

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

REVERSE THE CUTS!

Councils, schools, unis, benefits



Pic (2015):
@g_for_gemma

The Trump threat and the left

Defend democracy,
defend the US labour
movement

Pages 3, 10, 11

Women and Reeves's Budget

Frozen ceiling on rent
help hits women more
than men

Page 5

Solidarity versus sanctions

"Sanctions" have
become the default left
"foreign policy"

Page 13

Forerunners of socialism

Early socialist feminists
in France in 1830s and
1840s

Page 8-9

After the Reeves £40bn, anti-cuts fight still needed



After the 30 October Budget, we will push within the labour movement at all levels for a drive to rebuild the services and regain the welfare benefits lost since 2010. It will be a long battle.

In the run-up to 30 October, we cited Tax Justice UK's estimate that £52 billion per year could be got through a wealth tax, raising capital gains tax, and a few other measures.

We said that could be enough to "meet the most urgent demands". Rachel Reeves raised £40 billion – through different taxes, but still mostly on employers. Unions (as well as the IMF) have praised the Budget, though with some pointing to things not done.

NHS

Were the "most urgent" holes nearly 80% plugged, then? Not really. The Budget will allow the repair backlog and the staff shortages in the NHS to be eased a bit, but the Health Foundation [estimates](#) that real improvement would require a bigger increase than this year's every year to come. A lot of the next increase in NHS money is just to fill

a gap left by the Tories, of funds £4.8 billion below spending plans already in progress. Rachel Reeves has insisted that hers were one-shot tax rises. Future public service improvement is supposed to come from "reforms" (i.e. squeezing the workers harder).

The Budget allocated only £600 million to social care. The government has as yet no plan to fix social care, and no funds allotted for the purpose.

For local government the Budget allotted £1.3 billion extra. The Local Government Association commented that this will "help meet some but not all of the pressures in adult and children's social care and homelessness support", i.e. in the statutory spending which councils must by law cover before they even think of libraries, youth centres, swimming pools, daycare centres, etc.

Section 114

Maybe the Budget will stop more councils going into "Section 114", when they declare they are unable to make ends meet and usually have "commissioners" put in to manage cuts. It won't get those already in "Section 114" out, and it won't stop new cuts in some areas where pressures are greatest.

The National Education Union said that the extra money for schools would help but not "stem the crisis in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities" and will leave mainstream schools "in a very difficult situation".

The Budget did not even suggest extra money for universities. The government plans to increase tuition fees gradually from £9,250 to £10,500 by 2020. That will hit graduates and, especially, older prospective students, but not save uni budgets.

The Budget include a welcome limit on penalty deductions from Universal Credit, but the two-child benefit cap, the overall benefit cap, and the cut in



the Winter Fuel Allowance, remain, and Tory-planned changes to Work Capability Assessment will go ahead, cutting benefits for people with health and other difficulties. The Resolution Foundation summarised: "poverty is set to rise for all family types other than pensioners".

Gap

Rachel Reeves's talk of a £22 billion "gap" left by the Tories seems accurate. Over half the £40 billion has just filled that gap. A £52 billion tax rise would have increased the amount available to improve on the Tories' austerity plans from £18 to £30 billion.

But £52 billion a year is less than 2% of British incomes, less than 9% of profit flows. Not enough. As long as we leave the bulk of wealth and income in the hands of the rich and their hangers-on, we will live in a system of exploitation and poverty, mitigated and softened by labour-movement efforts, but relentless in its pressures.

The UK government is set to continue to pay £100 billion a year on debt-interest payments on its IOUs, a flood of which were issued in the Covid lockdowns. It pays out £20-odd billion a year to cover Bank of England losses from the Quantitative Easing programme and its winding-back, essentially a subsidy to the banks and high finance. To end poverty and win good public services, the labour movement has to win democratic control and public ownership of high finance, and of the big concentrations of productive wealth in other sectors, currently serving private profiteers.

With a Labour government, and with labour movement confidence increased, let's hope, by the proof from the Budget (despite everything) that union and labour movement pressure can make gains, we have a chance to reverse and rebuild. That will be won by rank and file agitation, not by benevolence from on high. □

Corrections

The income tax rates on successive slices of income, and the (frozen) thresholds are: Incomes up to £12,570: 0%. Income between £12,571 and £50,270: 20%. Between £50,271 and £125,140: 40%. Over £125,140: 45%. □

Spain highlights climate emergency



The floods in eastern Spain, from 29 October when areas had a year's total rainfall in a single day, have killed over 200 people. They are connected to climate change through moisture rising from a warmer Atlantic.

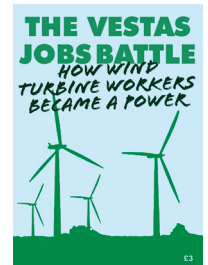
Yet Labour is still scaling down its green-transition plans. The 30 October Budget showed just £100 million – 0.01% of government spending – for renewables programmes via GB Energy in 2025-6. £3.9 billion is allocated separately for Carbon Capture and Storage projects, but it is not yet clear whether CCS can work at all on a large scale.

The National Wealth Fund, the vehicle for the government's public investment plans, has had its (one-off) funding cut from £7.3 bn to £5.8 bn, equivalent to maybe 0.5% of household wealth.

Green transition risks a huge setback from a possible Trump victory in the USA – and Kamala Harris, chasing conservative voters, has come out for fracking.

All the more urgency for environmentalist action to push governments where they are more susceptible to labour movement and left pressure. Yet at Labour Party conference (22-25 September), "green" agitation was weak.

Solidarity seeks allies to push green socialist policies in the unions and the Labour Party. □



The 2nd edition contains new material, plus photos from the campaign

and occupation. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Defend democracy! Defend the US left, labour movement and minorities!

By Mark Osborn and Cathy Nugent

As we go to press we do not know the result of the US election, but whether Trump or Harris wins, and especially in any hiatus without a clear result, we will almost certainly see a surge of violence in US politics.

Trump will declare that he has won the election, and will fight to impose himself against the bourgeois state and the election authorities, no matter if he has won or lost. He has already said as much.

The mayhem will probably come faster than when he lost in 2020. Trump may call people on to the streets to demonstrate for him in the immediate aftermath of the election – whether he wins or loses, and especially if the final result hangs in the balance for any period of time.

That is why the US labour movement must organise to protect itself and help to defend Black and migrant communities. Despite the dangers, democrats must come out onto America's streets to stand up for democracy.

Press

The left must press the Democratic leadership to stand up to Trump's demagoguery. A repeat of the political collapse of Al Gore in 2000, giving in meekly in the face of a tight and contested "hanging chads" election, would be disastrous. The left must demand the Democrats fight.

Individuals will be targeted. Trump, who is a bitter and vengeful man, has already incited violence against Liz Cheney, a renegade Republican and daughter of Dick Cheney, a former Vice President: "Let's put her with a rifle standing there with nine barrels shooting at her, okay?" he said.

Many of Trump's supporters – around 65% – hold the unhinged belief that he

won the 2020 Presidential election and will be motivated to harass and harm local election officials and rival politicians.

We may well see an increase in racist street violence by a section of Trump supporters. There is a vast hinterland of racism in the US. 76% of Republicans, according to polls, do not believe the legacy of slavery affects Black people. Now a growing number, in the wake of vicious propaganda and years of anti-Latino migration policies, are hostile to migrants.

If Trump wins a clear victory the immediate consequences for violence on the streets may be smaller, but Trump will begin to carry out a reactionary anti-migrant, anti-worker, anti-woman, racist programme.

Trump has promised to sack officials he hates, pack the state machinery with his people, purge the leaderships of the armed forces and secret services.

Promises

Trump promises to limit the right to protest and strike, to roll back labour and union rights, to attack electoral processes and further limit voting rights.

Trump's corps of political advisors will – after the experience of his first, chaotic Presidency – ensure that whatever Trump has highlighted in his rambling election addresses will have coherence.

Most of all Trump defends the rich, and their right to exploit and to escape taxes. And this is what endears him to the US elite.

Trump's reactionary personality and vision, now completely dominant in the Republican Party, does not represent the majority of US citizens. Trumpism has, however, managed to polarise US politics and has given direction to grievances that have arisen from social and economic crises over the past two decades: the destruction of traditional industries, the 2008 financial crash, the pandemic, a rise in the cost of living and worsening inequality.

Glaring inequality, lack of free health care for all, precarity, debt, mass opioid addiction, inadequate housing and expensive education all blight American life.

The Democrats certainly do not have political answers to the social crisis. They are in part to blame for many of

the enduring problems of US society. What they have not done in the last four years in power is to blame for Trump's continuing popularity. In the future the US left and working-class will go beyond the Democrats. But the Democrats and Harris are clearly preferable to Trump and the dangers that would be unleashed by him.

Task

That is where we are and the socialist left, and, centrally, the unions, have to rise to the task and present an alternative.

It is also our fight as socialists in the UK. It is our fight because if Trump wins the far right around the world will get a boost.

Is this fascism? We think not, as the Trump movement has not got the organisational or ideological profile associated with the Mussolini or Hitler movements. The fascist moment in history is not being repeated; what we see in India, Turkey and Hungary is not fascism, but authoritarian, far-right,

state-manipulated reaction. Trump, Orban, Farage – and to their right, characters like Tommy Robinson – are "brothers-in-arms", united by their respective ultra-nationalisms and opposition to progressive social change.

What it also is, is a mortal threat to democracy and workers' rights. The need to defend liberty and democracy is more urgent than it has been for decades. We defend even the restricted, peculiar and limited democracy of the US, with its rigged Supreme Court and ridiculous Electoral College, wrapped around a plutocracy.

Our task will be to support our allies in the US and their fight to protect the ability to organise – the right to protest, free speech, to unionise, to strike, to curb police powers and to demand the radical reform of the brutal racist prison system.

We fight for workers' democracy, for workers' liberty. □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Mon 11 Nov: Why socialist feminism matters. Leeds AWL. 7pm, Leeds University Union.

Mon 11 Nov: Israel-Palestine. Newcastle AWL. 6:30pm, Escape, Northumbria Uni Students Union, 2 Sandyford Rd NE1 8SB.

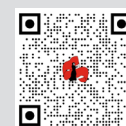
Wed 13 Nov: The rise of misogyny. London AWL. 7pm, Marchmont Community Centre, WC1N 1AB

Thu 14 Nov: Intro to Karl Marx's *Capital*. Ideas for Freedom discussion group. 3pm, Institute of Education Bar, Level 4, 20 Bedford Way, WC1H 0AL

Thu 14 Nov: Why socialism? Manchester AWL. 7pm, Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount St M2 5NS

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



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

uni campuses, and more. See workersliberty.org/work-unions, Insta [@workerslibertystudents](https://www.instagram.com/workerslibertystudents), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs

20 Nov: The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework. 7pm, online.

Campaigns

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



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

Nothing to fear from Trump?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Leading Communist Party of Britain member Andrew Murray has a weekly column, *Eyes Left*, in the *Morning Star*. His column on 30 October was headed "What should the British left make of the US presidential election?"

According to Murray, his readers shouldn't concern themselves with the choice between Trump and Harris, as "it is the wrong question anyway ... and chewing on it diverts our attention from where it should be – ending the hegemonic power and domineering aspirations of the US, and Britain's alliance with it".

Murray helpfully goes on to spell out what he really means: "Happy the day when the result of US presidential elections is of interest exclusively to US citizens. That is what we should work for."

Which seems a little strange, coming from a self-proclaimed Marxist. Marx, after all, in the years leading up to the formation of the First International, was impressed by British workers' opposition to the US Confederacy. Marx went so far as to write to Abraham Lincoln congratulating him on his victory in the 1864 presidential election, congratulating him and his side in the civil war for fighting against slavery.

No doubt Murray would protest that no such great principle is at stake in the present election, despite conceding (as he does) that Trump "on the authority of some of his closest associates" is a "fascist of sorts" and that "a second Trump presidency will be largely driven by retribution against his numerous enemies, whatever the cost to democracy."

For Murray, it seems, fascism "of sorts" and the threat to democracy itself don't matter very much. In fact, "Trump may provide perverse assistance [to the 'global left'] with his apparent disregard for the sanctity of Nato and willingness to countenance an end to the Ukraine war which Starmer very much

wants to keep fighting by proxy." It is hard to avoid Murray really favours a Trump victory.

As for Trump's "unabashed ... support for Israeli aggression", it is "impossible to imagine how he could make the situation ... any worse".

Murray seems to be (or chooses to be) unaware of the fact that many leading pro-Palestinian campaigners in the US – and on the evidence of at least one opinion poll, Palestinians themselves in Gaza – do not agree. He seems unaware of Trump having told Netanyahu to "do what you have to do" in Gaza and of [Project Esther](#), a blueprint for the Trump administration to destroy the Palestinian solidarity movement within two years.

As for Trump's repeated threats of physical violence against opponents, mass deportations of legal and illegal immigrants, making it easier to deploy martial law, and likely further restrictions on abortion rights and the rights of LGBT+ people, again Murray seems unconcerned.

In fact, Murray tells us, Trump's threats

and possible "civil conflict" are "nothing to fear". After all: "There is no progress without conflict, and in the USA most likely no socialism without an awful lot of it". And the prize will be worth it: "A weakened US is a gain for the rest of the world."

As for "a fascist US presidency" – not to worry, it will "surely give cause for protest here before long." But the "most aggressive powers on record have been impeccably liberal British and US imperialisms, with not a day of fascist rule between them... There is the main enemy, not the orange demagogue".

There is a precedent for this: the "Third Period" that Stalin propounded into the early thirties, declaring that the pre-Hitler Weimar regime was already as bad as Hitler could be, and Hitler could give "perverse assistance" ("after Hitler, our turn next"). Of course, Trump is not Hitler. But for America's imperilled minorities, its women, and maybe its labour movement, this is a life-or-death election. And Murray says it doesn't matter. □

Georgians want democracy and a European future



Eric Lee

One week after the Georgian elections, the situation has become somewhat clearer. The evidence that the election was not "free and fair" has been mounting. There has been widespread condemnation and concern from the international community. The Russian role in the process has become more evident. And in the next few days, we will know the plans for protests agreed by the opposition parties.

My Vote, a local observer mission uniting dozens of civil society organisations, called for the annulment of the results in hundreds of precincts with over 400,000 voters – but their demand was rejected by the Georgian government. The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has called for the results of all 2,263 electronic precincts to be annulled,

citing mass violations of voting secrecy. Two respected US-based pollsters have accused the Georgian Dream government of widespread vote tampering, with one declaring that the discrepancy between the official results and their exit polls was "statistically impossible".

The European Union and United States have expressed concerns as well. A US State Department spokesman called for a full investigation. It is not yet clear if the international community will be satisfied with a local investigation – or if it will demand international involvement.

Under pressure, some Georgian government agencies have announced investigations. The Special Intelligence Service says it's looking into possible illegal interference with work of journalists covering the elections. Among others, the European Federation of Journalists has raised concerns about this.

And the Prosecutor's Office

claims it has opened dozens of new cases investigating "vote rigging, influencing voters' will, violation of the secrecy of voting, vote buying, obstruction of journalistic work, violation and threats during pre-election agitation, damage and destruction of property."

Investigations

But not everyone is convinced that these investigations will produce any positive results. Among them is Georgia's President, Salome Zurbishvili, who was summoned by the Prosecutor's Office for questioning. Zurbishvili has been outspoken in her criticism of the Georgian Dream government and the elections, and has played a leading role working with the opposition parties to challenge the results.

She has pointed a finger at Russian involvement in the flawed vote, and announced that her summoning by the Prosecutor's Office "strangely coincided" with a statement

by former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Medvedev called Zurbishvili a "puppet president" who "refused to accept the election and went against the Constitution by calling for a coup." He added ominously: "The standard practice in such cases is removal from office and arrest."

The Georgian Dream leaders insist that the elections were free and fair. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said that "Russia has no influence in Georgia." They have adopted the Russian line that if there was any electoral interference in Georgia, it came from the West, yet another of the "colour revolutions" that have toppled authoritarian, pro-Russian regimes in the last couple of decades.

Meanwhile, a Russian attempt to wrest control of Moldova has failed, with the pro-European president Maia Sandu winning a second term in office. After her win, Sandu shared a message on X to the Georgian people: "I admire

your resilience and determination to build a free, European future. Stand strong – Moldova is with you."

What will the Georgian opposition parties and civil society do now?

Three of the four big opposition blocs – Coalition for Change, Unity and Strong Georgia – are holding a rally on 4 November at which they will present a detailed plan of action.

It will certainly include a return to mass street protests in the hope that, as was the case during Georgia's Rose Revolution in November 2003, mass election fraud will lead to mass protests.

In fighting for democracy and a European future for their country, the Georgians are fighting for all of us. They deserve our solidarity. □

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

Reeves freezes ceiling on rent help



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

Rachel Reeves shared a video of herself holding the red Budget box outside 11 Downing Street, and captioned it, on X: "Today is the first time in our country's history that a budget will be delivered by a woman. For every young girl watching, let this be a sign that there should be no ceiling to your ambitions."

Fellow girl boss Liberal Democrat Party treasurer, Tilly McAuliffe, responded on X: "[I've] been thinking all morning about the fact this is the first ever budget delivered by a woman. When Rachel Reeves mentioned it, I

welled up." But the Budget has not done much for working-class women.

The 3.6 million women fighting for state pension [equality](#) with the raising of the pension age were not mentioned. Nor did the Tory two-child cap on benefits get a mention. In fact Keir Starmer has suspended seven Labour MPs after they voted against the government for scrapping that cap.

The Women's Budget Group had made its main demand re-linking Local Housing Allowance to actual rents. Reeves failed there too, freezing LHA until 2026.

LHAs were introduced in 2008: area-by-area ceilings on housing benefit. After 2012 the Tories limited increases in LHAs to the CPI price index, even if rents rose faster. From 2015 to 2020 they froze LHAs completely. They [raised](#) them in April 2024.

In England, the percentage of women's median earnings absorbed by rent for a one-bedroom property was 47% in the year to April 2024, up from 36% at the same time in 2023. For men, this figure stood at 26% in 2023 and has increased to 34% in the year to April 2024.

The same picture for two-bedroom properties: the gender gap increased from 12 % points to 15 % points for England.

In London, a woman renting a two-bedroom property could expect



Pic Jakub Zerdzicki

to see 70% of her earnings absorbed by rent as of April 2024, up from 62% at the same time last year. For men, the figure is 55%.

WBG analysis showed that women have been hardest hit by cuts to public services and changes to tax and social security since 2010, losing 9.4%, equivalent to £3,162 per year, in living standards, compared to men's loss of 5.8% (£2,395 per year).

Government statutory homelessness figures released this year show 145,800 children are homeless and living in temporary accommodation with their families – the highest on record and up 19,460 (15%) in a year. Additionally,

317,430 households were accepted as either homeless or at imminent risk of it by their council, last year – the highest number since records began, and up 9% on the previous year.

Council spending on temporary accommodation is further worsening the effects of low council funding.

Unfreezing LHA and permanently re-linking it to local rents would help housing benefit cover renting costs and protect women from falling into poverty or becoming homeless. Labour must also commit to a programme of new council homes, needed to deal with long-term housing shortages. □



Women's Fightback.
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Will Badenoch scare Starmer?

By Colin Foster

Oddly, hard right-winger Kemi Badenoch seems to have won the Tory leadership contest as the "softer" and more "uniting" candidate than centrist-turned-migrant-basher Robert Jenrick.

Badenoch says that Britain should quit the European Convention on Human Rights, only not as fast as Jenrick wants. She has said that ma-

ternity pay is "excessive". She has denied any need for trans rights: "well, we've got gay marriage and civil partnerships, so what are transsexuals looking for?"

Her only definite economic policy so far is to exempt private schools again from VAT. She is a declared free-market rightist, but it was she as Business Secretary who turned Sunak round on his plan to

abolish all EU-inherited regulations in a single bonfire.

Despite her criticising the last Tory government as having talked right but governed left, we have yet to see how different she will be from Rishi Sunak in politics rather than just in less stilted style. And how much she will scare off the timorous Starmer team from doing anything she can denounce as "woke". □

Acquittal shows protest can work

By Will Roberts

Five activists on trial for blocking a coach taking asylum seekers to the Bibby Stockholm barge were cleared of all charges on 30 October.

The protestors were part of a crowd that took action to stop the deportations on 2 May. The case was dismissed after the police officers who were meant to testify against the defendants failed to show up to court.

This shows that, despite the jailing of JSO and Palestine Action people, well-organised protests can still work.

Actions against deportations, both by members of the public and by workers in strategic industries like transportation, are key to the fight for asylum and migrant rights under the new Labour government. □

SOAS: defend the right to protest!

By Sam Myerson

On 29 October, the University of London (UoL) was granted an [injunction](#) against Abel Harvie-Clark, Tara Mann, Haya Adam, and Persons Unknown in the SOAS Liberated Zone for Gaza and the Democratise Education Movement, i.e. in effect, the SOAS Gaza protest camp.

The camp was initially on land near SOAS university but belonging to “the University of London” (an umbrella body covering 17 universities in London including SOAS). It is now on a public pavement area nearby.

The ruling bars those named from organising demonstrations without prior UoL consent or putting up tents, on a stretch of UoL land around SOAS, Birkbeck University, and the Institute of Education.

The injunction is an affront to the right to organise or show solidarity. We are critical of BDS (the policy of the SOAS Gaza camp), but defend the right of others to organise for it. The injunction



Students protest at Sheffield University after it declares a £54 million shortfall this year and cuts to follow More: bit.ly/cuts-uos

also has far-reaching consequences for workers on campus in unions such as Unison which have a BDS policy.

Anyone breaking the injunction faces fines, or even being held in contempt of court and jailed. It builds on the rulings granted to other universities over the summer.

Campus unions, particularly at SOAS where the students were enrolled, must make clear their objection to it.

Abel Harvie-Clark and Alex Cachinero-Gorman (not named in the injunction) were in July debarred by SOAS Student Union from taking their elected posts as sabbatical co-presidents, and

SOAS has not awarded Abel his degree although he has finished his studies.

Other “security” measures by SOAS over the last few years have produced a sharp decline in protests on the previously-lively SOAS forecourt. □

Prices revolt in Martinique

From the NPA(R)

The protests against the high cost of living [in Martinique, a Caribbean island which is an “overseas department” of France], which

began in early September, are continuing throughout the island, alternating between street demonstrations, rallies, road blockades... and clashes with the police.

The prefect has again ex-

tended the curfew from midnight to 5am in Fort-de-France [the capital] and four towns on its outskirts until 4 November. An initial partial curfew was put in place on 18 September and then renewed.

So far, however, the people of Martinique are holding firm, still demanding that the prices of everyday products be brought into line with those in mainland France. They are on average 40% more expensive.

An initial agreement, providing for a 20% reduction on 6,000 products (out of 40,000), was rejected by the [group] leading the fight. □

• Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (R): bit.ly/m-que

Thousands of political prisoners in India

By Sacha Ismail

Prominent Indian left activist, academic and writer G N Saibaba died on 12 October, seven months after release from prison. He was slow-motion hounded to death by the Indian state for his determined and outspoken defence of human rights – particular those of Adivasi (indigenous / tribal) peoples, oppressed castes and religious minorities.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders summarised the conditions that led to his death as “10 years of judicial harassment and seven years of continuous arbitrary detention in conditions that appeared to have amounted to torture and ill-treatment”. Saibaba was only 57.

From the age of five he was physically disabled, paralysed from the waist down and reliant on a wheelchair after contracting polio. This did not deter, maybe emboldened, the Indian state in its brutal physical mistreatment of him. The conditions in which he was held,

often in solitary confinement, and repeated denial of proper medical care, led quickly to the development of multiple serious ailments.

In 2020 the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights called for Saibaba’s immediate release on grounds of his deteriorating health. Instead the summits of India’s judicial machine fought alongside the Modi regime to keep him behind bars, opposing a High Court decision to acquit him in 2022. Thus he was kept imprisoned for an extra 15, perhaps decisive months.

Saibaba was born into a relatively privileged-caste, economically middling peasant family in the south-east Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. During postgraduate study in the 1980s he developed his political ideas under the influence of intellectuals connected to the Maoist movement that had blossomed in many parts of India from the late 60s.

The widely used term “Naxalite” refers to a peasant uprising in the Naxalbari district of West Bengal in the year

of Saibaba’s birth, 1967, that was pivotal to the development of this Maoist revolt. “Naxalism” inspired many disillusioned with the often parliamentary-focused politics of India’s two existing mass Communist Parties, CPI and CPI(M). In some parts of the country it gained mass support from peasants and agricultural workers, often indigenous, who have faced an ever growing offensive of dispossession by the state and corporations to gain control of their jal, jangal, zameen (water, forest, land) and resources such as minerals.

State violence against poor peasants, and particularly tribal peoples, has sometimes escalated into full-scale military assault.

From the early 1990s Saibaba devoted himself wholeheartedly to supporting the struggles of the oppressed in India, and particular its Adivasi people under siege.

It has become common for accusations of “Maoism” and “Naxalism” to be thrown at a wide variety of left-wing and

liberal activists in India. The attempts to link Saibaba to Maoist *military* activity appear to have been fabrications so blatant that eventually the court system could not sustain them.

As far as I can make out he was up to his death a Maoist in the broader sense, ie a particular variety of Stalinist. This contradiction does not negate his striking bravery and self-sacrifice in helping defend the rights of the oppressed and exploited in India – the Adivasis, but also Dalits and other oppressed castes, Muslims and other religious minorities and, as has also been widely noted, women.

There are thousands of political prisoners in India. Seven of the Bhima-Koregaon 16 ([BK16](#)) – left activists jailed in connection with Dalits defending themselves against Hindu nationalist violence – still imprisoned are currently on hunger strike in protest at denial of access to the courts. □

• Abridged. More at bit.ly/gn-s or bit.ly/gnsai

“Government of death” imposes social cuts

By Ira Berkovic

The Israeli cabinet has approved an austerity budget, cutting social provision and attacking working-class living standards. Whilst Netanyahu’s Likud party is aggressively neo-liberal, and would likely pursue such measures anyway, the spiralling costs of Israel’s deadly wars and occupation have created a particular pretext and driver for the cuts. The cost of the war is estimated at around £51 billion so far. The absence of tens of thousands of military reservists from their workplaces, and the exclusion of thousands of Palestinian workers, has also hit economic production in key sectors.

The budget, led by far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, involves across-the-board cuts of at least five percent to every government department’s spending. An earlier draft pro-



posed a freeze on welfare payments for the elderly, the disabled, bereaved families, and Holocaust survivors, although these were dropped following opposition from within the cabinet. Opposition politicians estimate the budget will see Israeli families lose an average of nearly £4,000 each year.

Israel’s wars in Gaza and Lebanon

have devastated Palestinian and Lebanese civilian life. They have made Jewish Israelis less safe, rather than more. And now they will worsen poverty and deepen social inequality within Israel. Immediate ceasefires to halt the slaughter are an essential first step in toppling what Standing Together rightly calls “the government of death”. □

UK Friends of Standing Together

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Resist Israel’s ban on Unrwa!

From Standing Together

On Monday 28 October, the Israeli parliament passed a set of laws that will ban Unrwa [the aid agency responsible for supporting Palestinian refugees] from operating in Israel, and designate it as a terrorist organisation. The ban is set to come into effect within 90 days.

Members of the Knesset voted 92 to 10 to approve the law barring Unrwa from operating in Israeli territory, and 87 to 9 in favour of curtailing Unrwa’s activities in Gaza and the West Bank by banning contact between state authorities and Unrwa. Both laws would make it impossible for Unrwa to work in Gaza, the West Bank,

and East Jerusalem.

Unrwa is the primary humanitarian aid group in Gaza, with nearly the entire population relying on Unrwa for aid, and one million people using Unrwa shelters for food and healthcare. Unrwa provides education, healthcare, shelter, and funding to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East.

The organisation handles almost all distribution of UN aid entering Gaza, and has assisted with implementing the polio vaccination campaign. Unrwa also provides humanitarian aid and services for 19 refugee camps in the West Bank, and over 90 schools and several health services. In Gaza alone, Unrwa employs around 13,000 people, of which 233

have been killed since 7 October.

The desire to dismantle Unrwa is not new. Parts of the Israeli government have long opposed Unrwa and sought to dismantle it before this war, but a replacement has never been created. The new efforts to dismantle Unrwa come after Israel claimed Unrwa staff were involved in Hamas’s 7 October attack. A UN investigation found nine staff members who may have been involved in the attacks, all of whom have since been dismissed from the organisation.

Any involvement of Unrwa employees in the 7 October attacks, or Hamas’ military activity in Gaza, must be condemned and Unrwa must be

held accountable to ensure the organisation is not complicit in war crimes or crimes against humanity. But to assume this ban is only in response to claims of Unrwa employees’ involvement in Hamas is misguided.

[It] is part of a decades-long battle to delegitimise Unrwa, and part of a process of removing Palestinian refugees’ rights to justice and ties to the land. In addition, the timing of this ban is highly concerning, as Israel is currently suspected of being in the process of implementing the “generals’ plan”, a plan to ethnically cleanse northern Gaza using starvation as a war tactic. In order for the plan to be carried out, all factors that interfere with it must

be eliminated, Unrwa being one of them. Banning Unrwa’s operations enables the swift implementation of this plan, and continued Israeli control over northern Gaza.

Banning Unrwa’s operations is catastrophic. It would far worse the humanitarian crises in Gaza, and would create a massive vacuum in Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank that would directly affect the livelihood of Palestinians in these areas. The USA has opposed the ban already, and seven other countries have called on Israel to halt the legislation [...] Stripping Unrwa of the right to provide humanitarian aid and crucial services will directly harm Palestinians and add to existing suffering. □

One press of a button, 100 killed

“We can’t say that we didn’t know. We can’t say that the reality in Gaza isn’t happening. Even if the Israeli media doesn’t show us what’s happening in Gaza, that doesn’t mean it isn’t happening. It doesn’t mean that, three days ago, they didn’t kill 100 people,

100 human beings, in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza, with one press of a button. 100 people, killed in one bombing of a single building.

“Why? Does anyone think this will bring back the hostages? Does anyone think this will bring us security?

Does anyone think that a thing like this will improve life for a single person in this land? [...] This is all the work of the racist clan that rules us, the Israeli Ku Klux Klan. [The military] commits war crimes in the name of annexation and resettling Gaza.” – Excerpted from a

speech by Alon-Lee Green, Co-Director of Standing Together, at an anti-war rally in Tel Aviv on Saturday 2 November. Some portions are transcribed from [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/standingtogether/), others are quoted in [Haaretz](https://www.haaretz.com). □

Forerunners of s

By Paul Hampton

Early socialist feminists

Women within the Saint-Simonian movement constituted themselves into a separate section in 1829, and took the initiative in running evening classes for artisans. Claire Bazard and Eugénie Niboyet were the original leaders. Several dynamic young seamstresses attended their classes and became important in the movement, notably Marie-Reine Guindorf, Désirée Véret and Jeanne Deroin. In 1829 the women's section in Paris had 200 regular members and groups developed in provincial cities, notably Lyon and Nantes.

Véret and Guindorf started a newspaper for women, *La Femme Libre*, in August 1832, with a thousand copies of the first issue printed. The paper survived until February 1834, appearing irregularly, 32 times. The first issue included the declaration:

"It is by liberating woman that you will liberate the worker, their interests are linked and the security of all classes depends on their freedom."

The Saint-Simonian women began to develop a critique of the oppression of women in bourgeois society. Jeanne Deroin wrote in her *Profession de foi* (1831):

"Most marriages are based on the chance whim of love. Genuine sympathy, respect and equality are absent. It is vain for the law to assert that marriage is indissoluble, a marriage has failed almost as soon as it is made... Indissoluble unions bind the couple in an oppressive chain, humiliating for the wife. A slave can at least hope for freedom.

Flora Tristan

Flora Tristan was a pioneer socialist feminist, whose life and politics contributed to the emergence of working class self-emancipation.

Flora Tristan was born on 7 April 1803. Her mother was French, while her father was Peruvian. Tristan was employed by an engraver, André Chazal. They married when she was 17. By the age of 21, with three children, she separated. Tristan travelled to Peru in 1833-34, gaining a small legacy from her uncle.

In 1837, Tristan published a semi-autobiography, *The Peregrinations of a Pariah 1833-1834*. She wrote about her domestic life with Chazal, who tried to seize custody of the children. In 1838, he attempted to murder her and was

A wife finds deliverance only in death."

Claire Démar went even further with her critique, *My Law for the Future* (1833):

"A liberty without regulation or limits, a liberty as broad as possible, supported by secrecy, which I hold as the basis of the new moral law, even if it should lead us to the chaos which you find vulgar and disgusting... [In the future] woman will only owe her existence, her social position, to her capacity and her work. Well for that it is essential that woman performs a task, fulfils a function; – and how can she, if she is always condemned to spend a more or less lengthy period of her life in the tasks which the education of one or several children demand?... from the breast of the natural mother take the new born infant to the arms of the social mother, the professional nurse, and the child will be better raised; for it will be raised by one who has the capacity to rear, to develop, to understand children."

In 1829, Saint-Simonian leader Prosper Enfantin had raised the question of the status of women in the new religion. He wrote: "Let us say it boldly, the Saint-Simonian epoch will be marked by the complete emancipation of women." However Enfantin's views were far from liberatory, entrenching inequality and leaving all the rights and power in the hands of the leading men.

In January 1832, Enfantin wrote in a letter in *Le Globe*:

"We may see men and women united by a love unknown before, since it will

neither grow cold, nor bring jealousy in its train; men and women giving themselves to several without ceasing to be united as a couple; whose love, on the contrary, will be like a divine banquet increasing in magnificence, in proportion to the number and choice of the guests."

Enfantin's father protested in a letter that: "Your doctrine is a regulation of adultery; it is not by organising prostitution and adultery that you will succeed in destroying them." Enfantin increasingly embraced the search for the "female Messiah", to complement his own paternal role.

Bazard

Bazard vigorously combated Enfantin. The dispute developed into a trial of strength between the two "Fathers" of the movement. Bazard maintained that Enfantin's views rested on a false interpretation of Saint-Simon's principle of the "rehabilitation of the flesh", whereas Enfantin was closer to Fourier's views. The controversy was so strenuous that Bazard had a stroke and left the movement. He died in 1832, after publishing an account of the controversy, in which he accused Enfantin of "so abusing the religious idea that it is nothing but a masquerade". French government repression put an end to the movement shortly afterwards, using the debate around women as a pretext.

However the fight for women's liberation did not cease. In 1848 women socialists demanded the vote. At the time, no country allowed women to vote. The

who control everything, wealth, political power, and for whose benefit the country is governed, and on the other, the workers of city and countryside who have nothing, neither land, nor capital, nor political power, who pay, however, two-thirds of the taxes, furnish recruits for the army and the navy, and whom the rich, as they see fit, keep on the verge of starvation to make them work for lower wages."

Tristan expressed independent working class politics, calling for workers' organisation, a socialist newspaper and agitation for immediate reforms in *The Workers' Union* (1843):

"Workers... Now the day has come when one must act, and it is up to you and only you to act in the interest of

This third of a series of instalments about socialism before Marx covers early socialist feminists – those coming from the Saint-Simonian movement, and Flora Tristan. References, and whole series, at bit.ly/f-run

Voix des Femmes took up the case for enfranchising women. Jeanne Deroin's demand for votes for women put her at odds with some male socialists, who believed that their first task was to emancipate the underprivileged male. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon launched a newspaper campaign against her, claiming that women had no place outside the home, except as prostitutes. In the newspaper she launched when *Voix des Femmes* folded, Deroin retaliated in *L'Opinion des femmes* (28 January 1849):

"As a Christian socialist, I would say, like you, 'rather a housewife than a whore' if I was convinced that many women become whores to avoid being housewives. Prostitution is the consequence of slavery, ignorance and poverty... You want to strengthen the family, and you weaken it: the man to the debating chamber or the workshop, the women in the home... You ask what women can achieve outside the home? She can help to restore order in the great, but badly-run household we call the state... no serious and lasting reform can be hoped for until the rights of women to civil and political equality are acknowledged to be fundamental to our social redemption."

These early steps towards socialist feminism should be better known in our movement. □

your own cause... So leave your isolation: unite! Unity gives strength. You have numbers going for you, and numbers are significant. I come to you to propose a general union among working men and women, regardless of trade, who reside in the same region – a union which would have as its goal the consolidation of the working class and the construction of several establishments (workers' union palaces) distributed evenly throughout France...

"The unification of the working class now remains to be accomplished. In turn, the workers, the vital part of the nation, must create a huge union to assert their union! Then, the working class will be strong; then it will be able to make itself heard, to demand from the

socialism part 3



bourgeois gentlemen its right to work and to organise."

Tristan toured France speaking at workers' meetings. Her message, cap-

tured in her *Letter to the Workers of Toulon*, underlined the goal for workers to emancipate themselves:

"You have not understood that in order to organise yourselves, workers, you must exclude all the bourgeois... The great proletarian party must first be built in order to destroy all masters and all slaves."

Bound

Tristan's feminism was inextricably bound up with her socialism. She criticised Rousseau for treating women as passive, while praising Mary Wollstonecraft's demands for women's liberty. Tristan made sharp criticism of various facets of women's oppression, comparing the position of women to slavery. Tristan emphasised paid work for women, reflecting the importance of economic independence. Although some of her writing idealised artisan family life, she envisaged the ultimate disappearance of the family structure, advocating socialised child raising and education for young women and men.

Probably Tristan's most significant contribution was to foreground woman's leadership in all aspects of public life, starting with leading the workers' union. She regarded herself as the first strong woman (*la femme forte*) and advocated the "woman guide" in politics. When Robert Owen visited Paris in 1837, he was criticised at a meeting for not having a female leader beside him.

Flora Tristan from the audience, stood up, held out her hand and said, "I am here". Owen apparently bowed.

In 1839, Tristan snuck into the Houses of Parliament disguised as a man with a Turkish embassy official, because women were banned from the premises and workers denied the vote. She was rumbled in the gallery and ejected. Tristan urged the workers' union to reserve seats for women on its leading committees and insisted on women's leading involvement in all aspects of life.

In *The Workers' Union*, Tristan was explicit about the limits of her politics. She wrote, "I am not a revolutionary or an anarchist or a bloodthirsty person" and argued that the union was "a measure in favour of order", to be led by "a well-known university doctor". Tristan's feminism did not engage with sexuality, gender and other aspects of women's oppression. Tristan's survey of the "march of civilisation" in the non-European world in *Peregrinations* (1837) expressed a Eurocentric perspective, including some racist tropes. However in the same publication she held up the courage of the ravanas, female members of the Peruvian army.

Most significantly, Tristan's socialist feminism was saturated with religious sentiment. She regarded socialism as the perfect moral law, the logical outcome of the Christian exhortation, "do

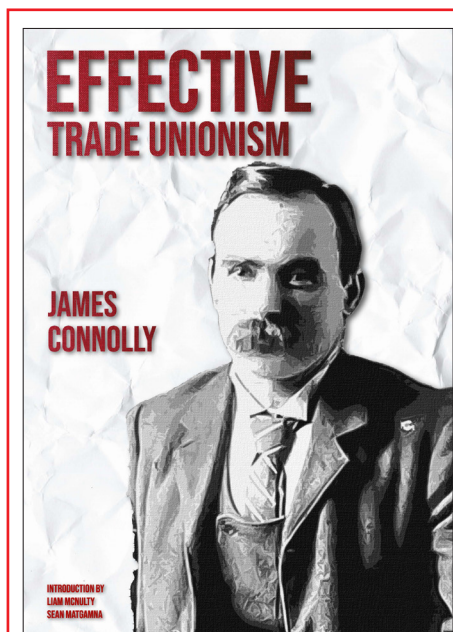
unto others". She perceived her own role in messianic terms and criticised the secular, atheist "men of mathematics". Yet Tristan also married without a religious ceremony, criticised the Catholic Church and held extremely unconventional beliefs for her time. □

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The US left after 5 November



By Martin Thomas

In early 2017, after Donald Trump first took office, there were big demonstrations across the USA against his “Muslim ban” on entry to the USA from seven countries.

At the time I asked a US socialist whom I respected about the protests. They dismissed them as “liberal hysteria”.

Even in 2020, Howie Hawkins, a socialist who was the Green candidate in that year’s presidential poll (and a majority among Workers’ Liberty backed him), said: “I don’t think Trump is more right-wing than some previous Republicans... people can get a little bit hysterical”. There were no big left counter-protests to the Trump “Stop The Steal” demonstrations, initially feeble, which built up to 6 January 2021.

There is less “no real difference” talk on the US left now. But still, in the run-up to 5 November most leftists have said little about after – about how the left may respond to a Trump victory or attempt to “manufacture” a victory.

Socialist Alternative (linked to Soc Alt UK); Speak Out Now (linked to Etincelle in France); and the website Left Voice (“Morenist”) all just say that the left should fight the new president whoever it is (Soc Alt with a Stein vote in the meantime).

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Since Harris is on much the same line as Biden (with some veer to the right), that can only mean: carry on after 5 Nov as before.

Yet, whatever good things the left has been doing in the USA recently, they included little campaigning directly against the federal government.

There is no left campaign to broaden democracy as counter to the threat from the right-wing Supreme Court. Social provision in the USA is poorer than in Europe, but there aren’t federal government social cuts in the USA as there are in the UK and France, or federal moves against civil liberties like the Police Act and Public Order Act here, with street protests and campaigns against them.

There have been more strikes since the Covid lockdowns, and left-wingers have been active supporting them, but all the main ones have been against private bosses, not the federal government as an employer.

The big exception is Palestinian campaigning. It is good and right that US leftists are campaigning to stop US arms supplies to Israel.

Shrill

But much the campaigning has been so shrill as to cut off the leftists from mobilising many workers. And worse, implicitly or explicitly pro-Hamas.

Biden has sought to get Netanyahu to heed calls against escalation, or for ceasefires, by way of continuing military supplies but making periodic threats to pause them. That has been ineffectual. But Trump is aggressively pro-Netanyahu. In the last Gallup poll, 76% of Republicans (vs 23% of Democrats) backed Netanyahu’s action in Gaza.

The “whatever the result on 5 Nov, it’s business as before” line is off-beam even on Israel-Palestine.

The International Socialist Organization, up to 2019 the most active left group in the USA, disbanded that year after internal scandal, with no remnants now bar groups round small websites.

Solidarity USA, also once fairly active, has been in decline. It takes no collective view on the election. About half its members, when polled, were for voting Harris-Walz at least in marginal states, with some of those however for voting Jill Stein in “safe” states. The other half divided between backing Stein or Cor-



nel West, or not voting. Its statement on the election says nothing about response to a Trump victory or attempt to “manufacture” victory.

Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have combined calls for a Harris vote with calls to campaign for goals such as Medicare for all. But Sanders’ “Our Revolution” organisation was never more than an NGO, and has been in decline. Thanks to New York electoral law, Ocasio-Cortez can run for Congress as a “Working Families Party” candidate. But the WFP is a ballot-line label, not a party.

The Democratic Socialists of America grew hugely from the Sanders campaigns in 2016 and 2020, and at its height in 2020-1 claimed 90,000 members – now, maybe 50,000.

It is still by far the biggest group on the US left. Historically, it has lineage back to Shachtman-Draper-Harrington “Third Camp” socialism in the 1950s and 60s. But it doesn’t produce a paper, do socialist street stalls, organise socialist public meetings, or do socialist intervention into demonstrations or in the unions. It does support strikes, do activities like food banks, and join pro-Palestinian protests.

Politically, it has turned to what we call “kitsch anti-imperialism” and “campism”. At the July 2024 Young DSA conference, “the dismantling of the Zionist Entity in totality” was passed without debate and with a 91% majority, and a plan to expel those considered “Zionists” from YDSA also by a clear majority.

The DSA, like some academics and indeed former Trump officials such as John Kelly, has shifted in assessment of Trump, and now describes the Trump

Republicans as at least “veering towards” fascism.

However, it has said almost nothing about 5 November – other than about the few DSA-backed people running on that day, generally through having won selection as Democrat candidates – and nothing about resistance to Trump after 5 November.

The US left is ill-prepared for after 5 November. Indeed, timid mainstream Democrats have done more specifically against Trumpism, with “sanctuary cities”, state-level action for abortion access, and moves for state “Wagner Acts” to counter Republican efforts (which may succeed

even if Harris wins on 5 Nov) to get the 1935 Wagner Act, the USA’s main union-rights laws, declared unconstitutional. That will not be sufficient. The US left needs to reassess and talk about playing a positive part in resistance.

In November 1920 in Italy, when Mussolini’s fascist movement was still diffuse and scrappy, it threatened Bologna City Council, where the Socialist Party (and its most revolutionary wing) had won a majority. The SP pointedly did not call on the city police to defend the city hall. The SP councillors didn’t only (rightly) refuse to rely on the police: they believed that on principle they must look only to self-defence by the SP.

The ill-organised self-defence was ineffective. Worse, in the course of it SPers inadvertently killed a conservative (non-fascist) councillor and threw bombs at the SP crowd gathered outside city hall to support the council. The bombs and fascist bullets killed nine people in the crowd, all socialists. The councillor’s death gave grist to fascist agitation. The regional “prefect” (not a fascist) appointed commissioners to replace the council.

The USA is not the Italy of 1920, full of footloose armed bands of demobilised soldiers and of business people enraged by a recent real threat of working-class revolution, and with a government losing the will to rule. But Trump is still a threat. Let’s hope the US left can start talking about well-organised and well-prepared resistance. It should include a considered strategy for, not reliance, but pressure on the Democrat states and cities to resist, and a positive campaign for democracy. ☐

If Trump is beaten, it'll be thanks to women

By Tom Harrison

Whatever the outcome on 5 November, it seems certain women will vote against Trump more than men.

It's been women who've inflicted the most damage on Trump. E Jean Carroll won a massive defamation case during which Trump was adjudicated a rapist. Letitia James did him for defrauding the citizens of New York – fined \$450,000 plus interest. Stormy Daniels was a great help in getting Trump convicted on 34 felon charges. Finally, Georgia DA Fani Willis got his mug shot and fingerprints for election racketeering.

All have done more to hold Trump accountable than wretched US Attorney General Merrick Garland.

Before Trump's first presidency, the October 2016 release of the notorious "Access Hollywood" tape caught him bragging about grabbing women by the genitalia. Many even on his own campaign staff thought that would sink his chances, but a majority of white women voters still plumped for Trump.

All that was before the Me Too movement and the reversal of *Roe v Wade*. A major impetus for the growth of Me Too was the exposure of numerous sexual assault allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein, currently serving 23 years in prison after being found guilty of some of them.

Trump has recently bemoaning

Weinstein's prosecution, saying "I was so amazed that Harvey Weinstein got schlonged." Trump has form when it comes to feeling sorry for sexual abusers. He's "wished well" sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell on several occasions, hoping she'd continue to keep her mouth shut about his doings with Maxwell's late boyfriend Jeffrey Epstein.

Ban

A nationwide abortion ban is a strong possibility in a second Trump term, despite his disclaimers, and his appointment of right wing judges to the Supreme Court paved the way on *Roe v Wade*. His latest pronouncement that he will be the protector of women "whether they like it or not" projects a vibe reminiscent of the USA as Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

As if that isn't enough to break the clappers on countless alarm bells, Trump wants to appoint Robert F Kennedy jnr to be in charge of women's health! RFK has all the right qualifications for "protecting" women. He became infamous for posting nude pictures he'd taken of females from his phone, and his second wife committed suicide as a result of his philandering.

An additional task for Kennedy could be looking after food safety. This might prove too much for him given that he's said a worm has eaten part of his brain! RFK himself keeps a freezer full of road-

kill, although he couldn't fit a dead bear in there and instead dumped it in New York Central Park.

Another creepy character Trump intends including in his forthcoming cabinet is Elon Musk, busy buying votes for him at a million dollars a pop via an illegal lottery scheme in swing states. Musk believes he has superior sperm (another sign of racist delusion) and on occasion offers it to dinner guests in order to address "a collapsing birth rate", thereby obviously playing into far right "great replacement" nonsense. Musk has a plan to corral all his children and their mothers into a \$35 million compound in Texas. What could possibly go wrong with that!

Musk's suggested role in the next Trump government is to lead an efficiency task force. Expect from that a

gutting of social expenditure. State contracts benefiting Musk companies will naturally go in the opposite direction.

At the Madison Square Garden Trump rally, practically every non-white section of the population – Afro Americans, Latinos, Jews – was insulted, as if the MAGA movement believed election victory inevitable. It may yet be that calling Puerto Rico an floating island of garbage or saying Haitians eat people's pets will have electoral consequences.

The Julia Roberts ad telling women they didn't have to tell their husbands which way they vote was denounced by airhead presenters on Fox News as tantamount to adultery, but it's going to have some traction. Whether enough to counter a sexist and misogynist drift among male voters, we will see. □



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Why not a pick-and-choose line?



Debate

By Rhodri Evans

Zack Muddle (*Solidarity* 723) asks: why not limit assent to US socialists voting Harris-Walz on 5 November to the "battle-ground" states and advise abstention in the safe-Democrat (or safe-Republican) states.

Short answer: similar reason to why in the July election we said vote Labour in every constituency, not vote Labour in marginals and stay home in safe-Labour or safe-Tory seats.

The arguments for voting Starmer-Labour were not the same as for voting Harris, but the superiority of a clear statement is the same. The aggregate votes matter politically, if not constitutionally.

For a small Marxist group, the purpose of any electoral intervention is to "speak the truth, no matter how bitter it may be", not to pose as clever distributors of a big voting bloc which we do not in fact have.

Trump, whether you call him fascist or not, is much worse than Harris. If he win or seeks to "steal" victory, we want the

US labour movement and left, and indeed the Democrat states and cities, to organise and deploy their strength against his promised assaults. We don't say: oh, another bourgeois president, continue as usual. I'm sure Zack would agree.

So we call on US workers after 5 Nov to defend their areas against Trump's "mass deportations now", his "one very violent day" to clean up the streets, his promise of "retribution" against "radical left Marxists"? In fact, to risk their lives to do that? But when they can reduce Trump's political

authority just by voting on 5 Nov, then no, they should stay home? Or stay home unless their state is marginal?

A message like that tells its listeners nothing about Trump (or about Harris's bad policies), but only something about us: that we are shilly-shallyers, preoccupied with signalling virtue to ourselves, people whom they can't trust to be consistent and logical.

The "don't vote" line makes some sense from the many who say that Trump's threats are empty, or that the US bourgeois constitutional system is so strong that we can rely on

it nullifying them. But Zack doesn't say that.

The line of some on the US left, to vote Jill Stein in "safe" states, Harris in marginals, is more plausible. But it is off-beam too. If a "propaganda" candidacy like Stein's makes sense, it can only be to proclaim the "propagandist" message as urgent and essential, and to give its supporters a sense of power by rallying maximum votes. It must advocate "write-in" votes in states where that's necessary, as serious socialist "propaganda" candidates have done in the past. □

The new RCP: a garbled return of old ideas



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

In January 2024 *Socialist Appeal* re-named itself *The Communist* and declared the group would be renamed "Revolutionary Communist Party".

This, they said, was "a truly historic breakthrough!" They claimed "an astonishing rise in the ideas of communism, especially amongst younger generations", and that capitalism is now in terminal decline.

The new name, RCP, is also an old one, used by a group in Britain from 1944 to 1949 within which Socialist Appeal's veteran leader Ted Grant (who died in 2006, aged 93) was a leader of the majority who opposed vigorous intervention in the Labour Party ("entrism", as it was known).

The new RCP claims an "unbroken

thread" argument. In *The Communist* #8 editor Rob Sewell writes that "in 1944, our forerunner, the first Revolutionary Communist Party, was founded by Ted Grant and others. Despite a promising start, this was cut across by the objective situation... Nevertheless, Ted Grant, in the most difficult of times, kept the ideas of genuine Marxism alive, which he has bequeathed to us today."

The RCP (first edition) organised on the expectation of a rapid radicalisation after 1945 like the one after World War One (though Grant recognised some capitalist stabilisation earlier than other Trotskyists). In fact the RCP declined. From 1947 a minority departed to focus inside the Labour Party, and in 1949 the rump RCP collapsed, its members segueing into Labour.

Grant became the most Labour-immersed of the Trotskyists. In 1959, when some other Trotskyists had re-established a group with a profile distinct from Labour (though with its members

still very active inside) he wrote, in *Problems of Entrism*: "To the sectarian splinter groups ... the problem is posed in the simplest of terms: [the Labour Party] and Stalinism [now represented by the *Morning Star*] have betrayed the working class; therefore, the independent party of the working class must immediately be built. They claim the independence of the revolutionary party as a principle, whether the party consists of two or two million."

Simple

Politics is not that simple, declaims Grant, if it were "all that would be necessary would be to proclaim from the street corners the need for a revolutionary party".

Grant argued that any upturn in the class struggle would be reflected more or less mechanically in the trade unions and the Labour Party. By being well-embedded within the Labour Party his group (from 1964, *Militant*) would be able to offer the newly radicalised

workers a beacon to which the masses would flock. Militant shunned united action with others on the Labour left, but controlled Labour's youth section from 1970 to about 1987.

Grant and his close co-thinkers Alan Woods and Rob Sewell were eventually expelled from Militant in 1992 as, after its Liverpool fiasco, it turned away from the Labour Party (and soon became the Socialist Party). They established Socialist Appeal, committed above all to immersion in the Labour Party.

Bit by bit Socialist Appeal drifted. It still said that future revolutionary upsurge was mechanically guaranteed to reflect directly in the official labour movement, but increasingly, in the meantime, it focused on first uncritical solidarity with Chavez's Venezuela, then on campus Marxist Societies on campus.

Now it has completely trashed the element of truth that there was in its "traditional" arguments for orientation to the existing labour movement. □



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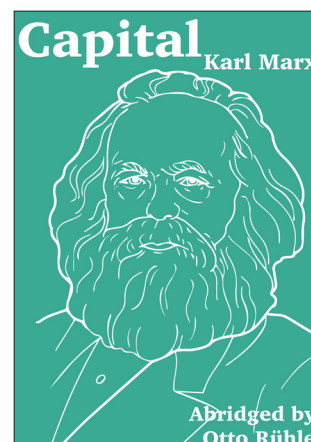
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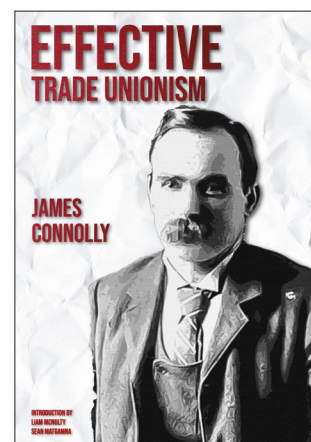
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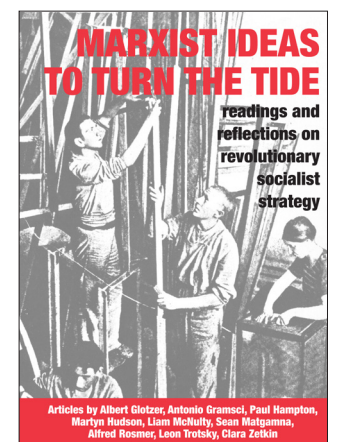
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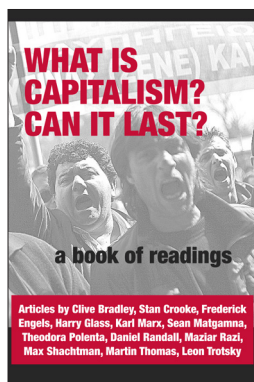
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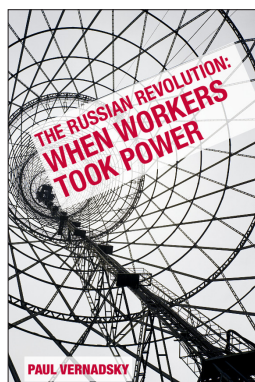
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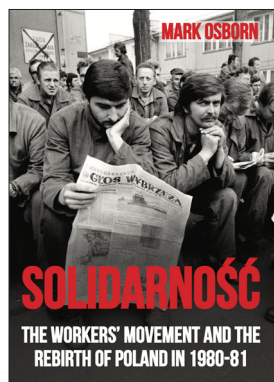
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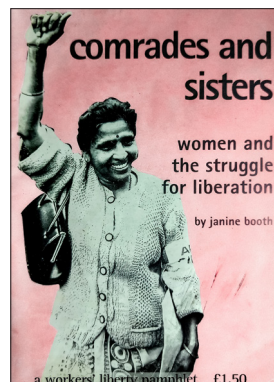
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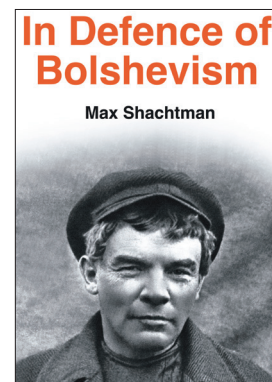
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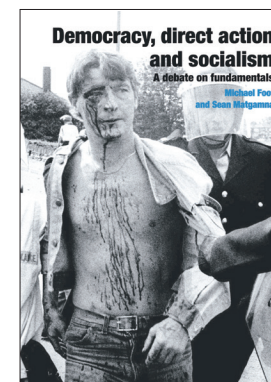
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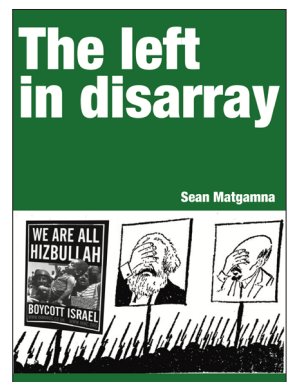
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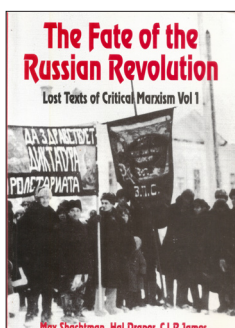
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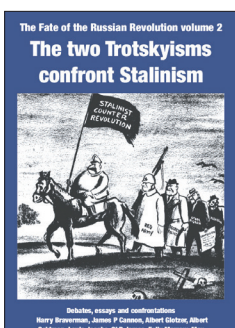
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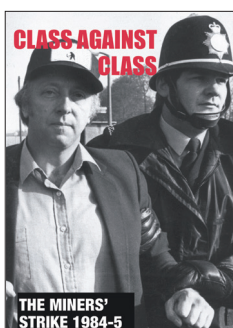
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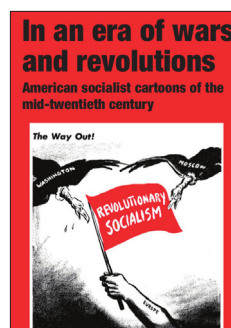
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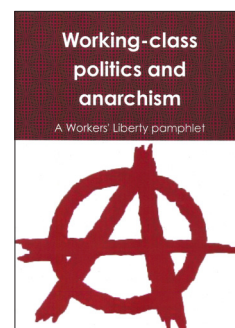
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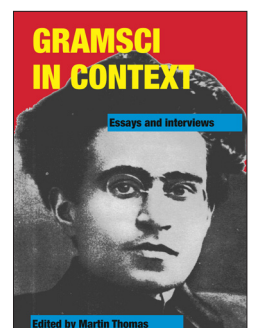
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Sanctions vs solidarity

By Dan Katz

Iranian comrades demand the closure of the Iranian embassy in London. Belarusian friends demand their country is kicked out of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a forum of governments and of employers' and workers' organisations from 187 countries.

Ukrainians demand more Western sanctions on Russia. Pro-Palestinian protesters demand we boycott Starbucks, cut links with Israeli businesses and end cultural and academic ties with Israelis.

Stop this, end that, break connections... Often unclear is exactly what these activists positively want and how that is connected to their boycott-type calls.

Iranian left-oppositionists want women's freedom, workers' rights and socialism. And the closure of the Embassy will help to bring those things about? How? No doubt the regime would be inconvenienced, as would many Iranian citizens who might need their Embassy's services.

There is no connection between not buying latte in London and ending the war in Gaza. Refusing to speak to an Israeli physicist or anthropologist, or to read a book by an Israeli author (and without even asking their views on the war), is counter-productive, if only because it alienates many reasonable Israelis.

The biggest state-orchestrated sanctions package in history has been imposed on Russia to stop its war against Ukraine. Those sanctions have completely failed; Russia's brutal onslaught continues.

We agree that weapons should not be sold to Putin's Russia. Russia has its own large arms industry, so not selling doesn't stop its war, but we agree. But refusing to sell burgers or clothes to Russia does not help Ukraine. Russia has tilted towards China and buys more goods from there. Or Russian people do without.

According to Dutch academic Nicolas Mulder, author of *The Economic Weapon*, sanctions have become the US government's standard foreign-policy tactic since World War Two and especially since the 1990s, as easier and less risky than war. The tactic dates back over one hundred years, to World War One. Yet over all that time, sanctions have only rarely had the intended impact, by causing a regime to alter key policies or to stop a war.

Mulder stresses that it is important to distinguish between the effects of sanctions (sanctions have had an impact on Russia, which now has raging labour shortages, wage inflation, and 21% interest rates and sells oil at discounts to China and India) and the efficacy of sanctions (Russia continues its

war on Ukraine, unrestrained). The pro-Ukraine-left's focus on sanctions against Russia is particularly baffling given the existence of a clear demand which certainly would work if implemented: Western states should give Ukraine the financial support and weapons it needs to defeat Russia. The West clearly and easily has the capacity to do this, but chooses not to for its own political reasons.

Sanctions have been particularly ineffective against large states with sizeable economies. Russia has many of the natural resources it needs within its own borders. It has been able to reconfigure its oil and gas trade.

Sanctions are easy to comprehend and seem to offer a quick, painless result: this is, apparently, a "violence free" solution. And sanctions can be demanded easily, even casually, from an existing government, without the difficult business of having to create links of working-class solidarity.

Standard

Sanctions have become a standard, immediate, knee-jerk reaction of the liberal left as well as the US government. Unfortunately sanctions, if imposed, often have side effects which are unintended by those that support them.

US sanctions on Saddam's Iraq in the 1990s had a serious impact on ordinary Iraqis and the country's infrastructure. Transparency International (TI) suggests that sanctions led to malnutrition and shortages of medicines and basic foodstuffs. TI suggests two million people died as a direct result. But the sanctions brought no change in Iraq's regime or its policies.

The current sanctions regime against Iran for its pursuit of nuclear weapons has not caused the regime to stop trying to build nuclear bombs (which it now says it can produce quickly if it faces an "existential threat") nor have they altered Iran's malevolent interventions across the Middle East. Last week Iran declared it would increase its defence spending by 200% in the next year.

The Iranian state has organised an extraordinary petrol-smuggling operation to circumvent sanctions. Perhaps 50mn litres of petrol is sneaked out of Iran every day. Smugglers use 2,000 litre tanks on vast convoys of pickup trucks; it is an enormous state-run, IRGC-operation. Vast amounts of crude oil are exported to China, despite the sanctions.

However, millions of working-class Iranians have been plunged deep into poverty by the sanctions.

On the left the myth about the effectiveness of sanctions is bolstered by a story, originating with the Communist Party, that sanctions against South Africa brought down Apartheid. In fact, Apartheid fell because of a mass an-

ti-Apartheid movement inside the country at the centre of which was a radical, independent, non-racial trade union movement.

Like many others in the 1980s I refused to eat South African oranges. I moved my bank account to a bank that said it didn't invest in South Africa. Nothing wrong with that. It made me feel a little more virtuous and pleased with myself. But my actions had no impact on ending Apartheid. None at all.

The connection between aims, demands and workers' self-activity is pretty clear to me at the level of workplace activity. I am a teacher and an National Education Union (NEU) rep, so when my head teacher wanted us to work an hour more after school, one day a week, I told him we would walk out the following week at 4pm. Then we would escalate our action every week after that. He offered an extra week's holiday, and we settled the dispute.

But at the level of international political struggle those direct connections seem to have been lost. It is a big job to fight an authoritarian regime. It can be out-facing. Activists say, "We've got to do something". Boycotting and demanding sanctions seem the easiest thing to do. But let's consider what might be effective. And effective from our working-class, internationalist perspective too.

Often sanctions will have unintended and unconsidered, but harmful, side effects. Sanctions on Russia, for example, have impacted significantly on the world economy. Russia has developed a transactional relationship with Iran, importing drones and, more recently ballistic missiles.

Russia has been pulled towards China and now – alarmingly – has 10,000 North Korean troops helping it to wage war on Ukraine. Political realignments have followed the unpicking of world-market links. Sanctions on Russia have made the world a more dangerous place.

As I stand outside the Apple store in Covent Garden, protesting against Apple's use of forced Uyghur and non-union labour in Chinese factories to make their phones, well-meaning people ask, "So, we shouldn't buy their phones?"

We had similar conversations twenty years ago when we campaigned against sweatshop labour through the No Sweat campaign. In that case the issue was clothes and trainers made by Nike, Gap and others in anti-union, ultra-low-pay sweatshop conditions. Indonesian activist Dita Sari pointed out that if Westerners organised an effective boycott of Adidas the first victims would be the factory workers who we were trying to help. They would be laid off and the union organisations in the factories which Dita Sari and her comrades were trying to build would col-



lapse.

Better, we concluded, was to fight for union recognition in the sweatshops in solidarity with workers abroad. Rather than breaking links and raising barriers, we believe that we need more and better links, working-class links.

At my NEU branch an incoherent motion was moved demanding my local council, which "through the Local Government Pension Scheme has investments in companies complicit in genocide", divest its funds. The Council is asked to end "all investments in companies linked to Israel, directly or indirectly," as if such a thing is remotely possible.

It turned out that the companies "complicit in genocide" include Airbnb. Really? Airbnb rents holiday homes, it doesn't kill people. A boycott makes sense, apparently, because any company operating in Israel, or even dealing at some remove with Israeli firms, is "complicit in genocide". It seems people are now "complicit in genocide" merely for where they live and work, rather than what they do.

The rock band Radiohead has come in for a lot of criticism for playing in Israel. The band replied that they played in the US when Trump was President and no-one complained, so why not Israel with a Likud Prime Minister? To play in a country is not to endorse the government. By stating the obvious, Radiohead also made clear that the left has different standards for Israel than, say, for the USA.

If socialists want peace between Israel and the Palestinians – and we should, and we do – there must be a government in Israel that will make a peace agreement. So, logically, we should help those, like the Israeli leftists and peace activists in Standing Together, who are working to do that. That requires more and better links with Israel, rather than boycotts and ending all links.

For international workers' solidarity, not bourgeois sanction regimes. □

“What we stand for

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

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.

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

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement
- A workers' charter of trade union rights – to organise, strike, picket effectively, and take solidarity action
- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a green society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
- Maximum left unity in action, and full openness in debate

If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! □

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

Don't taint Palestinian cause with conspiracy thinking

By Colin Foster

On 2 November, Palestine Action took two sculptures of Chaim Weizmann from Manchester University, where he long worked as a chemistry lecturer.

Weizmann was the informal mediator between the Zionist movement and the British government for decades. He was then President of Israel from 1949 until his death in 1952, in a largely ceremonial role.

PA has some 14 activists in jail for actions, often brave, against armaments firms in the UK linked to Israel. But their claim that taking the Weizmann sculptures helps the Palestinians is false.

They might as well set about abducting all pictures or sculptures of the socialist and scientist Albert Einstein, since Einstein was asked to be president of Israel after Weizmann, and refused only because he thought himself not up to the job.

PA in their accounts of the action presents Israel as a conspiracy between the Jews and British imperialism. It is not clear whether they see British imperialism as a catspaw for Jews, or Jews as catspaws for Britain. Both variants have antisemitic implications, and are wrong.

As antisemitism in Europe rose in the late 19th century, some European Jews sought a safer place to live as a community. As with Europeans moving for individual benefit to sparsely-peopled far-away lands in that era, which included such as Dora Montefiore to Australia, James Connolly to USA, Giuseppe Garibaldi to Uruguay, those Jews often didn't think much about the rights of older populations there.

The Jews did not have an imperial power to help them. They got an un-



easy deal with the Ottoman Empire, which then ruled Palestine, to be allowed to settle there.

The Ottoman Empire would not survive World War One, and France and Britain would divide up its Arab territories. So the migration-minded Jews – Zionists – sought and got agreements from the French and British governments to continue to allow them to settle. Weizmann was central to getting the British deal.

The British grabbed Palestine, but soon became disillusioned. From 1939, as Hitler came to rule Europe, they banned Jews from buying land in Palestine and severely limited Jewish migration.

After 1945 the Jewish refugees in Palestine, who had become more numerous since Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, fought a war against Britain for Holocaust survivors to be allowed into Palestine. The Palestinian Arabs, battered by British repression of the Arab revolt in 1936-9, were largely bystanders.

In 1947 Britain gave up, referred

the fate of Palestine to the UN, which voted for partition, and then withdrew its troops. The Jewish population set up Israel. First guerrillas mainly coming from Syria, then the Arab states (mostly then semi-colonies of Britain, or even with British officers leading their armed forces), fought the Jews. Thanks to aid from the USSR via Czechoslovakia, and despite an arms embargo by the US and UK, the Jews won.

In that war the Jews carried out atrocities, forced or scared hundreds of thousands of Arabs into fleeing, and refused to allow back home those who had fled. Socialists are still fighting for a democratic equal-rights settlement of the conflict.

Weizmann was a Jewish nationalist, even though a diplomat-type rather than a warmonger. He is no political hero for socialists. But then neither are most of the academics commemorated at universities across the world.

It is no service to the Palestinian cause to tie it into the conspiracy theory behind the Weizmann stunt. □

Betty Boop for President



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

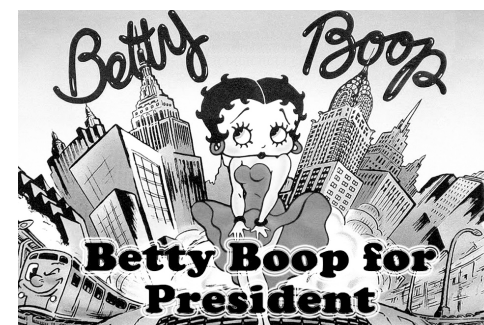
Released just days before the elections of 1932 which took Roosevelt to the White House, *Betty Boop for President* is a very funny seven-minute cartoon by the Fleischer brothers.

Betty's opponent is "Mr. Nobody", who appears as a stick figure topped with only a mouth. He is no match for Betty's popular appeal, with promises of chauffeur driven street cleaners to pick up horse shit in the streets and

tram passengers delivered to their door. Even prison reform features in Betty's populist election platform. A convict is led to what looks like an electric chair but instead of being zapped he receives a manicure, haircut and shoeshine and walks away very satisfied with his new appearance and seemingly unaware that he has changed sex in the process.

Of course, Betty wins the election and her victory parade finishes with an image of an overflowing beer glass. Prohibition was ended in the following year.

As a British Film Institute website entry drily states, *Betty Boop for President* "discloses a disbelief in the effec-



tiveness of the ruling class and a desire for simple entertainment as an antidote to rhetoric". A winning formula: in 1948 it was re-made as one of the Popeye series, *Olive Oyl for President*. □

• Betty Boop is on [Youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

G4S workers strike against “two tiers”

By Sacha Ismail

Civil service security workers outsourced to G4S have been on strike for improved pay, sick pay and annual leave, and against a two-tier workforce. Carly Wade, a PCS union rep at the Cabinet Office in Whitehall, spoke to us.

We have a two-tier pay system here. We have a lot of people who are just on the London Living Wage, and some of us get more. We want one pay tier. We don't want anyone to be without sick pay, we don't want anyone to have a lot less holiday. We all do the same job – we want everyone to be equal.

We're asking for a certain amount above the London Living Wage for those on that; for a percentage in line with inflation for the rest of us; twenty five days sick pay for everybody; and thirty days holiday for everybody. We need the two-tier system to stop.

Our colleagues who have no sick pay at the moment, for instance, obviously have to come to work unwell. And then if a member of your family has Covid or flu, say, it's a knock-on effect for all of us.

I do get sick pay, and my salary is better, but a lot of my colleagues don't get those things. The reason is I was previously employed by the civil service, and I have civil service terms and conditions. Our workforce has been outsourced six times since 2007, and each time the company has brought in a certain number of people. So the number who were directly employed constantly falls. I don't think there's even half of us now who are on those relatively decent terms and conditions.

Even those of us on civil service conditions haven't had a pay rise in seven years.

I want to underline that outsourcing is the problem. The relative benefits the civil service brings, in terms of pensions, for instance, a certain amount of sick pay, a certain amount of holiday pay – these companies don't bring that. They bring people in, sometimes on zero hours contracts; so you'll see someone for seven hours one week and then fifty hours the next week.

We're against outsourcing. We be-

lieve that government buildings, especially, shouldn't be outsourced. The quality of the job done also goes down. You can see that with the people they've brought in to replace us, who have had no real government security training. Meanwhile, even at normal times, when people have no job security, when they're scared to go sick, when they feel they have to do overtime, or won't get annual leave approved, that has a huge impact on people's state of mind too.

We began on the 28th, and we're on strike till this Sunday [10 November]. Monday we all go back to work. We're picketing Monday to Thursday both weeks, 8-10am.

There's no movement officially, but we know, and our friends in the building have confirmed it, that this is not sustainable. They've brought people over from Northern Ireland, they've had to pay for their accommodation, for their food, for taxis. Management have had to come in at 6 every morning, which never happens! I do believe we are going to win. Once we stop on Monday, we'll announce our next round of dates. We won't stop till we get what we deserve.

First

This is the first time [security at] 70 Whitehall [the Cabinet Office building] has been on strike. Do you know what? – it feels quite empowering. It really does. There's a lot of bullying going on, in this company especially. People are not treated well; they're treated like second class citizens in a way. They didn't think we would pull this off. I'm a very new rep, my colleague [fellow rep Mohammed Miezou] is a very new rep, and this is the first time we've done anything like this – but everybody has come out on strike, every single member has come out. Everybody is so pumped up for this; everyone is here at 7 o'clock in the morning, everyone has got their whistles and is ready to go.

I've never seen unity like this strike has brought us. Everybody is so loyal to one another. It's actually been quite emotional to see everyone come together.

What would you say to other workers who are thinking about going on strike,



or even just joining a union?

Know your worth. Know what you deserve. I'd recommend everyone join a union. I've been here 19 years, and in the union 17 or 18 of those. PCS have been fantastic; they've given us the support we've needed, materials we've needed, they've been on the phone at 11 o'clock at night.... We've also had good support from our directly employed PCS colleagues, who've joined our picket lines, come and clapped us, brought us chocolates, and found other ways to support us.

Wherever you work, everybody needs to stand up for what they believe in. If you think you're not getting what you're worth, then come out! They can't run businesses without their workers.

Unlike our civil service colleagues, our ministers haven't come and supported us. They've not even come out to speak to us and find out what our issues are and why we're on strike. We find it extremely disappointing.

What we want to see from this government is insourcing. We'd like to see contracts like this insourced. Companies like G4S and similar, they don't have anyone's best interests: it's all about profit. You'd get so much more loyalty and commitment out of your workforce if you brought them back in

house and treated everybody with respect.

It's lovely to hear buses and lorries coming past and beeping [this was pretty continuous while we were at the picket]. That and people joining our picket lines and clapping gives us such a boost. It's tiring blowing whistles for three hours, so it gives us a real boost to get support from others. People can also promote our stuff on social media, and contact their MP. And promote the message: we need insourcing of all government contracts. □

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Support the eCourier strikes

By Owen Flood

On 14 and 15 November, workers at eCourier will be striking over employment classification and pay, and to oppose bullying and harassment.

In 2017 the courts found

that eCourier, owned by Royal Mail, was breaking the law by classifying its couriers as independent contractors rather than workers. The company promised to investigate and rectify the issue. However, eCourier has so far sat on its hands. When work-

ers and union activists have raised the issue, they have been met with intimidation and harassment.

As with other sections of the so-called gig economy, the majority of the workforce are migrant workers. The striking couriers are mem-

bers of the IWGB union. Please donate to their strike fund (bit.ly/r-o-d), pass a motion in support at your union or Labour Party branch, and join the picket line on the day. □

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Stop Gaza starving!

By Ira Berkovic

According to the Palestinian Civil Defence, more than 100,000 people in northern Gaza are without access to food, water, or medicine, as Israel's siege continues. Bombardments on Sunday 3 November killed 35 people in Jabalia. Other recent strikes in the area have killed dozens, including many children. Israel continues to deprive the area of vital aid, with levels well below the 350 trucks per day demanded by the USA. This figure is itself significantly below the levels aid agencies say are necessary to reverse worsening malnutrition and other health crises.

These mounting crises are not a byproduct of Israel's war, but, increasingly, a deliberate tactic of it. The so-called "generals' plan", developed by a group of former military leaders including Giora Eiland, proposes Israel impose a "surrender-or-starve" siege on northern Gaza, based on the assumption that anyone who has not evacuated is a combatant and therefore a legitimate target. Although military spokespeople say the IDF has not formally adopted the plan, Israeli tactics in the north strongly suggest it, or something like it, is being pursued. Such a strategy represents a form of ethnic cleansing.

America has previously told the Israeli state that, if aid levels to Gaza do not increase by "mid-November", some restrictions will be placed on US military aid to Israel. That the flow of military matériel has continued until now, seemingly unconditionally, whilst Israel's war has turned an enclave of 2.2 million people into a wasteland, is a moral obscenity. Even a total arms embargo by the USA would not mean an immediate halt to the war, as Israel has significant levels of existing supplies, but it would, over time, degrade Israeli military capabilities. It would also represent an important political symbol that would increase pressure on the Israeli regime, and might elicit more determined opposition to the war from those within it who place greater value on the country's relationship with its most powerful ally than they do on enacting the messianic-eschatological vision of the settler movement.

Israeli air strikes also killed 52 people, and wounded 75 others, in Lebanon on Friday 1 November. On Thursday 31 October, at least seven people, including four migrant workers, were killed in Israel by Hezbollah rockets. A further 11 were wounded on Saturday 2 November.

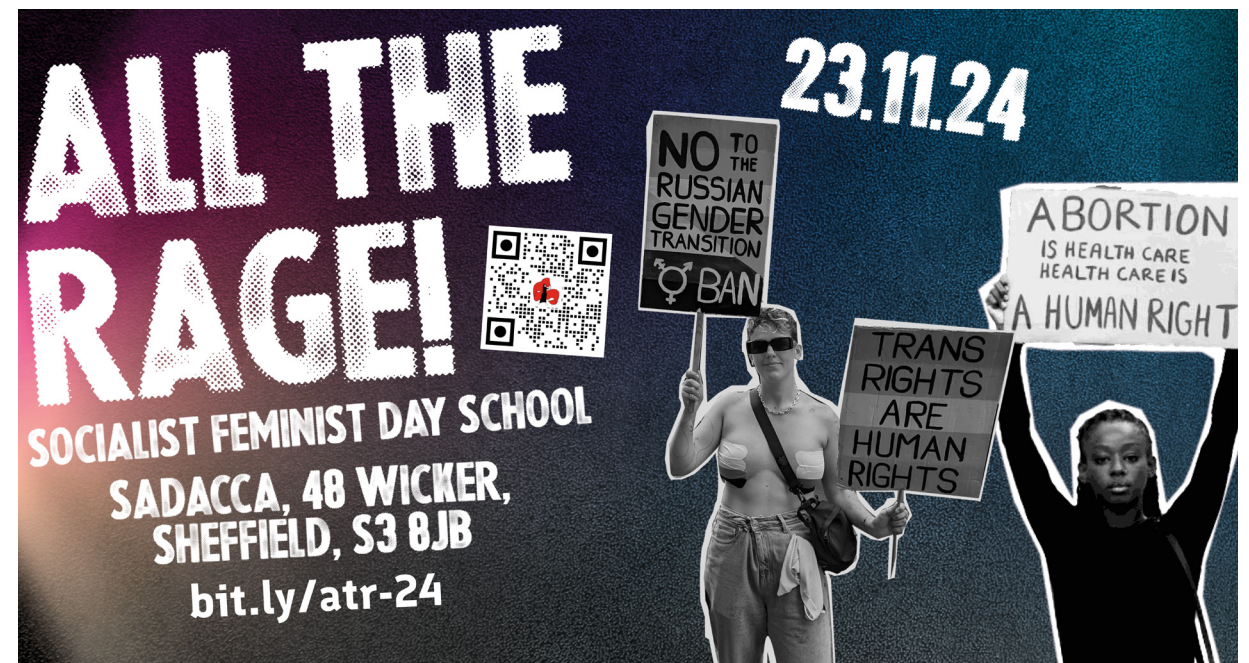
Within Israel, thousands demonstrated in Tel Aviv on Saturday 2 November, as part of ongoing mass demonstrations against the government, led by families of hostages demanding the government do more to conclude a deal to ensure their return. The left-wing Standing Together movement organised an anti-war rally and feeder march prior to the main demonstration, which saw two of the movement's leaders, Uri Weltmann and Alon-Lee Green, arrested by Israeli police. Both were held for several hours before being released. □

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• More on page 7

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RMT wrong to call off Tube strike

By Ollie Moore

Tube workers' union RMT has called off strikes over pay and conditions planned on London Underground from 1-8 November. Many RMT reps and activists oppose the decision, especially

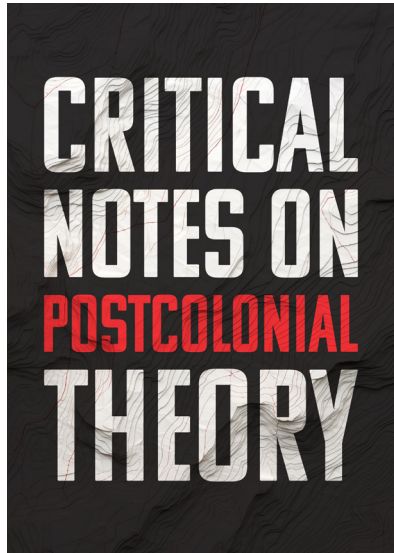
as a majority at a reps' meeting on 30 October wanted to proceed with the action.

Those arguing for maintaining action say that, whilst London Underground Ltd (LUL) has made important concessions during the course of negotiations, its current offer does not come close enough to meeting union demands for an above-inflation pay increase for all, and a reduced working week. Its current pay offer is above inflation for workers in some roles, but not all. And it says only that it will hold a "review" to discuss a "restructure" of the working week.

As *Solidarity* went to press on 5 Nov, driver-only union Aslef also suspended its planned strikes, which were to be on 7 and 12 November. It has said the company has presented a "groundbreaking new offer", but workers on the job are yet to see what this offer includes.

Aslef's aims are conditioned by the nature of their organisation as a sectional craft union; they want a deal that privileges drivers and benefits them more than workers in other roles.

Tubeworker, the rank-and-file bulletin produced by Workers' Liberty, has always been against any offer that privileges one already higher-paid-grade over another. □



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For a workers' government

STOP THE SCHOOL CLOSURES!

By David Pendleton

A demographic dip (fewer children) currently means fewer pupils in primary schools. The dip, combined with general underfunding and funding being calculated per pupil without reference to other factors, is leading to primary-school closures across the country.

On the Isle of Wight, where I teach, the council is running a consultation on the closure of six primary schools, 16% of the primary schools on the Island, with the loss of over 300 posts.

Children will have their education disrupted. Class sizes will increase. The workload of staff who do not lose their jobs will go up.

Britain already has some of the largest class sizes in the industrialised world. It is widely accepted that smaller class

sizes improve educational outcomes. The school unions on the Island are working together to launch a "Staff Our Schools" campaign.

Difficult

It is difficult for trade unionists to generate "trade disputes" here. Local authorities are not responsible for the underfunding or the funding model. They do not have additional resources they can allocate to schools. Local authorities cannot close academies or free schools, so it will be disproportionately local-authority schools closed or restructured. Local management of schools makes redeployment of staff more difficult: every local-authority school, even within the same local authority, decides its own recruitment. However, the National Education Union (NEU)

at Beecroft Garden Primary in Lewisham will be striking against a proposed restructure and redundancies on 12 November. They got 100% "yes" to strikes, on a 92% ballot turnout. Their demands are no compulsory redundancies and no increase in workload. They propose re-opening the nursery and getting rid of private contracts

However, we also need a national campaign by the school unions, militant and member led, demanding a big increase in funding for all schools, smaller class sizes (no more than 20 in any primary class), all schools to be taken back into Local Authority control, increased funding for education departments, and a changed funding formula. □

