing to fight the Kadets you are leaving under the ideological influence of the Kadets masses of proletarians and semi proletarians who are capable of following the lead of the Social Democrats. Now or later, unless you cease to be socialists, you will have to fight independently, in spite of the Black Hundreds danger."



This, in an election where the Mensheviks were already standing their own candidates, and producing their own election propaganda. The comparison to the majority position on the coming American election seems tenuous, to say the least.

The United Front and elections

Other comrades recognise a break, but say this is accounted for by the enormity of Trump's threat. For this, we have to look at the origins of debates on lesser evilism and working-class anti-fascism in the movement.

The difference between Trump and Harris is undeniably more significant than Republican and Democrat candidates in the 1940s. But Draper and Trotsky's main object for discussion is the rise of Hitler. The minority have been accused on multiple occasions of underplaying the seriousness of a Trump victory. So let's be clear: a Trump presidency would be a threat to the tenets of democracy, to minorities of all stripes, and to class organisation. It is not, however, a greater threat to democracy, minorities and the class than Hitler was.

The notion of a "lesser evil vote" has arisen several times in our movement's history. Each time, the severity and potential threat of the "greater evil" has been discarded as a reason to justify the lesser evil. Once more: this does not mean that it is inherently wrong to say so now. But comrades in the majority who take this view must justify the reason for a change in line.

One potential justification is that the writings of the 1930s don't hold, because there is no organised working-class force on the scale of, for example, 1930s Germany. "We are third campists", they say, "but in the absence of a third camp of any strength, pick one of the other sides". This is the most

credible form of the majority position.

We certainly have to recognise that the labour movement is weak, cowed, and disorganised; we must also offer solutions to the class from where they are. But if entryism was once justified as the united-front tactic adapted to conditions of the terrible weakness of the revolutionaries, then emblazoning our press with "Vote Biden/ Vote Macron" is the popular front tactic adapted to those same conditions.

Even where the labour movement appears weak, our primary job is to point to the need for independent working-class political organisation. This is not our election, these are not our candidates. Workers are being forced to make this choice, and these do not have to be the only options.

If we were a group in the US that work would have to begin before the election period, before the candidates were selected, and before the choice effectively narrowed to Democrat/Republican. Very little of our betwixt election coverage has been on the struggle to get unions to break from the Democrats, or what possibility there is within the DSA to plant a flag for working class political representation. Instead, it has largely been fawning pieces about

"pro-union" Biden, a "good President".

Across the world, we are seeing a wave of clashes between reactionary, racist, nationalist populism, and globalising, broadly-metropolitan free-market capitalism. The latter provides a greater degree of social freedom and more space for workers' rights to be exercised.

But we do not give political confidence to the liberals. We do not even trust them to consistently fight for those elements of their own programme. Faced with a rising tide of racism and nationalism, the instinct of the liberal bourgeoisie is to triangulate with that nationalism in office, rather than confront it head-on. As Draper says, we are more and more faced with "the Lesser Evils who, as executors of the system, find themselves acting at every important juncture exactly like the Greater Evils." (Neither Draper nor the current writers think that this means there is no difference between the two). The Bidens and the Macrons have fuelled the growth of the far right, doing nothing to attack inequality or poverty, allowing Trumps and Le Pens to pose as fighters for the "ordinary man", from "outside the system". They have fuelled the far right by constantly accepting racist fringe politics into the mainstream.

The left must advocate workers' unity against all forms of racism, and for jobs and decent housing for all workers; for free healthcare for all and the end of student debt, and for genuine democracy. We must clearly state we are for migrants, black people, LGBT+ people.

We need to convince those who rightly fear Trump that working class unity can defeat the right. We need to convince those who wrongly see in Trumpism a solution to their miserable lives that it is class, not race or nationality, that is the fundamental divide in society. The only lasting cure for Trumpism is a healthy and fighting workers' party. Waiting until election time, then calling primarily for a Democrat vote clouds this perspective, rather than clarifying it. □

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Review: The Easter Rising and Irish History



Debate

By John McNulty (Socialist Democracy)

The book is subtitled *An attempt at a Marxist account*. In my view the author is not successful in that attempt. Above all the book is a polemic, with some closely researched arguments, but there is no attempt to present alternative accounts, no real context for the behaviour of the actors and, surprisingly, the outline of the class forces at play or the economic substructure underlining them are weakly presented.

There is no doubting the main target of the book – James Connolly. The book starts with Connolly and ends with him. The main charges are that his indications of support for German imperialism against the British wiped out his long history in the socialist movement. The 1916 proclamation was not a socialist document and we should remember Connolly now as a Republican martyr and not as a Socialist one.

This case does not stand alone. There is a background account of Irish history with a number of surprising ideas and many omissions.

A slow accumulation of capital in Ireland was followed by Cromwellian conquest.

I quote Matgamna:

"There's no evading the fact that the English bourgeois revolution was led by Oliver Cromwell... the source, along with the Revolution of 1688, of the ideas of the American Revolution, of the French Revolution, of the United Irishmen and later Irish republicanism. There is also no evading that in Ireland, which he invaded in 1649. Cromwell was a genocidal butcher and enslaver... Whether English Marxists like it or not, that was a part of their bourgeois revolution; and whether Irish Marxists like it or not, that was one part of the great period of bourgeois enlightenment in history, upon whose achievements socialists aim to build socialism."

THE EASTER RISING AND IRISH HISTORY



An attempt at a Marxist account. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Sean Matgamna has said too little. His argument seems close to the ultra-imperialism theory of Karl Kautsky and would need massive explanation in its suggestion that Marxists would not always oppose imperialism.

As a Marxist account of Irish history the booklet has surprisingly little to say about class.

The land wars and the appearance of a class of small farmers provided a social base for Irish parliamentarianism and the slow movement towards Home Rule. Essentially Irish nationalism was a unitary movement with tactical differences between evolutionary reformists and physical force activists.

There's no reference to the Irish famine, a seminal event that decimated the Irish peasantry, saw the decline of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and massive gains for the Irish bourgeoisie. This class drove the Irish party and its preference for home rule over independence.

Nationalist Ireland in the run up to 1916 is seen as supporting the British war effort and a British army now loyal to the Empire following an earlier mutiny. Home rule had been suspended, but there was confidence that the British would keep their word and there would be further evolution towards

independence. The divisions in the nationalist movement were political rather than class based, between a tactic of electoralism and evolutionary politics versus a minority physical-force tradition.

In relation to 1916, there is much criticism of Connolly, but there is a lack of context. The international workers movement had moved from a determination to prevent war to voting war credits. Later the international split to form a new revolutionary current. In Dublin the workers had suffered a major defeat in the 1913 lockout. What he had left was the Irish Citizen Army and he used that.

Lenin and Trotsky criticized him for rising too soon. They did not go beyond that.

There is little context for the motives and actions of British imperialism. The move towards limited home rule had led to a revolt by the army in the Curragh Mutiny. A savage war was being fought to retain colonial power while trying to defuse Irish opposition.

Unionism

Sean Matgamna takes a quick trip through the partitioned country that followed the civil war and the buildup of Catholic grievances. He condemns Unionism for their repression, but defends their right to establish a northern state. Again, Unionism is presented as a unitary force. There is no mention of the use of pogroms as a weapon, nor of the shipyard pogroms that saw the expulsion of almost 10,000 workers, by an Orange mob directed by the Unionist leaders, including 3,000 "Rotten Prods" who were trade unionists and socialists.

The book is at its weakest when it deals with the civil rights period. Earlier arguments are mainly assertions and the statement of contesting perspectives. Here there are many errors of fact.

After the 1950s campaign the IRA abandoned a military strategy and adopted a reform perspective. The leadership were able to hold the whole organisation to that, until the loyalist and RUC pogroms in Belfast and the RUC siege of the Bogside in Derry.

The Communist Party worked alongside the Republicans, but they did not argue for a united Ireland, holding to a stages theory where a democratic Northern Ireland would be established first. People's Democracy was not part of the International Socialists, but rose from an emigré group based on the earlier Irish Workers Group. PD did not call for the deployment of British troops.

The author then advances an alternative to Connolly.

"The Marxist organisation would have built on the existing trade-union-level working-class unity to create a cross-community revolutionary party. That party would over the years, have systematically agitated on all the grievances of the workers of both communities. It would have educated sizeable sections, at least, of both communities in a socialist international outlook."

Yes, there was existing trade union level unity in industrial struggles that continues to this day. Time and again the sectarian state deployed the Orange card and time and time again it was successful.

One of my first political memories is of the Young Socialist Alliance organising a protest against a bus fare increase. Well over 10,000 workers from the Falls and Shankill roads marched down to City Hall, where they were baton charged by the RUC and forced up the Falls road. The Catholic workers went on up the road in triumph, victims of state brutality. The Protestant workers went down side streets and hid in their houses until any bruises had gone and they were no longer at risk of being identified as Lundy's – traitors to the Orange. People's Democracy was formed with members from both communities. In nationalist areas we were met with sympathy. Those living in unionist areas lived in constant fear of a loyalist movement granted impunity for its actions by the police.

Marxism allows the erection of many theoretical constructs but they must all eventually pass the test of praxis.

The Easter Rising and Irish History does not pass that test. □

Caricaturing the "Third Period" of 1929-30



Eye on the Left

By Martin Thomas

In 1929-30 the Stalinist Communist Parties (CPs) declared that capitalism was collapsing everywhere; workers would therefore inevitably radicalise and discard reformist leaders; so it was all down to the CPs making themselves "the lead-

ership". They went for "the conquest of the streets" – staged demonstrations where fights with the police were seen as boons rather than difficulties – and ultra-radicalism by CPers in strikes.

Socialist Appeal ("RCP") can't quite copy the Stalinist CPs' tactic of 1929-30, not having the forces which the CPs had to fill the streets or affect strikes, but approximates by an "instant sign-up" drive which is supposed to make the RCP the

"revolutionary leadership" for a world of capitalist collapse, in abstraction from anything in the mass labour movement.

A new capitalist crisis, big or small, will come in time, and maybe soon, but for now capitalism is still in a phase of recovery from the Covid and Russian-gas disruptions.

In 1929-30 Trotsky told the Stalinists that by declaring capitalist profits destroyed they were undermining the prospects of the tentative rise

of wage strikes in France visible in 1929.

Some period of capitalist upturn would be more favourable for strikes and restoring workers' confidence, so they could deal with inevitable crises with militancy rather than by hunkering down.

If workers' confidence and demands grow, then that wouldn't just mean them flocking to join the CP in its street stunts. The old labour-movement organisations would

respond, inadequately, treacherously, but respond. United-front tactics would become more, not less, vital.

The RCP still cites Ted Grant as a mentor. But Grant stressed that idea of Trotsky's about the old labour-movement organisations not being easily bypassed – in fact, over-emphasised it, in a mechanical way.

Trotsky's ideas from 1929-30 are still relevant today. □

Venezuela: Maduro clings to power

By Dan Davison

Protests continue to erupt across Venezuela following the disputed presidential election of July 28. Demonstrators have faced tear gas and pellet shots. As of July 30, human rights NGOs had registered at least 11 deaths. Tarek William Saab, the Prosecutor General of Venezuela, claims that 749 detentions have been made, that the detainees are all “delinquents”, and that they will be prosecuted for terrorism and instigation of hate.

Nicolás Maduro of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) has ruled the country since the death of his predecessor Hugo Chávez in 2013. In Venezuela, votes are made via machine at voting centres. The votes are recorded in tallies (“actas”), the data is sent electronically to the National Electoral Council (CNE), and the CNE can stop the transmission at will. In the early hours of July 29, Elvis Amoroso, a key Maduro ally and president of the CNE, declared Maduro to have an “unassailable lead” of 51.2% of the vote against 44.2% for Edmundo González, the candidate for Unitary Platform (PU), the main, right-wing opposition, after 80% of the votes had been counted. Later that same day, the CNE ratified Maduro’s victory.

The CNE did not provide a breakdown of the claimed results. According to González and PU leader María Corina Machado, the transmission of information was interrupted an hour before Amoroso’s announcement, when they had received only 40% of the results. Amoroso alleged that this was due to hacking, later claimed to have been traced to North Macedonia and coordinated by three opposition leaders, including Machado. González and Machado assert that, at the point of the transmission’s interruption, González was leading by a proportion of around two thirds to one third. This is consistent



ent with the exit polls, which had projected a landslide victory for González, and with recent opinion polls, which indicate the Maduro government’s popular support to be somewhere between 10 and 20%.

In the run up to the election, the government arbitrarily blocked the nomination of opposition candidates, including Machado, who had won the right-wing opposition’s primaries; her successor Corina Yoris; and Manuel Isidro Molina, who had been supported by leftist organisations, including the Communist Party (PCV). On the election day itself, there were reports of voting centers closing early, opposition witnesses being denied entry, CNE personnel preventing access to the actas, and people being denied access to citizen verification, a process required by law to reconcile the voting receipts with the data registered by each center’s scrutiny report. Out of the over 7.7 million Venezuelans who have left the country, only just under 68,000 are registered to vote, often due to bureaucratic obstacles designed to limit the vote abroad.

Aside from PU, the center-right candidate Enrique Márquez (supported by the PCV), the independent centrist candidate Antonio Ecarri, the left-oppositionist Socialism and Freedom Party (PSL), and the Fatherland for All

party (PPT), which had previously been a longtime ally of Chávez, have all rejected the official election results.

Chávez and the PSUV’s predecessor, the Fifth Republic Movement (MRV), came to power in 1997. This means that Venezuela has experienced 27 years of near-uninterrupted Chavista rule. Since Maduro came to power in 2013, the economy has shrunk by an estimated 80%. While this is frequently blamed on US sanctions, the economic crisis was underway well before those sanctions were imposed. In 2023, the inflation rate reached 360%. With low pay and chronic shortages of basic amenities, many Venezuelans struggle to buy food.

Despite its pro-worker posturing, the PSUV regime systematically attacks the working class through austerity measures, keeps a Mafia-like grip on the unions, and persecutes labor activists like Rodney Álvarez, who was imprisoned for over ten years. Most of the Communal Councils hailed as participatory venues for working-class democracy are little more than passive feedback mechanisms for the bureaucracy. For all of Maduro’s “anti-imperialist” rhetoric, his government is itself backed by imperialist powers like Russia and China. Under joint venture contracts, Maduro has permitted multinational corporations to conduct ecologically

destructive mining for natural resources in Venezuela’s Amazon region. Last December, Maduro held a demagogic, nationalist referendum to annex the Essequibo region, which makes up around two-thirds of Guyana. In March he moved to sign this annexation into law and almost certainly intends to let Russian and Chinese companies extract oil in the region.

In the election, a number of Trotskyist organizations like the PSL, Socialist Tide (MS), and the League of Workers for Socialism of Venezuela (LTS), plus the PPT, called for a null vote under the slogan “The working class has no candidate”. They raised important political and economic demands like guaranteeing freedom of association and raising the minimum wage. Another section of the left grouped itself under the originally Zapatista slogan “The other campaign”, calling in a fairly abstract manner for an “alternative of the exploited ones”. The PCV hoped its integration into Márquez’s campaign could constitute an alternative pole and develop a “workers’ government” (how is anyone’s guess).

The real decider of who rules Venezuela is the military top brass. So far, they have remained in lockstep behind Maduro. But the international left should support the Venezuelan working class against the attacks it faces from imperialist powers and the PSUV regime alike. □

• Abridged with thanks from *New Politics*: bit.ly/dd-ven

Defend and use free speech on campus

By Will Roberts

Labour Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has halted the Tory “Higher Education (Freedom of Speech)” Act just before it was finally implemented.

The bill was an attempt by the outgoing Conservative government to stoke the culture war over university campuses and campus protest.

Universities will no longer have to show evidence of “reasonable steps” to promote free speech on campus. Despite the liberal veneer, the law would have meant a

crackdown on Palestinian solidarity and harsher penalties against students taking part in that activity.

There is a “free speech” issue among the left on campuses, but we deal with that by organising among students. Opportunist Tory legislation will hinder, not help. Students should seize this reprieve by making use of their right to protest, forcing the Labour government to pay serious attention to the developing crisis in higher education funding. □

Years in jail for a Zoom call

By Will Roberts

Five Just Stop Oil (JSO) activists received hefty jail sentences on 18 July for “conspiracy to cause public nuisance” after a zoom call planning to disrupt the M25 motorway.

JSO founder and leader Roger Hallam received a five year sentence, while the other four activists involved received four. This is an increase in sentence compared to previous JSO cases, despite the fact that the act in question was not carried out. The next sentence will not

be far away: Phoebe Plummer and Jane Tuil were both remanded on 31 July after spray-painting the departure boards at Heathrow Terminal 5. Plummer had just been found guilty of property damage for her eye-catching stunt throwing paint over Van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” in 2022.

The approach of “raising awareness” through stunts like these is severely deficient, in our view. But we say: release all JSO activists. No protestor should face criminal charges for minor disruption and protest. □

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

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

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

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- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
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Do Tube drivers care?



Diary of a Tubeworker

By Jay Dawkey

A lot of drivers like that in this job you rarely take any work home. Once you have got off your final train, stabled it, or handed it over to the next driver, you don't have to worry about anything until you are back in. The joke that drivers only walk fast when they are finishing, or late for their grub, does bear some truth. It is not just age that might slow you down, but experience. Once you realise that there is little to be gained by rushing around and that given you are driving the train, it won't move without you, there is much less pressure on your back to get things done any quicker than the timetable allows for. But is refusing to be in a permanent state of hyperactivity a sign of not caring?

Unlike social workers, teachers, or builders you don't need to be planning what you'll do the following week or days. You don't have children-at-risk or students you need to be worried about. You don't have projects falling behind. There are no weekly or monthly one-to-one chats with your line manager about your performance, hopes and dreams. The so-called Performance and Development



oment that you will have perhaps, if a manager remembers, every 18 months or so, may last five minutes. In my case the answer to every question was either "no" (as for "are there any other roles you are interested in?") or "this is fine" for (as for "are you at your preferred depot?").

But, if you ask a driver if the job comes up in their dreams, then almost inevitably they'll tell you it has done. And your dreams are not just a calm drive in the warm weather, without a care in the world. The dream-trains find you in some place you have never seen. You might be on the road, your brakes don't work, and suddenly your train hits something, and maybe it bounces back at great speed and height. Or it'll probably involve you skipping a station or having a SPAD (passing a danger/red signal without authority).

The peak for this sort of anxiety dream is probably while you are being trained, or just after some kind of inci-

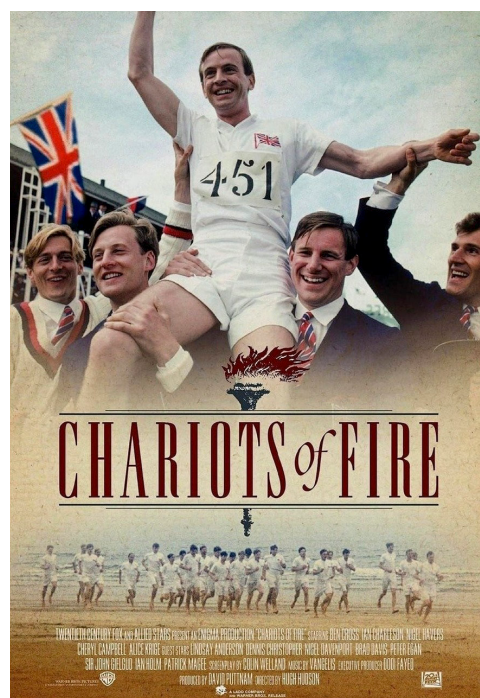
dent. At the same time, management often treats drivers having real-life incidents as if they do not care enough. An increase in SPADs on the Piccadilly line is sometimes blamed on new drivers who have come in and just care about the money, not taking the safety aspect of the job seriously enough.

The number of incidents, particularly among newer drivers, has more than one cause, with the rushed training being one of the biggest. But the almost universal experience of the SPAD dream suggests that even subconsciously people do care about keeping safe at work and keeping their job. □

Chariots of Fire

By John Cunningham

The Olympics don't interest me much nowadays. I'm not a great fan of synchronised skateboarding. Film-wise there is not much to choose from. One possibility is Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938). It's the "Nazi Olympics", but you



do get to see Jesse Owens in action deflating the myth of Aryan superiority.

Otherwise the choice is obvious: *Chariots of Fire* (1981), directed by Hugh Hudson and set to the background, appropriately, of the 1924 Olympics in Paris. It is a curious film in many ways, praised by some as an espousal of Thatcherite individualism – plucky athletes up against a crusty, stultifying establishment – but also raising other issues, particularly Harold Abrahams's (Ben Cross) fight against the antisemitic prejudices of his Oxford college. The determination of Eric Liddell (Ian Charleson), a devout Christian, not to run on the Sabbath, is less interesting, unless you happen to be a devout Christian.

All the athletes are posh boys. We don't see any shot-putters or the like, as those more hefty pursuits, I presume, were left to working-class athletes. Nor does this Olympic team seem to contain any women. The cinematography is at times beautiful and the music, of course, is memorable. All together now: "Dah, dah, da, da da, dee dum diddy dum..." □

• Watch online at bit.ly/c-of-f

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Learn from the junior doctors!

By Sacha Ismail

By the time of the general election, dozens of days of strikes by junior doctors – a majority of the NHS doctor workforce – had already won them and other doctors some of the better pay offers in the public sector.

Five strike days by junior doctors in England just before the election produced speedy movement on negotiations from the new government, and from those negotiations further gains – an average increase of 22% over two years. (More: bit.ly/jd-off.)

This includes the government accepting the full 9% increase recommended by the Doctors' and Dentists' pay review body, and committing new money to fund the pay increases going forward.

Socialists should work to spread a lesson: determination, and specifically determined strikes, can win.

We should not talk up the junior doctors' offer. The deal is a very significant step forward in the British Medical Association's fight for pay restoration –

restoration of real-terms pay rates to and above 2008 levels – but still only a step. Although there are various ways of calculating things, it certainly does not restore a majority of the real-terms loss since 2008.

The Labour government could have carried out full restoration on a short-time scale – indeed for all public-sector workers, not just junior doctors – if it was willing to [tackle](#) the huge wealth that has and is continuing to build up in the hands of the rich.

Nonetheless, the central fact remains that the junior doctors pushed and pulled the BMA, or decisive parts of it, into a much stronger fight than was waged by other public-sector unions, with correspondingly better results.

Junior doctors in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have also won significant gains through strikes. The Scottish (SNP) and Welsh (Labour) governments have formally committed to the goal of pay restoration – which the UK Labour government, for England, has not.

Almost certainly a more effective campaign – the BMA had some long

gaps between strikes, and at certain points discouraged picket lines and demonstrations – could have produced more. So could more active support and solidarity from other unions: along with general political passivity in much of the labour movement, the retreat of other NHS and public-sector unions in their own pay fights made that difficult.

The BMA is putting the new offer to its members, with its Junior Doctors' Committee recommending to accept (a requirement of the offer).

We know militant junior doctor activists who will vote to accept while advocating preparation for renewed fight over pay next year. Equally many in the BMA will understandably want to oppose the deal in the name of extracting more.

Already the right-wing media are trying to scandalmonger about BMA activists discussing strikes next year. The [Times](#) has denounced the "extraordinary move" of junior doctors' leaders discussing "further strikes [i.e. next year] even if members vote to accept" the deal.

Such ranting represents an attempt to delegitimise the whole idea of strikes.

The BMA asked Wes Streeting and co. for a pay offer covering next year, and were rebuffed. They have every right, and indeed duty, to come back and fight for more.

We should be having just such discussions in all our sectors and trade unions – about the kind of action needed to win real gains, and in the public sector to unlock the funding needed to seriously rebuild public services.

Socialists trade unionists should discuss the lessons of the junior doctors' dispute; support left-wing junior doctor activists in their ongoing fight to shake up the BMA; and make the case to get the BMA into the TUC, where its activists can best learn from and influence other unions.

We should ask BMA comrades how best to support their [GP members](#), about to embark on action-short-of-strikes to win increased [funding](#). Another victory for the BMA will make victories elsewhere more likely. □

Support Jay and Justine against victimisation

By Gerry Bates

The branch committee of the public services union Unison in Lewisham (South London) has voted for balloting members for industrial action against the council's sacking of its two branch secretaries, Justine Canady and Jay Kidd-Morton.

Lewisham Unison has called protests outside the Town Hall, too: on Wednesday 31 July, on Tuesday 6 Au-

gust, 6:30pm (to be joined by Unison's national president Steve North), and on Wednesday 14 August, 5pm (specifically against workplace racism).

The move to sack Jay came after she raised a racism whistle blowing complaint. Lewisham is a Labour council and has elected its first Black woman mayor. Justine is set to lose her job in a sudden "restructure" exercise. After initial protests, the council said it would delay to give Justine chances

of redeployment, but then claimed it "couldn't" do that.

Justine has been told that she will be out of a job from 9 September. Jay has been told that her dismissal hearing is due at the end of August. The sackings would incapacitate the biggest union in the council on the eve of £25 million of cuts and changes to core employment policies.

Unison general secretary Christina McAnea has said: "It is disappointing

that the council have failed to engage with the many arguments put forward about the nature of their actions and they've failed to address Unison's valid concerns. There is no place for any form of discrimination within our workplaces, and everyone deserves an impartial and just process. No branch activists should ever be victimised by any employer for their participation in Unison... I would also like to offer my solidarity to the branch during the ongoing trying circumstances..."

More: [@LewishamUnison](#) □

Teachers to consult in September on pay

From Educators' Fightback

On Monday 29 July, the newly-elected Labour government announced that it would accept the recommendations of the School Teachers' Pay Review Body and confirmed that teachers will receive a pay increase of 5.5% from 1 September 2024.

The government also announced that the award would be funded with an additional £1.2bn provided to schools specifically to cover this. The National Education Union (NEU) and other unions have welcomed this decision, although formal acceptance is not yet a done deal.

The NEU will need to go through a two-stage democratic process before the union can formally respond to this award. First, the National Executive will meet to consider its recommendation to members. Then the union will hold a snap survey of its teacher members between 21 and 30 September to assess whether they are minded to accept or

reject, and to get an indication of the support for industrial action to win a bigger increase in pay and funding.

All indications from the top of the union suggests that the leadership and Executive will recommend acceptance and that the prospect of national action on pay during 2024-25 is low.

In large part, this is because the union's demand was vague and has arguably been entirely achieved. When the NEU made its submission to the STRB, it argued for "a fully-funded above inflation pay rise". The 5.5% increase is clearly above inflation and appears to be funded.

Indeed, the NEU's initial public response states that it is – in fact, saying that the union asked for an additional £1bn whereas the government has announced an extra £1.2bn.

The union leadership has also drawn attention to other aspects of the government's announcement, such as the removal of the requirement to apply performance-related pay and a prom-

ise to make some workload reductions. Teachers will, for instance, be permitted to take planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) at home.

None of this means that there is no alternative to the proposed award and no prospect of industrial action on pay, funding and workload. The real value of teachers' pay will remain way behind what it was in 2010 when the Tories and Lib Dems came to power.

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Drax: for a workers' audit!

By Sam Myerson

Drax, Britain's largest power station, is to be the target of a climate action camp by the group [Reclaim the Power](#), 8-13 August. Workers' Liberty people will be at the camp, arguing for a worker-led "just transition", for workers' plans to convert to low-carbon and sustainable economic life.

Drax produces energy by burning millions of tonnes of biomass, pelletised wood that it imports mainly from North America. Drax states that this wood, chopped and pulverised into pellets, comes only from renewable sources: it is sustainable so long as the annual forest harvest doesn't exceed the annual growth of trees, because the tree growth takes carbon from the atmosphere and "Carbon Capture and Storage" can capture carbon dioxide from the wood-burning and put it underground.

BECCS ("bio-energy with carbon capture and storage") is widely seen, including by scientists in the IPCC, as an important possible element in reducing emissions, and in principle it could be very valuable. But does Drax's version measure up to its bosses' claims, or is it more a device to get government subsidies for them to keep their ageing power station profitable?

We don't trust capitalists to tackle climate change, and we would be foolish to trust their self-reporting on sustainability. However, even Drax's own self-reporting demonstrates that its actual operation is damaging.

Drax bosses claim that the wood they burn comes from wood industry residue, low grade timber by-products, and wood from forestry management, thinning and branches etc. The [BBC](#) found that Drax is actually cutting down vast swathes of old-growth forests in British Columbia.

Currently Drax has seven pellet production sites across North America, all in the Southern States of the USA, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and

Arkansas. These are supplied from the forestry operations such as in Canada, and in the US south, where old-growth forest is clear-cut and replaced with monoculture fast-growing pine.

In December 2022 Australia [ruled](#) that "native forest biomass is no longer considered an 'eligible renewable energy source' for the purposes of [the nation's] Renewable Energy Target".

Besides, monoculture forests that are the backbone of Drax wood pellet production and consumption have their environmental impacts.

Financial costs should not be a barrier to the implementation of climate mitigation, and transition away from carbon emitting energy production. There is an urgency around climate intervention, which means that even high costs should be funded by taking energy and high finance into public ownership and by taxing the rich effectively. But in any case, the financial cost of BECCS electricity-generation has been [calculated](#) at almost double that of the costs of solar, more than 60% higher than onshore wind, recently given the green light by the new Labour government, and higher in cost than large-scale hydroelectric projects. It is not as if this is a quick and easy fix to tack onto other options.

Wind and solar power depend on wind blowing and sun shining. There is a need, and will be until grids and energy-storage technologies are much more developed, for baseload and variable "on-demand" power. And for now, new large (or even small) scale nuclear is years off implementation in Britain.

But Drax, even if it were better than it is, would not be the "only green solution". For example, geothermal energy, though possible in parts of the UK, remains almost non-existent. With adequate public investment, both could be scaled up. So



could hydroelectric power, and nuclear power – which is low-carbon and relatively safe – could be expanded.

Drax produces about 6% of Britain's electricity. Increased efficiency, better insulation of buildings, and other similar changes, can all reduce the quantity demanded of baseload power. All those things require significant public investment, which will happen faster with social ownership and democratic workers' control of energy.

There is also a problem with Carbon Capture and Storage, at least to date. Most schemes for pumping CO2 emissions underground are used to aid the [extraction](#) of more fossil fuels.

Is Drax carbon-absorbing? No, if you include the carbon emissions produced at source and in the transport of pelletised wood to the UK. Can we produce the biomass elsewhere, can it be sustainable, is it even desirable to do so? It remains to be seen.

There are no industry standards on sustainable sourcing for biomass. Drax has demonstrated this with the destruction of virgin forest in Canada, the exclusion of carbon emissions from transport in their calculations, and their exploitation of legal loopholes in Louisiana, where land is parcelled up below the size in which federal enforcement can take place.

Many conclude that the only answer for Drax is immediate closure, and immediate cessation of energy production. We propose instead a worker-led audit and discussion on a conversion plan to a greener alternative, starting from existing skills and equipment, with retraining and public financing. Some of the Drax installation could perhaps be used for further developing future green technology. Carbon Capture and Storage is not a cure-all for CO2 emissions, but it may pro-

vide a sticking plaster on emissions from power stations.

Workers elsewhere in the energy sector have already made similar efforts, for example in the [Our Power](#) report on North Sea oil and gas.

Workers at Drax should fight to take control of the development of the site. Currently BECCS is in an experimental phase at the plant. A worker-led audit and conversion to greener alternatives, utilising existing equipment and skills, under public ownership is possible.

We cannot and will not bring about the necessary changes by reliance on NGOs (though the helped on the Our Power report), or by cooperation with the capitalist class. We, the organised working class, and the socialist environmentalists within that, must make ourselves the decisive force in determining the future.

That requires addressing many other issues besides arguments, however important, about technologies of electricity generation.

Environmental degradation will create hundreds of millions of climate refugees. Anti-migrant politics will be stoked further by the climate-driven movements of people. We advocate freedom of movement and equal rights for migrants as part of international working-class solidarity. There is currently no movement able to make this a reality in the imminent future.

Some left slogans about the environment, such as "System Change not Climate Change" or "One Solution, Revolution", sound radical but hide a vagueness about the centrality of working-class action. And to many environmental activists, the labour movement and the left seem to offer little.

But at this camp there are welcome plans to discuss class, and the potential of workers' action. In the run-up activists have been open to ideas to seek links with workers inside Drax. Workers' Liberty activists have been pushing within Rtp for discussions at the camp on the questions of worker organising and worker-led transition, and there is an audience for worker led transition, and organising. □

Summer schedule

Summer schedule: #718 will be out on 4 Sep (copy date 31 Aug-1 Sep); #719 on 2 Oct (copy date 28-29 Sep); and then we're back to our usual weekly routine. □





Solidarity

For a workers' government



By Ira Berkovic

A full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah, the Shia-Islamist paramilitary party based in Lebanon, would have devastating consequences for civilian life in both Lebanon and Israel. All possible outcomes from such a war would move the region further away from peace and equality.

The recent deaths of 12 Druze children and teenagers in a rocket attack on Majdal Shams in the Golan Heights, and of 15 Palestinian children in an airstrike on Deir Al Balah in Gaza, are both tragic and outrageous. The Golan Heights is a Syrian territory occupied by Israel in 1967, and formally annexed in 1981. Around 20% of the area's Druze population have taken up Israeli citizenship.

For these deaths, the immediate responsibility lies with Hezbollah, whose rocket struck Majdal Shams, and the Israeli military, which continues its destructive assault on Gaza. More widely, the deaths are the consequence of a political reality dominated on all sides by war-mongers pursuing policies of religious and national supremacism.

A further escalation of the simmering border conflict between Israel and Hezbollah could also lead to direct military intervention by Hezbollah's allies, the Assad regime in Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran. This, in turn, could provoke a response from the USA, Israel's most powerful military ally. Regional war could turn into a global conflagration.

Israel's assassination of senior

Hezbollah and Hamas leaders Fuad Shukr and Ismail Haniyeh in Beirut and Tehran respectively also risks intensifying conflict. Both men were leaders of clerical-fascist movements, and almost certainly directly involved in the planning of military operations that murdered civilians. Socialists should not collude in any elegising of them as heroes or martyrs. But striking civilian infrastructure in Beirut, and carrying out a targeted assassination of a leading Hamas negotiator just as ceasefire talks have resumed, shows Israel is not serious about de-escalation or concluding a deal. Not only Palestinians, but the Israeli hostages still held in Gaza, will continue to suffer as a result of the continuation of the war. □