

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



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STAND WITH UKRAINE



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For Ukraine, and for Ukraine's workers!



It is now more than three years since the full-scale Russian imperialist invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022.

The war has been fought at a terrible cost.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy admits that Ukraine has had 46,000 troops killed, with 380,000 wounded and tens of thousands more missing in action.

In February Zelenskyy said the war had cost Ukraine £250bn. Estimates of the cost to rebuild Ukraine have reached \$500bn.

Nearly seven million Ukrainians are living as refugees outside the country (UNHCR) and perhaps four million are internally displaced, with a similar number living under Russian occupation.

About 20,000 children have been abducted from Ukraine by Russia.

Ukraine is currently investigating over 140,000 alleged war crimes including torture, rape, murder of civilians and POWs, use of chemical weapons and deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure.

Ukraine was a poor country before the war began, and its GDP now stands at about 78% of the pre-war figure. The Russian economy is ten times the size of Ukraine's and is growing as Russia has pivoted to avoid sanctions by selling oil and gas to China.

Drone and missile strikes have targeted Ukrainian infrastructure and have led to a 65% loss of energy generation capacity over three years. One in ten homes in Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed since 2022. 576 educational facilities in Ukraine were damaged or destroyed in 2024.

Inflation is running at 13%, and the impact on workers and the poor is higher with energy and housing costs rising at 20% per year.

There is absolutely no reasonable justification for the Russian invasion, which is a war of conquest and obliteration. The Ukrainian people are entitled to self-determination and, consequently, the right to fight to maintain their freedom and to demand weapons to fight effectively.

Russian President Vladimir Putin

seems to maintain his ultimate goal of abolishing Ukraine as an entity, through occupation and the installation of a Russian-controlled state to rule across the country, the destruction of Ukrainian institutions, the absolute repression of the Ukrainian nation.

Putin is deliberately projecting strength and a determination of crush Ukraine, no matter how long it takes.

On 23 May Russia's unpleasant Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made an often-repeated Russian nationalist claim that Ukraine is run by a "junta" which has "banned speaking Russian," presenting himself as a defender of a Russian minority. Lavrov is a liar. There is no ban on speaking Russian in Ukraine. The big majority of Ukrainians – including Russian speakers – back Ukraine's war. The argument that Russian speaker equals Russian is as stupid as saying that an Irish person who speaks English is therefore English.

Lavrov said, "We cannot leave [Russian] people under the rule of the regime currently in place in [Kyiv]."

Russia currently controls 20% of Ukrainian territory, a land-mass larger than Portugal, and rules in the occupied areas through terror. Democracy, political and trade union organisation are fiercely repressed.

Trade unions

The Ukrainian workers have more to defend than their national rights. They have their working-class organisations, the trade unions, to defend too. If Russia wins the unions will be smashed.

Ukrainian workers continue to find their rights under attack from the Zelenskyy government. However, their unions are relatively free to operate, and Ukraine remains a democratic state, unlike Russia. Workers' Liberty backs the Ukraine against Russian invasion and the Ukrainian workers against Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian capitalists.

Russian forces continue to advance slowly, and at great cost. They took 4,200 sq km in 2024. All the areas they overran have been destroyed, houses and infrastructure have been demolished, and the former battlefields are littered with mines, unexploded munitions, dead bodies and wrecked military equipment.

Total Russian losses amount to at least 750,000 troops killed, wounded, missing or captured. For the last six months the figure has been more than

1,000 per day.

The Russian leadership currently shows no signs of negotiating an end to the war, and the new far-right US President, Donald Trump, has no intention of putting significant pressure on Russia, threatening to "walk away" from his half-hearted attempts to get a ceasefire unless Russia and Ukraine look like making a deal. If Trump even has a coherent policy it is that the US will gain economically if the war ends, sanctions are cancelled, and profitable economic relations with Russia are restored.

Trump cares much more about making money from Ukraine, and trade with Russia, than he does about the rights of the Ukrainian people.

Trump has refused any guarantees of Ukraine's security under a future peace deal. Ukraine wants a pledge of help because it does not trust Putin. The Ukrainians are right to be sceptical.

The "Stop-the-War left" in Europe has spent the past three years demanding an end to Western arms sales and donations to Ukraine, and declaring that the war is a proxy war between NATO and Russia fought on Ukrainian territory. Effectively they have sided with Putin, because if Europe and the US ended arms sales Ukraine would be quickly overrun.

"Welfare not Warfare" is a slogan that has recently been raised by the Stop-the-War left in the UK. It sounds bland, but is a covert swipe at arms for Ukraine. The idea has a nasty nationalist edge, implying that better social provision in Britain is more important than helping Ukraine to maintain its freedoms and can only come through abandoning Ukraine.

Both a rebuilt welfare state and arms and aid for Ukraine can be won by taxing the rich. In any case, the amount spent on arms or aid for Ukraine is tiny compared to the shortfall in hospitals, schools, and the benefits system.

Some left groups, such as *Socialist Worker*, reflexively side with the main opponents of the US and UK, which in this case puts them in Putin's camp. They support Hamas in Palestine for similar reasons. And they backed Brexit (as a protest against the British establishment), which lined them up with Farage, no matter what their private thoughts on the matter.

These "left" groups care more about defeating their own rulers than defend-

ing the rights of the those under attack, such as the Ukrainians.

Workers' Liberty supports the working class and the oppressed fighting to alleviate their oppression.

The Russians are mobilising for a new summer offensive against Ukraine and are concentrating large numbers of troops on Ukraine's north-eastern border. Putin has no intention of stopping soon.

That's despite pressure on the Russian economy. Inflation is 10% and interest rates are a staggering 21%.

Trump pressed hard for Ukraine to sign away its mineral rights and a deal was signed on 30 April. It was less bad for Ukraine than was originally mooted when Trump demanded Ukraine simply hand over its mineral, oil and gas rights to repay and alleged \$500bn owed to the US for aid and arms donated to Ukraine since 2022. \$500bn is a figure Trump had invented. The real amounts of US aid to Ukraine are around \$120bn, and most of that figure was signed off by the US Congress as donations, not loans to be repaid.

Zelenskyy has repeatedly said Ukraine will not sign away Ukrainian territory for peace. In the end, under pressure, he might feel he has no other choice.

How do the Ukrainian people feel about this? The number of Ukrainians who support a negotiated peace is increasing with war-weariness. Concessions on territory have become somewhat more popular, though 50% of Ukrainians still say they would accept no loss of land.

We would not condemn Ukrainians if they feel forced into compromise, but Workers' Liberty continues to fight in the British labour movement for working-class solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian workers. If you agree with us, join us and help the fight. □

• More on Ukraine: bit.ly/chalenko

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2025 inflation at 8% or more

By Rhodri Evans

The latest official figures show January-to-April inflation running at a rate equivalent (if continued for a full year) to 11.2% (RPI), 8.5% (CPI), or 7.9% (CPIH).

The figures mostly quoted are for price rises over a full 12 months to April 2025, so understate the speeding-up of the rate this year.

Water, gas, and airfares led the rises in April; clothing

prices are if anything down, and some foods have seen only modest rises. Private sector rents are rising fast, though not quite as fast as in some other recent times: 7.4% from May 2024 to May 2025.

Inflation may slow down later in 2025, because energy prices are due to fall in July. At present Trump's tariff wars look more likely to cause inflation in the USA, not all-round retaliatory tariff-raising but rather

a world recession, which all other things being equal will slow prices.

But there is little assurance that, looking forward, a wage rise of 4% or 5% is "above inflation". □

Stop the war! Aid to Gaza! Recognise Palestine!

By Ira Berkovic

Israeli air strikes on Gaza continue to exact a horrific toll in civilian life. On 23 May, nine children from the al-Najjar family were killed, the oldest of whom was 12 years old. The 10th sibling of the family was injured and is in critical condition. On 24 May, air strikes killed two Red Cross staff in Khan Younis. On 25 May, 54 people were killed in strikes on targets in Gaza City, mostly housing people displaced from Beit Lahia.

Press reports suggest one of those killed was Mohammad Al-Kasih, a senior official in the Hamas police force. His wife and child were also killed. The death toll is a grim indication of the tactics with which Israel has prosecuted its war since the beginning: seeing large numbers of civilian deaths, and total devastation of infrastructure, as acceptable collateral for eliminating sometimes individual Hamas figures.

Israel says civilian casualties are inevitable because Hamas and Islamic Jihad embed their cells within civilian infrastructure. But bombing that infrastructure, in the full knowledge of the devastation it will cause to civilian life, is still a choice.

The potential for a future without Hamas is not represented by Israel's savage war of destruction, but by the demonstrations against Hamas that have taken place sporadically in Gaza in recent weeks, including on consecutive days from 19-21 May in towns in southern Gaza. An immediate trigger for the latest round of protests was the circulation on social media of an in-

terview with Hamas leader Sami Abu Zuhri, in which he argued that "the wombs of our women will give birth to many times over the number of martyrs", claiming the number of births during the war matched or outweighed the death toll, and that the deaths were "the price we need to pay".

The people of Gaza will displace Hamas when they are able to develop democratic political alternatives. That so many have joined anti-Hamas protests whilst facing bombardment, starvation, and Hamas authoritarianism is a testament to their courage. Israel's war, and the wider oppression of the Palestinian people of which it is the most destructive element, make a future without Hamas less likely, not more.

Blockade

Humanitarian and health crises caused by Israel's long-running blockade of aid continue to mount, despite Israel loosening the blockade to allow a trickle of aid into Gaza. Israeli prime minister Netanyahu has been explicit that the purpose of the influx of aid was not to meaningfully address crises of malnutrition and potential famine, but to placate Israel's key ally, the USA, to a sufficient degree to ensure continued US backing for the war. Although some aid has now entered Gaza, aid agencies report that much of it is yet to be distributed.

On 19 May, the governments of Britain, France, and Canada published a joint statement which marked a pronounced shift in their rhetoric around the war. The statement described Israel's action as "egregious" and threatened "targeted sanctions" should Israel not "cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid."

While a shift in tone is welcome, it is meaningless unless actions match the words. There is much more international governments could do to ameliorate the humanitarian crises, not only pressuring Israel to lift the blockade but via direct aid provision and working with the Egyptian government to provide aid via the Egypt-controlled Rafah Crossing.

Britain previously withdrew 30 government-issued export licenses permitting UK-based firms to sell arms to Israel, but has continued to issue others. All such licenses must be withdrawn.

The joint statement also reaffirms Britain, France, and Canada's commitment to a two-state settlement. The main impediment to two states is the

Israeli government's explicit refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Palestinian self-determination, in any arrangement, on any territory. Neither Britain, France, nor Canada currently recognise the state of Palestine. Immediate recognition would be a symbolic act, and would not make an independent Palestinian state a reality. But it would increase the pressure on Israel and give Palestinian diplomats direct access to official diplomatic channels in the three countries.

On 18 June, a conference on the future of Israel-Palestine, co-chaired by the governments of France and Saudi Arabia, will take place in New York. Foreign secretary David Lammy had previously signalled Britain and France would use the conference to announce joint recognition of Palestine, but subsequent press reports indicated both governments were rowing back on the idea. Grassroots pressure in the run-up to 18 June, demanding recognition of Palestine, could have an impact.

Within Israel, two military reservists, Daniel Yahalom and Ron Finer, have now been jailed for refusing to serve in Gaza. On Sunday 26 May, activists from the binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement Standing Together and others protested outside the military prison where Finer is being held to demand his release. Standing Together wrote: "Today we went to support Ron Finer at the military prison where he will be jailed for 20 days for refusing to return to duty as a reservist. More and more reservists are refusing to participate in this war of annihilation and the abandonment of the hostages in Gaza, are refusing this man-made catastrophe whose only purpose is the continuation of the Netanyahu government and resettlement of the Gaza Strip.

"We know that the crisis in Gaza will only cause more suffering. For Palestinians, who are being starved, bombed, and endlessly displaced; for the 58 hostages, who cannot be freed through force; and for all of us in Israeli society who demand another way – a way of freedom, independence, and safety for everyone on this land."

External pressure on Israel, via the withdrawal of arms sales, recognition of Palestine, targeted sanctions against the settler movement, including far-right ministers Ben Gvir and Smotrich, plus direct aid to the Palestinian people, are all vital in the current moment. But a long-term democratic settlement, guaranteeing equal rights to both Palestinians and Israeli Jews, is impossible



without a movement on the ground, including within Israeli society, fighting for it.

On 18 and 23 May, Standing Together organised emergency protests at the Gaza border. 500 people mobilised at less than 24 hours' notice for the first protest, engaging in non-violent civil disobedience to attempt to block the movement of military vehicles along the border roads. Six activists, including Standing Together co-director Alon-Lee Green, were arrested. After being held for several days, they were released to house arrest. Green returned to the Gaza border for the 23 May protest, which was attended by almost 1,000 people.

The wave of refusal by military reservists, ongoing anti-war protests, and strikes, such as those launched recently by teachers objecting to pay cuts imposed because of the economic cost of the war, are an immediate source of internal leverage. As well as an international movement against the war, we need an international movement of solidarity with anti-war struggles within Israel.

Such solidarity is especially needed now. The Israeli parliament is currently debating a new law which would impose 80% taxes on NGOs, charities, and campaign groups that receive a majority of their funding from "foreign entities". The law would also bar them from bringing legal claims within Israel. Such measures are typical of authoritarian regimes aiming to consolidate their power. Further restrictions on the ability of anti-war and anti-occupation groups to operate will give Netanyahu more freedom to continue the war indefinitely.

A separate law currently under debate seeks to give the state greater powers to disqualify candidates from running in municipal elections if they have "denied the existence of the State of Israel as Jewish and democratic, or expressed support for terrorism or armed struggle against the State of Israel." The law is widely seen as a mechanism for excluding Palestinian candidates. □

UK Friends of Standing Together

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

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

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

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

Condemned... for condemning Hamas



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell was arrested at the Palestine Solidarity protest in London on 17 May 2025, for holding a placard that read: "STOP Israel genocide! STOP Hamas executions! Odai Al-Rubai, aged 22, executed by Hamas! RIP!"

Peter has said: "According to the police, Palestine march stewards told them I shouted 'Hamas are terrorists'. I never shouted anything. This was a crude smear by stewards to get the police to remove me from the march. Even if someone said those words, they have a right to do so under the laws protecting freedom of speech and the right to protest.

"I support the Palestine Solidarity Campaign but it has questions to answer: Did its stewards collude with the police to have me arrested? Is it the official policy of the PSC that supporters of Palestine are banned from criticising Hamas on its marches?"

Under the heading "Pipe down", the *Morning Star* of 21 May commented as follows:

Peter Tatchell should give it a rest. He is squandering the credit of a lifetime of brave campaigning for gay rights, above all, by his present posturing.

His intervention on the Palestine demonstration, equating killings by Hamas with Israel's genocide and indeed giving greater prominence to the former, serves no purpose beyond sowing division and causing provocation.

Never one for subordinating his actions to the greater good of the movement, such ego-driven performances are exhausting everyone's patience. Pick a side, Peter, or put a sock in it.

This utterly shameful comment from the paper claiming to be "for Peace and Socialism" must never be forgotten and should be raised within the trade union movement whenever the *Morning Star* comes touting for support.

Still banging the drum for Brexit

Even as public opinion confirms a clear majority – including Leave vot-

ers – now think Brexit was a mistake, the *Morning Star* continues to bang the drum for little-Englandism.

The response of the right wing media to Starmer's very minor "reset" of relations with the EU verged on hysteria: the *Daily Mail* ran with "Starmer's surrender". The *Sun* went with "Done Up Like a Kipper". And the *Telegraph* opted for "Kiss goodbye to Brexit".

Joining them was, all too predictably, the *Morning Star*, which ran a front page headline (20 May): "Starmer hails 'reset' with Brussels but fishermen slam ... 'EU HORROR SHOW'"

Some of the paper's opposition was due to the UK gaining access to a new EU loan scheme for defence spending, known as "Safe", which Nick Wright (an anti-EU ultra, even by MS standards) claimed would mean "Britain will be compelled to buy into this fund, inevitably at further cost to the remnants of our increasingly threadbare welfare state and the destruction of Remainer illusions". The reality is that access to "Safe" in itself does not require increased military spending (that would be happening -unfortunately- anyway) and in practice is likely simply divert

defence expenditure away from Nato. Sadly for Mr Wright it will not lead to any "destruction" of what he calls "remainer illusions."

But most of the MS's opposition to the "reset" centred upon its new-found concern for the fishing industry: "There is real damage done by ceding fishing rights, both because of the over-exploitation of our waters and because of the impact on communities dependent on them" claimed the editorial of 20 May.

As for "ceding" fishing rights: once again, the MS is being (shall we say) economical with the facts. Nothing has been "ceded" because, apart from allowing fish caught in British waters now to be exported into the EU with the massive amount of red tape caused by Brexit, the deal simply involves a 12 year rollover of the existing arrangement, which was set out in Boris Johnson's October 2019 Withdrawal Bill. And what did the MS have to say about this "horror show" arrangement at the time? It supported it, and printed the British Communist Party's statement urging "MPs to support the swift passage of the new EU Withdrawal Bill." □

We demand... what sort of change?



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

It is now two months since the 29 March SWP-organised We Demand Change (WDC) summit in London which promised that local WDC summits would follow across the country.

The first took place in Sheffield on 18 May, with a good turnout of around 400 people. A few other organising meetings have occurred, and WDC coordinated a successful "mega-picket" of hundreds in support of striking Birmingham bin workers on 9 May.

The rollout of local summits has been slow. Manchester has hosted some preliminary meetings and has an active WhatsApp group. Summits are scheduled in Leeds (15 June) and Bristol (21 June). The places and dates are presumably chosen by WDC nationally – effectively, the SWP liaising with Corbyn's Peace and Justice Project (PJP). The Leeds summit's headline speaker is Richard Burgon. The inclusion of a left-wing Labour MP perhaps signals the WDC be-

coming more like other broad fronts organised by the SWP.

Where it is all heading remains unclear to me, and maybe to the SWP. At the end of the London summit, SWP secretary Lewis Nielsen made a speech suggesting WDC would become a platform for candidates in the May 2026 local elections. Since then, the SWP has quashed such thoughts.

The Sheffield summit included discussions around launching a "new party", but the plans seem to be for an electoral umbrella or clearing-house, not a party, and distinct from WDC. Maxine Bowler – an SWPer and an "independent" in Sheffield Brightside in July 2024 – invited those interested in standing in May 2026 to leave their names with summit organisers, a selection process that could make Reform blush.

Events have been co-chaired by representatives of both the SWP and Corbyn's PJP. Since the May council elections, Corbyn has supported a united platform for 2026. At a Counterfire event on 3-4 May, he said, "those left-independents that stood for election [in the

May 2025 council elections] did so on broadly similar platforms of support for refugees, of decent housing policies... of redistribution of power... of opposition to benefit cuts... There is a whole lot of people that are elected as socialists and independents and the important thing is to bring all of them together... It is about having a collective platform... about giving people hope not despair."

Pivot

This suggests Corbyn sees PJP, not WDC, as the pivot. Andrew Feinstein, a Corbyn ally, told *Weekly Worker* (#1538) "We can't just build another political party... [that would] not appeal to people who do not already think like us and come to our meetings". He, like Corbyn, wants to negotiate to connect local groupings of candidates and councillors, especially ex-Labour people such as those around Alan Gibbons in Liverpool and Jamie Driscoll in the northeast.

Feinstein added, "We need to ensure that... every local community, has its own independent organisation... once we have spent a small time doing this organising, we need

to have a launch congress for a new national party." In practice, this looks more like umbrella than a party, with the "congress" maybe a rally.

Ex-Respect leader Salma Yaqoob was more bullish, telling the Sheffield summit: "We need a new left party. Our movements are coming together and we will make a call very soon. Let's get this party started!" She said such a platform would have a "minimum programme."

All the "minimum platforms" discussed say almost nothing about council politics, although the focus is on May 2026's council elections rather than parliamentary by-elections.

The SWP has little choice but to go along with this. At Sheffield, its National Secretary Lewis Nielsen (now by some alchemy speaking for WDC) echoed Corbyn's stance, saying the new organisation would not be "a party made up of the existing left – an alphabet soup party". "The existing left is not the answer: the movements are."

Maxine Bowler echoed this by stating that they should pursue the Huddersfield model

(by which she understands candidates should come out of meetings of local campaigns and activists, although the Huddersfield meeting was actually initiated by an existing left group, Socialist Alternative). Thus, the SWP is trying to combine its desire for an electoral challenge with its ambition to "hegemonise" (by which they mean assimilate or at least recruit from) the protest movements. But it seems the nature of this project will not be theirs to decide. □

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MPs to debate decriminalising abortion



Women's Fightback

By Natalia Cassidy

Abortion in the UK is [currently legal](#) up to 24 weeks of pregnancy, and if agreed as medically beneficial by two doctors; after 24 weeks with special medical certification of emergency circumstances. The [amendments](#) by Labour MPs Stella Creasy and Tonia Antoniazzi to the Crime and Policing [Bill](#), likely to get debated in June, are not seeking to change the legal term

limit. Rather, they would women from being prosecuted or facing legal consequences because of their pregnancy ending.

This is certainly a good thing: there have been multiple cases since 2020 of women having undergone the traumatic experience of still births and subsequently being investigated by police in their homes to ensure they had not had an abortion illegal on time-limit grounds. The current situation is cruel and unnecessary and treats women as criminal suspects in their own medical complications.

That the amendments do not seek to change the legality of abortion after 24

weeks does however raise its own questions. If anyone who assists a woman in getting an abortion (including a medical professional) outside the law would be liable to be prosecuted, though not the woman herself, does this not push women who are in desperate situations and are in need of an abortion away from the safest healthcare or away from their own friends and family out of fear they may be prosecuted?

Regardless of one's own views on the morality of abortion, the only feasible formulation of a demand is "as early as possible, as late as necessary". Any term limit (and therefore, its policing) necessarily leads to perverse consequences

whereby women are forced to carry to term against their will. □



Women's Fightback.
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This "anti-Zionism" is antisemitism

By Ira Berkovic

What kind of worldview might have led Elias Rodriguez to shoot Sarah Lynn Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky at the Jewish Museum in Washington DC on 21 May? Rodriguez claimed he "did it for Gaza", and shouted "free Palestine" as he was escorted away by police following the murders.

No-one rational can possibly believe the killings have done anything to advance the cause of Palestinian freedom, to save Palestinian lives, or have any impact whatsoever on the Israeli war machine.

The killings only "make sense" in the context of an antisemitic worldview: the belief that there is a form of power that is so compact, singularly malign, and entirely world-shaping that any damage to it is justified, and that anyone and anything connected to it is a legitimate target. That power is usually named "Zionism"; its base is Israel, but its tentacles spread to every corner of the world.

Although Rodriguez's victims were staffers at the Israeli Embassy, he carried out his attack at a Jewish museum; in his mind, it seems, the thing he could do "for Gaza" was find a prominent Jewish institution, and murder Jews.

Justifiable?

Had Rodriguez carried out his attack at the actual embassy, would that have made it more justifiable? After all, embassies are state institutions, and the Israeli state is currently engaged in a war of starvation and destruction against the people of Gaza. In 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a Jewish refugee, assassinated a Nazi diplomat in the German Embassy in Paris. Whatever the strategic merits of the act, it was, at the very least, understandable; at most, morally defensible. Might the same logic not apply here?

Sarah Lynn Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky were not political or military officials involved in shaping Israeli policy, or directing the war. Nor is the Israeli state the monolith the

Nazi regime was, such that anyone associated with it, in any capacity, might be seen as a legitimate target. Nor can Rodriguez's actions be explained as a response to direct experience, as Grynszpan's could.

Education

As far as we can tell, Rodriguez received at least some of his political education when, several years back, he was a member of the Party of Socialism and Liberation, an ultra-Stalinist organisation. PSL has disassociated itself from Rodriguez and "does not support" the killings.

Rodriguez's shootings however have historical precedents linked to PSL politics, or extrapolated versions of those politics, such as the 1969 attempt by Tupamaros West Berlin, a group inspired by Guevarism and Maoism, to bomb a Jewish community centre (with explosives provided, as it turned out, by a government agent who had infiltrated their cell).

Surely no group on the organised left, except perhaps

a few small fringe Stalinist and Maoist groups, will explicitly endorse Rodriguez's action. But it is an uncomfortable truth that a softer version of the worldview that likely inspired it – seeing "Zionism", and everything and anyone connected with it, as a compact, singular force with world-shaping power – is widespread in the way many currents on the

left think about Israel-Palestine.

Workers' Liberty has, over several decades, developed a critique of that thinking. If it continues to be prevalent, it will both harm Jews and fail the Palestinians. The starved and bombarded people of Gaza need genuine internationalist solidarity, not acts of antisemitic violence. □

Kneecap: drop the charges!

By Ira Berkovic

Charges brought under anti-terrorism laws against Irish musician Liam Óg Ó hAinídh, aka Mo Chara of the band Kneecap, for waving a Hezbollah flag at a gig are nonsensical, and should be dropped.

It should not be a criminal offence to wave a flag, even one of a reactionary organisation. The Metropolitan Police says it has "reasonable suspicion" that Ó hAinídh is "a supporter of a proscribed organisation." Even if he does consider himself a "supporter of Hezbollah", this should in no way be a matter for criminal prosecution.

Perhaps the British state wants to argue that waving a Hezbollah flag at a gig might be in some way connected to helping Hezbollah carry out terrorist violence in Britain. Hezbollah has undoubtedly been considerably weakened by Israel's war on Lebanon, but it scarcely needs to enlist Irish rappers to act as its agents.

Kneecap's politics on Israel-Palestine are expressive

of a particular type of kitsch, campist "anti-imperialism", that confers progressive status on clerical-fascist paramilitary groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. In Kneecap's, these politics also represent a particularly distasteful form of relativism. The drinking, drug-taking, and raving they celebrate is for themselves and their fans; Palestinian and Lebanese people can, it seems, live under the authoritarian rule of Islamist forces who violently repress such things, as long as those forces are sufficiently militant against Israel. The LGBT+ rights, feminism, and reproductive freedoms they advocate are only for people in the west; such rights can be violently repressed elsewhere, as long as those doing the repression are "anti-Zionist".

These ideas are disorienting and dangerous. But legal repression by the British state is no answer to them. Drop the charges! □

• More online – the Lineker row bit.ly/ce-pit – against "Zionist conspiracy" descriptions of the unions bit.ly/wra-gra

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The Green Party: a home for socialists?



Environment

By Owen Flood

The Greens now have more left-wing policies than Labour, and many left-wing people gravitate more readily to it than Labour. The Greens now have about 60,000 members, fewer than in 2015, but 50% up on 2018, while Labour is sinking down to 300,000. Polling has shown that over half of Labour voters in 2024 have considered voting Lib Dems or Greens at the next general election. A quarter of those voters considered Reform. So should socialists be orienting to the Greens?

In the previous general election, the Greens doubled their vote share. Most of the votes the Greens received were from Labour. They gained a similar amount from previous Conservative and non-voters.

The Greens are very often left-wing out of power. That shifts once in power, even at council level. In 2013, in Brighton, they attempted to cut bin workers' pay. A week-long strike ensued. Even more well-meaning Greens

such as Caroline Lucas, ended up scabbing, doing community litter-picking, undermining the strike against the express wishes of striking workers.

Cuts

In Bristol the Green council has attempted to push through cuts to libraries, museums, and support for cultural organisations. It has largely backtracked on that. Successful opposition was led by Bristol Trades Council. With a stronger local labour movement response, the Greens could be pushed towards a no-cuts budget.

Though its [constitution](#) makes no provision for local Green parties to send motions to the party conference, there are left-wing caucuses within the Greens. Greens Organise is new, and has around 150 members. On paper, the group pushes for a democratisation of the party and establishing stronger ties to the labour movement. The leading elements are in part people previously active in Momentum. It is unclear how they approach their class politics and whether their approach to trade unionism is transforming the existing labour movement or becoming friendly with more left-wing union officials and staffers.

The Green Left, set up nearly 20 years ago, as a left faction within the party, is not particularly influential now and parts of it see the main problem with the leadership as its (in their view) excessive support for trans rights.

It remains to be seen how a socialist left in the Greens develops. Other Green parties worldwide have had left wings. There is no case yet of a solid working-class socialist left organisation being assembled through a fight within a Green party.

Organised

As socialists we orient to where workers are most organised, and so we are active in the unions and Labour Party. Both are extremely flawed.

Nonetheless, the Labour Party has links to the biggest unions and was historically built as a political organ for the working-class. It has functioning branches and conferences where views can be expressed, motions debated, and MPs and councillors challenged. It has had organised socialist tendencies openly function within it. As Workers' Liberty we orient to it, not as a resting place but as somewhere to organise for a transformation of the labour movement and for working-class politics.

If we decided to organise within a party based on its track-record after having come into power, we would have thrown Labour out long ago (and we'd never consider the Greens). Wherever we are, we are not there as passive supporters. We organise within broader movements to break the more working-class and socialist elements from the more bourgeois ones and as part of a larger project to transform the labour movement.

Unlike Labour, the Greens have no structural links to the labour movement. They have promised to go further than Labour under Corbyn in abolishing all anti-union laws from 1979, and they have a Green Party Trade Union Group. Nonetheless, that pales into insignificance to the weight, influence and structures of unions in Labour. Much like Labour itself, the dominant unions are conservative, bureaucratic, and the ways in which rank-and-file members there can impact on Labour Party policy are opaque and labyrinthine. Perhaps more seriously, much of the socialist left has not properly tried that avenue. □

Mass council house-building needed

By Tom Enatos

Since her first speech as Chancellor in July 2024, Rachel Reeves has spoken of planning reform to spur house-building as the most crucial "foundation" of economic growth.

Starmer's Government has sought to distance itself from public investment, a proactive industrial strategy or any of the assertive economic measures associated with Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. For a Government seeking "growth" but unwilling to do anything to achieve it, "planning reforms" have become the cost-free panacea for all difficulties.

In order to achieve this, Labour have pledged a series of measures intended to spur private sector house-building, and meet the manifesto target of 1.5 million new homes by the end of this Parliament. These include the new "Planning and Infrastructure Bill", reducing consultation requirements, strengthening development corporations, and devolving planning fees. Alongside this, Labour has updated the "National Planning Policy Framework", strengthen-

ing local housing targets and making "brownfield" house-building harder to stop.

These measures represent an internal victory for the self-described "YIMBY" ("yes in my back-yard") coalition, dominated by Labour right activists, and represented by policy campaigns such as "Priced Out" and the new Labour Growth Group. These groups have long had a close alliance with private developers, and argue that house price inflation is a simple case of demand outstripping supply – so therefore building more homes at market rent will automatically bring down house prices.

Fail

This strategy will almost certainly fail. Already, 90% of planning applications are approved, and the UK's ratio of available homes to households has increased steadily since 2000, but house prices have increased dramatically in that period. Rather than insufficient supply, rising house prices have been built on the financialisation of the housing market, as homes are a profitable asset, especially for private landlords. Meanwhile the lack of social housing has trapped

tenants in exploitative private markets.

Labour's policies may increase the supply of private housing, and some of the more positive changes such as streamlined "compulsory purchase" powers may reduce the number of empty homes. However as these are bought out by buy-to-let landlords, this will simply lead to more tenants trapped in private renting. These changes will not solve "landbanking", where private developers sit on land approved for development watching its value increase without building any housing. They will not end Britain's chronic shortage of tradespeople able to build the housing at scale, due in part to private developers' habit of taking on apprentices as cheap labour then ditching them before they qualify.

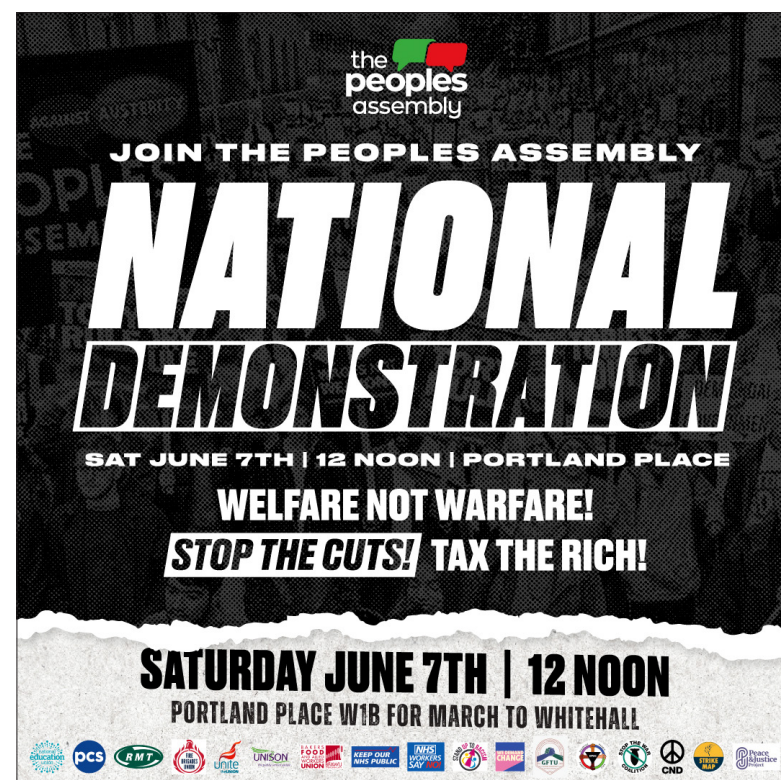
Most importantly, Labour have not pledged to build the council housing needed to cut growing waiting lists. In fact, increased housing targets may mean private developers can simply force through their proposals, making it harder for local councils to negotiate changes (such as higher proportions of affordable hous-

ing) to developments through "Section 106". Private developers will have local authorities over a barrel – and this may lead to even less social housing being built.

Labour's ambitions could be achievable, if they were willing to dispense with the neoliberal consensus and ditch their property developer allies. Nationalising the housebuilding sector and building council

housing on a mass scale, along with expropriating empty homes, would bring down house prices, allow tenants to escape exploitative landlords, protect more of Britain's meagre remaining nature, and train millions of workers in useful and skilled trades.

But Labour shows little sign of considering alternatives to the developers' bonanza it has in store for us. □



Fight in the labour movement for trans rights

By Simon Nelson

The Labour Party has, in a rush decision, postponed its Women's Conference and, supposedly in line with the Supreme Court's scientifically illiterate use of "biological sex," restricted the rights of trans women in the party. Trans women will no longer be eligible to be Women's Officers, or to run in all-women shortlists.

Labour wants to wait for the new EHRC guidance, the interim version of which has already proved unworkable and legally dubious, before taking a longer-term decision on the Women's Conference. Unions such as Unison and the PCS civil-service union (see p.13) are also concerned by the alleged legal consequences of proceeding with their previous policies and conference.

Lawyers told the Labour National Executive (NEC) that if the Women's Conference were to go ahead using the basis of self-identification, as it has long done (i.e. there are no "sex checks" at the doors), then "significant risk of a legal challenge" and "protests, direct action and heightened security risks" were likely. As with other NEC decisions, we have no publicly available minutes or records of how the CLP, affiliated society, MPs, and union reps voted. The left NEC members have complained about the undemocratic, restrictive nature of the debate and vote in their [report](#).

Pride in Labour, Labour for Trans Rights, and LGBT+ Labour's trans officer Georgia Meadows released a joint statement condemning the move.

"We urge all Labour NEC members to vote this paper down and for the Labour Party to adopt meaningful policies to combat transphobia within the party.. The proposals to restrict trans members' engagement in internal democratic procedures – including by blocking trans women from standing in All Women's Shortlists, excluding them from National Women's Conferences,



Delegates to the 2025 PCS annual conference protest for trans rights

and preventing them from standing as Women's Officers – are not effective ways to 'clarify' anything."

Labour Women's Declaration, a so-called gender-critical campaign within the Labour Party, also opposes the postponement of Women's Conference. This decision was made at the same time as the ruling out of independent conferences and structures for Disabled, BAME and LGBT members decided as part of the 2018 democracy review during the Corbyn leadership. The dominant right-wing Labour to Win faction argued that these separate structures cannot be financially justified when elections have to be won. The rulebook will have to remove references to them. These proposals were passed narrowly, 16-12, with the affiliated unions mostly voting against.

Ban

Setbacks like this will not help Labour activists. And we also face widespread moves since the Supreme Court decision by angry activists to ban political parties from Pride marches and events across the country.

Pride events are not run as democratic campaigning forums. They focus instead on commercial support and social events. However, we are left in a situation where Coca-Cola can remain a sponsor of Lon-

don Pride, but a local Labour branch, or a campaign group like Pride in Labour cannot attend as a group, and a pro-trans Labour MP cannot speak. This is farcical. It will depoliticise Pride and send false signals to people that no one is fighting the Labour leadership over their stance.

The backlash has spread to groups like Pride in Labour, which initially is-

sued statements condemning the ban, has been nasty. Some LGBT activists refuse to accept anything other than the complete rejection of any fight within Labour. Pride in Labour, Labour for Trans Rights, and other activists still intend to fight for trans rights using all means available to them, including motions to this year's annual conference. That fight would be strengthened if they can engage as a political group in Pride events.

Former Supreme Court president Brenda Hale has now criticised the interpretation of the Supreme Court judgement; Hale rightly has said that the judgement does not prohibit gender-neutral facilities, and that the other aspects of the Equality Act are to be interpreted as appropriate. Like the BMA, she questions how the term "biological sex" (scientifically illiterate in its deletion of intersex people) has made its way into the discussion.

Following its widely criticised, discriminatory and unworkable "interim update", which has no legal status, the EHRC has launched a public consultation outlining its proposed updates to the statutory Code of Practice for services, public functions and associations. The EHRC publishes two different codes about the Equality Act. The code on "services, public functions, and associations" is being updated. The [consultation](#) is now open until 30 June. There are no current plans to update the Employment Code. Organisations like Trans-Actual have promised to publish supporting documents to assist with submissions to the consultation. We will promote and share those once published. A summary of the proposed changes proposed by the EHRC: bit.ly/hildic

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Great British National Strike: a flop, but a warning

By Cathy Nugent

The far right media said there would be 500,000 participants in the 24 May Great British National Strike (GBNS) – a series of anti-government demonstrations in over seventy UK cities and towns. Reports suggest the protests were, at most, a few hundred people.

GBNS's headline demand was to get "Starmer and Labour" "out". Who are they? GBNS is ostensibly organised by one Tik Tok influencer and ex-army officer Richard Donaldson; its social media has

a Reform-adjacent political profile (against illegal immigration, inheritance tax for farmers, net zero, "two-tier justice", the Ukraine war).

The people at the badly-organised protests were more diverse, as far as we can tell, coming from across the far-right/conspiracy theory/Christian nationalist spectrum.

In Glasgow, the 150-plus crowd included hardline Loyalists, anti-sex-education campaigners and Rangers fans. In London there were people who opposed the government decision to hand the Chagos

Islands over to Mauritius. In Nottingham and elsewhere some people thought the demonstrations were about Starmer's cuts.

Workers' Liberty members attended Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) counter-protests where held in major cities. Organised at the last minute, these managed to match the numbers of the far right – though on a different day, and GBNS plans more protests, we would have been outnumbered.

Criticism

Our criticisms of SUTR are not that they tried to mobilise;

rather, that the left as a whole needs to take a different political and organisational approach.

Countering these far right populist protests with slogans like SUTR's "fascists not welcome here" misses the mark. Few of these people are hardline neo-Nazis. Some are confused. Others are hardline racist on immigration and ultra-nationalist. We need class-based political answers – for example, in Nottingham, on our initiative, the chant "build unions not borders" was used.

SUTR is not strong enough

by itself to organise mass counter-demonstrations. The necessary mass political work to counter the populist far right has to be done by organisations with the resources and reach to have an impact in workplaces and working-class communities – the trade unions.

The left has to unite around a strategy to force the unions to do the work: distributing material in workplaces and communities, organising open meetings, building local labour movement committees, organising migrant workers. □



The origins of Militant

By Sean Matgamna

I knew Peter Taaffe, who died on 23 April, fairly well at one time, when he was in Liverpool and for his first year and a half in London as national secretary of the Revolutionary Socialist League, better known as the Militant Tendency, which was then the section in Britain of the mainstream ("Mandelite") Fourth International ("United Secretariat").

I was a not-quite-convinced member of the RSL for about 18 months, until October 1966, when I told the Extended National Committee (ENC) of the RSL that Rachel Lever, Phil Semp, and I were leaving, and Rachel and I left the meeting.

The ENC was in fact a national aggregate of the RSL. All National Committee meetings were Extended NCs, so the NC was only a sort of differential franchise should anything need to be voted through. The RSL was run by a small body, of five people, called the Secretariat.

Peter Taaffe became secretary of the RSL early in 1965. He was a year or so younger than me, so he would have been 22 then. For about 30 years he was at the centre of Militant, with or rather under Ted Grant; and then, for another 30 years, as his own oracle, without Ted Grant, at the centre of the Socialist Party.

Peter means rock, as every Catholic and ex-Catholic knows, and Taaffe was the organisational rock of Militant. His party name of choice was Tom Peters.

Before him, the group had as secre-

tary Jimmy Deane, who was an electrician with more than one family. Deane gave his spare time to the RSL, but he had little time to spare. The group's history in the 1950s, and after, was Grant's history. It was Grant who spoke for Militant at Labour Party conference 1983, when they were on the point of being expelled from the Labour Party.

Grant had been "the theoretician" of the WIL and the RCP, the British Trotskyist groups of the later 1930s and the 1940s. With the leading WIL-RCP organiser, Jock Haston, and others, after 1945 he had bitterly opposed a turn into the Labour Party, which had formed a majority government that year.

A group round Gerry Healy separated from the RCP in 1947 and went into the Labour Party. There were now two Fourth-International-recognised groups in Britain. Both James P Cannon in the USA, and Michel Pablo of the Fourth International backed Healy.

By 1949, Haston and Millie Lee wanted out, and just to join the Labour Party, going over to reformism. Grant announced that though he was still against activity in the Labour Party, he now recommended it as a concession to Haston. Grant lost all credibility, and Haston still quit.

The groups reunited in 1949-50 under Gerry Healy's control. Healy expelled political opponents left, right, and centre. At a conference he displayed the new brutalism by shouting at Grant: "Get back to your dungheap, Grant!" Bill Hunter, whom the recent RCPers looked to as their organisation man, Haston's successor, changed sides and went over to Healy.

At the Third Congress of the Fourth International in 1951, the FI's Refounding Congress, Ernest Mandel moved that Grant be expelled, and he was.

After that, Grant was rudderless, having lost Jock Haston, the "organiser". Grant published a very, very, small magazine, *The International Socialist*, and was part of the Socialist Current group.

The Healyites, the biggest Trotskyist group, were with James P Cannon's "International Committee of the Fourth International", formed after a split with Mandel and Pablo in 1953. The pro-Pablo group in Britain became Communist Party people. They had a high profile in St Pancras Labour Party until they were expelled in 1958 and joined the CP openly.

The Healyites told a mischievous story that during the 1956-7 crisis in Stalinism Michel Pablo took an advertisement in the left Labour weekly *Tribune* asking for those wanting to form a section of his "Fourth International" to respond. There was an advert of some sort, and Grant came to head the British



section of the Fourth International (International Secretariat), the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). Grant had to split with some in Socialist Current, Sam Levy for example, to join Pablo's FI. Socialist Current continued to publish for decades.

Pablo had been publishing an English-language Fourth International magazine, in which Pierre Frank had a series on the history of British Trotskyism. He had got to "the RCP and its empirical leadership" when the rapprochement between Grant and Pablo took place; and there the history of British Trotskyism according to Frank stopped.

The RSL seemed to have a lot going for it, with 70 or so at its founding conference. With help from Pablo's FI, Grant published a bimonthly magazine, *Workers' International Review*, and a biweekly paper, *Socialist Fight*. The group had two full-timers, Grant and John Fairfield.

But still it was the Healyites who recruited and grew. The RSL fell apart. Differences on "economic perspectives" developed. Grant found himself in the same situation that he had had in the RCP.

There, the Healy minority was loyal to Cannon and Pablo; and the International used the "loyalists" as its faction. The Healy figure in the RSL was called Pat Jordan. His "FI loyalist" faction split in 1959, I think, and the RSL declined. John Fairfield, the other full-timer besides Grant, went with the Jordan group. He became a Posadist for a while, an advocate of World War Three because it would benefit "communism". Then Fairfield moved right. He eventually became a fascist.

Socialist Fight became a duplicated monthly. The first SF I saw, early in 1960, had as its front-page headline "Socialism The Only Road", or something timeless like that.

Ted Grant needed an organisation man. He always did. That is where Peter Taaffe came in. As RSL secretary, Taaffe travelled round the country with Grant and chaired his meetings. It was a way of getting Taaffe known, or so I was given to understand.

James P Cannon was quoted as saying, when Trotsky was still alive, that Trotsky was his brain. Taaffe might have said the same of Grant.

I remember the point at which on the first day, Saturday, of a two-day RSL ENC/ aggregate in 1966, I decided to leave the RSL. It was a speech by Peter Taaffe that decided me.

We had, Rachel Lever and I, written a critical document, at Grant's and Taaffe's suggestion. It existed physically on stencils, but the leaders were blocking its circulation. After trying various ploys, they settled for the formula: circulate it to the NC only.

Chicanery

Reasonable? But the NC never met except as an Extended NC, an aggregate. This was in fact a proposal to discuss the document at a future aggregate, but to let only a small part of the meeting read it before the discussion. It was desperate bureaucratic chicanery by people who seemed to me habitually very incompetent.

The point at which I decided to leave was when Taaffe made a speech justifying what they proposed by reference to what the Labour Party did. It was perfectly democratic, he said. That was how the Labour Party did things. The entire aggregate accepted that.

I aspired to something higher than the Labour Party, and I decided that I was in the wrong organisation.

But the RSL was in for great and unexpected things. The Healyites, the SLL, were far and away the biggest group in Labour's then-lively youth wing, the Young Socialists (later called the Labour Party Young Socialists, LPYS). Their weekly paper, *The Newsletter*, was proscribed from early in 1959, when the SLL was declared and immediately banned (the group had previously had no formal name). Their monthly youth paper, *Keep Left*, was banned in, I think, July 1962.

The SLL decided to leave the Labour Party, in which it had been immersed since 1947, on the eve of a new Labour government. (Labour took office in October 1964).

The SLL provoked their own local expulsions. Old guard Labour Party SLL people (I have in mind Ted Knight, in 1965) said that Healy was pursuing the right tactic for "the youth". For the next three years or so, everything the Healyites did was done in the name of "the Young Socialists".

What happened in the Labour youth movement after the Healyites were gone was strange, and, for the RSL, beneficial. At the first post-Healyite YS conference, the Labour leadership tried to diminish the YS. They decreed changes: the YS national committee would be federal, not elected at con-

Timeline

1950s: Ted Grant leads a small subgroup of British Trotskyists

1964-5: Grant group launches Militant; Peter Taaffe becomes the organiser

Late 1960s: Militant gains control of official Labour youth movement, and will keep it for two decades

1982-3: Labour leaders' bungled attempt to purge Militant assists it to its "glory days", growing to maybe 8,000 supporters

1984-5 onwards: Debacle of Militant-led Liverpool Labour council leaves Militant discredited. Labour leaders prune down youth movement. Militant people quit Labour Party

1992: Peter Taaffe's majority, which in 1997 will rename itself Socialist Party, expels Ted Grant and others who want to continue work in Labour: they form Socialist Appeal, and then in 2024 (with their own swing out of Labour) RCP

nd of the Socialist Party

ference; the YS could not discuss big political questions; etc.

But the conference wasn't having it. They defied the Labour leadership and discussed general politics, risking having the YS closed down. The Labour leadership backed off. The YS was allowed to continue.

Central there, I think, was that the once-left wing of the Labour Party had taken control, after the sudden death of Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell in January 1963, and they wanted to avoid expulsions and a tight regime as of old.

Nye Bevan was dead, but Harold Wilson, an old Bevanite, became Labour leader in February 1963. The Healyites had wanted to leave, making as big a stench as they could while doing so. But the RSL was still in the YS. It was the junior partner of the Cliffites (then IS, today SWP) in an anti-Healy youth publication, *Young Guard*.

The name came from the Belgian Labour Party youth movement Jeune Garde. There had been a general strike in Belgium in late 1960 and early 1961, and thereafter we were all as "Belgian" as we could be.

Young Guard was started in 1961 by IS, the RSL, and others. It was a good-looking but politically crude and miserable little paper. The only good thing about it was that it was genuinely a youth paper (the SLL youth paper *Keep Left* was not). Surprisingly, the RSL, then the British section of the mainstream Fourth International, was politically almost not present at all in *Young Guard*, except for Keith Dickinson being named as the business manager. I don't know why, exactly, but that is how it was.

Peter Taaffe was very much the conservative loyalist, who tried to justify most things of the past (and there was a lot to justify). But *Young Guard* and the RSL's role in it was one of the few things he would admit had been a mistake. He had not been involved in the decisions, he said. (Later, he tended to backdate his involvement in politics a bit).

But IS left the Labour Party in 1967, and the RSL was alone, of self-called Marxists, in the LPYS. They won a majority on the then still-federal LPYS committee in 1969. From then, or from when the IS left, the RSL ran the YS as a big school for their politics, and for recruitment to the RSL. Naturally, they recruited and grew as an organisation.

It was an extraordinary business, the RSL's control of the youth movement of the Labour Party for twenty years. (The Labour leadership severely curtailed the LPYS in 1987, and shut it down in 1991). Andy Bevan of *Militant* (no relation) was Labour's official youth full-timer from 1976 to 1988. I know of no comparison in the history of the working-class movement, no near analogy



even.

Any RSL claim that they turned the LPYS outwards and it became a "mass movement" is pure fiction. No, they did not! The RSL YS became a wizened RSL sect, under *Militant* rule, though a big sect, compared to what the RSL had been before.

It was the time of the movement against the Vietnam war. *Militant*'s political appreciation of the Stalinists in Vietnam was very high, but the LPYS did not join the movement!

It was also the time of the big revolution in youth culture (the pill separated sex from procreation, etc.), but again the YS did not join in, not even on the level of liberalism. The Wilson government (in fact, Roy Jenkins, of the Labour government's right, as Home Secretary) in 1967 had legalised homosexual sex, but the YS stuck to the old prohibitive attitude. The YS, under almost complete RSL control, would vote down resolutions which the Young Liberals, or maybe even the Young Tories then, would have passed. It was dominated by the morality of an elderly and probably repressed South African, Grant, and a smug Peter Taaffe who embodied the moralities the working class had begun to move away from.

The Labour Party's acceptance of the RSL-run YS was remarkable. Partly, as I've said, it was that the leaders of the Labour Party were one-time Bevanites who wanted a more tolerant Labour Party regime. Partly, it was the strange politics of *Militant* which made it safe for them.

I saw a strange thing when I attended the LPYS conference in 1974. It was a gathering of the RSL. Only a minority of those attending were actual LPYS voting delegates; the rest were RSL "observers".

The speakers had all been to the same school of oratory, and made the same "dramatic" hand gestures even for things that were not at all dramatic. More of them spoke with Liverpool accents than could have come from Liverpool.

A "recommendation" from the LPYS

NC was made for the vote on every and any motion. I.e. RSL "democratic centralism" was in operation, and it was obtrusive. But it was also funny, if you could "forget" for the moment what they were doing to the youngsters there.

Once, the chair forgot to tell the conference what the NC "recommended". When he called on delegates to vote, not a hand moved. Then he remembered to say what the NC "recommended", and regained the power to move the hands of the delegates on his call.

There were still, early on, a small knot of "Tribunites". The chair kept on and on, and on, reminding conference that the Tribunites were receiving rights that they had denied to *Militant* when the Tribunites had had a majority. It was true, but graceless, gratuitous, unsubtle, and horrible even to watch.

The "Tribunite" opposition eventually ceased to exist. The main other "opposition" group (before Workers' Fight, forerunner of Workers' Liberty, got involved) was a small split from the RSL itself, the RSL on speed, so to speak. Their "verbals" would speed up the labour-movement radicalisation which *Militant* and the LPYS majority always said was coming just around the next corner. You didn't have to be a psychiatrist to realise that their leader was as mad as the proverbial hatter. They did not recruit, and eventually they all become too old for the YS and ceased to exist there. (Later they lost their radicalism and came to publish the very tired Labour-left magazine, *Briefing*).

Peter Taaffe presided over all this as "the organiser", but the politics were Ted Grant's. And strange politics they were.

For Britain the RSL called for the nationalisation of "the monopolies". Just nationalisation, nationalisation in the style of the Labour Party. The 1940s RCP had called for nationalisation with workers' control, but *Militant* did not.

Peaceful

I was surprised when I realised that RSLers thought of themselves as very left-wing because of the number of things they wanted to "nationalise". Nor was it to be "nationalisation" by a workers' state. The existing state would evolve peacefully and parliamentarily into socialism, so *Militant* insisted. (The most you could truthfully say on that is that the British ruling class will surrender power only if and when they do not have the choice to resist it).

They thought that the motions for nationalisations passed on the nod by union congresses showed that the British labour movement was already socialist. There was no possibility, or none that they wanted to take into account,

that the labour movement would be seriously defeated.

They were strangest of all on Stalinism. Orthodox Trotskyists came to see the socialist revolution as (for now) the expansion of Stalinism after they decided (Grant in 1947-8, the FI majority in April 1949) that Russia's satellite states in eastern and southern Europe were "deformed workers' states" (except Yugoslavia, which for the FI was not "deformed").

Ted Grant, Jock Haston, and Millie Lee, in the WIL and RCP during World War Two, had swung behind James P Cannon in the USA in making a sharp turn toward Stalinism. After the invasion of Russia in June 1941 they followed Cannon into the spectacular nonsense of declaring the Russian army to be somehow "Trotsky's Red Army". In fact it was not Red or Trotsky's; it was Stalin's. They republished Cannon's testimony from his trial for "sedition" in 1941.

After the war they had gone through the gamut of positions on Russia. At one time they (that is, the Executive of the RCP) decided that Russia was state-capitalist. Tony Cliff would continue and develop that view.

Then the RCP leaders went ahead of all the other Orthodox Trotskyists in proclaiming that Russia, its satellites, and Yugoslavia, which fell out with Stalin in June 1948, were workers' states, degenerated (Russia) or deformed (the rest).

The Second Congress of the Fourth International in April-May 1948 decided that all the satellite states, but not Russia, were state capitalist and reactionary. That was not coherent, and eventually they decided that they were all "workers' states". Ted Grant was very proud of his priority. The other Orthodox Trotskyists tended to write nonsense, but at least they struggled with the problem; Jock Haston and the RCP were alone among Orthodox Trotskyists in welcoming (in *Socialist Appeal*) the Stalinist "coup" in Czechoslovakia in February 1948.

Grant expected Stalinist revolutions in all the underdeveloped countries, and thought the prospect tremendously progressive. He expected a progressive Stalinist revolution in Portugal in 1974-5, and of course he advocated it.

In the mid-1960s Grant and Taaffe were capable of becoming angry about Roger Protz, who had edited the early issues of *Militant*. (Taaffe's name appeared as editor all through, as a means of giving him prominence, but he never edited the paper). Protz had summarised an internal circular by announcing that Syria and Burma had become deformed workers' states. (Grant had co-thinkers in the "Mandelite" FI

continued on page 10→

→ from page 9

in the mid-1960s, Livio Maitan for instance, who thought that so-much nationalisation equalled a workers' state). The circular had said that, but it was not advisable to say it publicly, as Protz had. Or not yet.

I don't know if he ever wrote it down, but I heard Grant say that spreading Stalinism embodied "the autonomous movement of the forces of production". The forces of production couldn't wait for the workers to solve what Trotsky called "the crisis of leadership".

Taaffe and Grant had a formula: "The workers wouldn't understand". It meant they could say whatever, in their opinion, "the workers" would "understand" – as little or as much as they liked. For example, they had before Workers' Liberty did, and the SP still has, a "two states" position on the Middle East, that Israel has a right to exist. But who knows that? It is very unpopular on the activist left, so they shroud it.

Blanket

Grant's "perspective" was that Stalinism was the wave of the future in most of the world, and it was the revolution now going on. It was a comfort blanket he pulled around himself. Advancing Stalinism was not a threat: it was the socialist revolution. In fact they said very much what Max Shachtman and his comrades in the Workers Party and ISL said about advancing Stalinism, except that where Shachtman put a negative sign on it, they put a big plus.

But Grant's and Taaffe's urge to play at prophets sometimes betrayed them. When the Russians invaded Afghanistan at Christmas 1979, all the Trotskyist groups except what is now Workers' Liberty backed the Russians (though some said it would be better had the Russians not invaded, but we should side with them once they were there).

The SWP-US said that the Russians had "gone to the aid of a revolution". The RSL-Militant was not so clear-cut at first.

Grant wrote a long article in *Militant* which presented a passable picture of Afghanistan's "Great Saur" Stalinist revolution in 1978, 20 months before the invasion. He showed that as what it was, a military coup by Afghanistan's officers trained in Russia, with no mass support: thus it differed from Stalinist revolutions such as in China or Yugoslavia.

Grant wavered, but came down more or less on the side of advocating that Russia withdraw. Then, a month later, Lynn Walsh corrected him: of course,

What we are and what we must become

The founding document of the tendency which is now Workers' Liberty, written in 1966 as a critique of the RSL-Militant.

Available online at bit.ly/wwwawwmb

he wrote, ludicrously, Grant had meant to support the Russian presence. The RSL had had a month to discuss it, and collectively had managed to forget what was special and all-determining about Afghanistan before the Russian invasion: that the Stalinist officers had little support outside the small middle class of the towns.

Nearly all the other Trotskyists changed their pro-Russian attitudes in six months or a year, except Militant, the Spartacists (and Workers' Power and poor old Alan Thornett, who thinks that Marxism is knowing a little about the films of the Marx Brothers; but even the Thornettites changed at some point). Grant and Taaffe, and the organisation that they had created, simply did not know the difference for Marxism between "prospects" and "perspectives" that you fight for. Here, they even got the prospects in Afghanistan and for the Russian invasion wrong.

In their commemoration of Taaffe, his comrades say that he came from "extreme" poverty. I doubt that. It's either a bit of myth-making, or working-class life seen by people from higher up the class scale.

I come from the semi-literate working class in a west-of-Ireland town, Ennis. My father was a fireman in Salford Gas Works for 25 years. The family joined him. I remember coveting, and can still visualise, a two-volume green-covered History of the USA in the book market at Shude Hill, which at 37s 6d was way beyond me. That was poverty, I suppose, but there was a good public library system in Manchester. I never was short of the basic things.

When I knew Peter Taaffe first, in 1964, he was a clerical worker, paying the police in Liverpool. He wore a self-consciously "intellectual's" corduroy jacket. Presumptuous he was, too.

I had been roughed up by plain-clothes cops in a police station for trying to get workers to join the TGWU union, but Taaffe insisted from his own experience paying jovial cops their wages that the police were all right, really.

There was always in RSL-Militant a whine, said to be working-class, but actually middle-class pretending. In my head it translated into lines from a song popularised by The Spinners, a Liverpool folk group.

"And us poor sailor lads were up, were up, were up

And the land-lubbers lying down below, below, below

And the land-lubbers lying down below, below, below"

Militant was always "us poor sailor lads".

The true poverty working-class people suffered most from in the "full-employment" late 1950s and early 1960s was the warping and diminishing cultural poverty. Taaffe, in Militant, gloried in that cultural working-class poverty, and in the Militant-run YS of the 1960s-80s did his best to perpetuate it among young workers.

Young non-political workers in the

days of the Militant YS tended to be less culturally narrow and strait-laced than the YS was. For example, you couldn't get a resolution accepted at a Militant YS conference to make cannabis legal, although it is pretty harmless and many young workers used it. Why not? A Militant member, or more than one, would make a speech for the RSL that legalising cannabis would only create a new capitalist monopoly, as with alcohol and tobacco.

That was besides the point, but anyway – so then they wanted to illegalise alcohol and tobacco? No, no, comrade, "the workers wouldn't understand".

Stopping the persecution of homosexuals was just a matter of liberalism, but it had been adopted by socialists since August Bebel proposed in the Reichstag in 1898 the abolition of Germany's anti-homosexual "Paragraph 175". And long before that, I suppose. But it was too far ahead for the RSL YS.

And this was sometimes hypocrisy: comrades who went to gay bars came back with tales of meeting there Militant people who in their lives as political leaders did not support even liberal reforms on gay rights.

Vulgar

What struck me most about Derek Hatton and Tommy Sheridan, who became Militant's best-known figures for a while, was that their idea of "the good life", when they chose that, was quintessentially that of an apolitical and quite backward worker: vulgar and ostentatious consumption, in the style of well-known footballers and such, was their idea of "the good life".

Taaffe once said to me – I think Ted Grant was present – that people like us, him and me, with our lack of formal education, should not bother reading "difficult" writers like Plekhanov. He was far better formally-educated than I was – he was flattering me. I assumed that they just didn't want me spending time reading such things. I ignored the advice.

But whether or not Taaffe meant it literally about Plekhanov, Grant was his brain. A decade or so ago, Peter Taaffe and I exchanged polemics. He referred contemptuously to Max Shachtman as describing Russia as some variety of state capitalism. Peter had been 50 years in would-be Marxist politics, he was the political leader and organiser of the Socialist Party – and yet he didn't know the difference between bureaucratic collectivism and state capitalism as designations for the Stalinism whose expansion he supported!

And what had he built? It has not been often that Trotskyists have had a decisive part in determining the outcome of major class struggles, but RSL-Militant had that chance in 1984, in the miners' strike, and there they played the part of reactionaries.

The strike lasted just over a year, and challenged the Thatcher government. Militant had the leadership of Liverpool's Labour council, and major unions in the city, facing Tory cuts. It might



well have tipped the balance against Thatcher if the Liverpool labour movement, which Militant led, had joined the miners in confronting the government. Serious Marxists in Liverpool would have sought for a reason, an excuse even, to join the fight against Thatcher.

Not the very Marxist RSL. Not "Labour's Marxist Voice" under its strange spiv leader Derek Hatton! Militant made a deal with the Tory government in July 1984 which took Liverpool away from the fight by licensing it to postpone the financial crunch to 1985-6.

A year later, with the miners beaten, Thatcher went after Liverpool. By late 1985, the council was planning to lay off its entire workforce for four weeks "as a tactic", then revealed that it had made de-facto cuts and could plug the remaining gap through loans from Swiss banks, negotiated months before. Militant discredited themselves, set themselves up for the Labour leaders to purge them, and then quit the Labour Party rather than fight the purge.

Taaffe was, I understand, the Militant leader responsible for dealing with Liverpool, his home town, and the leading councillor there, Derek Hatton. Afterwards, "Degsie" and Taaffe were diplomatically silent about each other in one of the biggest debacles the left in Britain has experienced since the General Strike of 1926.

Although Taaffe later (1988) wrote a book about it, neither Militant, nor the SP, nor Taaffe ever fully explained themselves. The labour movement is still suffering the consequences of Thatcher's perhaps-avoidable victory in 1984-5.

On Ireland, Militant and Taaffe had one of the strangest trajectories of all. The artificial Catholic minority in Northern Ireland rose for civil rights in the late 1960s. The biggest civil right they lacked was national self-determination.

The Catholics in the Six Counties were a bigger minority there than the Protestants of the whole island would have been in a united Ireland. Two of the "Six Counties", Fermanagh and Tyrone, had Catholic and nationalist majorities. Catholics were a majority in half the land area of the Six Counties, and all along the border with the 26 Counties.

The Provisional IRA superimposed itself and its narrow politics on the Catholic civil rights struggle, and channelled the revolt into their own idea of an Irish war to drive out the British. They were able to do that because the Catholic and nationalist minority in the Six Counties was saturated in the songs and legends of Catholic Ireland's long struggle with England.

The Provo war was as unexpected to the RSL-Militant as it was to us. But the

"constitutional question" would dominate Irish and British politics for the rest of the 20th century and well into the 21st.

It was the most basic idea of Marxism (see the Comintern Second Congress Theses on the National and Colonial Question for instance) that those living in the oppressor country – Britain had partitioned Ireland, and was fighting to maintain the unjust partition – should back the nationalist insurgents, whatever the complexities, and try to tackle the political questions posed.

But the RSL-Militant did not even recognise the "constitutional question" dominating Irish politics. On that they were ultra-left. The Socialist Party would eventually come out for a federal united Ireland – the only possible united Ireland – but only after the Catholic and Provisional IRA insurgency had come to an end, and the fighting had stopped. That shift to a federal-Ireland policy was good, but very late, and thus not adequate. And it was a damning implicit comment on what they had said and done during the 23-year war.

Throughout the war, from 1971 to 1994 (or in Britain 1997, when the last Provisional IRA bombs destroyed part of the centre of Manchester), the RSL-Militant-SP, led by Peter Taaffe, proposed as a solution to the conflict a workers' militia based on the trade unions.

It was not Militant's idea. It was raised first by the Healyites, and then went the rounds of the Communist Party of Ireland and the Unionist BICO, but it became Militant's formula during the years of war.

Sectarianism

It was a good and right idea – for a different society. Sectarianism had deep roots in Northern Ireland and in the Northern Ireland labour movement. There was sectarian job allocation and preferment. Sectarianism entered the unions.

To call for a united Protestant-Catholic defence force was only another way of calling for workers' unity. That was fine, but it could not be achieved apart from uniting a large body of workers around a solution to the "constitutional" (Orange-Green, Protestant-Catholic, all-Ireland) question.

For Northern Ireland it was sheer escapist nonsense. It was like the mice and belling the cat. The predatory cat had killed a lot of mice, so the mice had a meeting to decide what to do about it. I know, said a mouse: we should put a bell around the cat's neck, and then we will know where the cat is, and he can't creep up on us. Excellent idea, the mice agreed. But how were they going to put the bell around the cat's neck? A workers' defence squad in Northern Ireland was "belling the cat".

And they weren't even serious about it. When the Orange general strike broke out in May 1974, Militant forgot its evasive panacea, and said that both communities should look to their own defence. That was at the time of large-

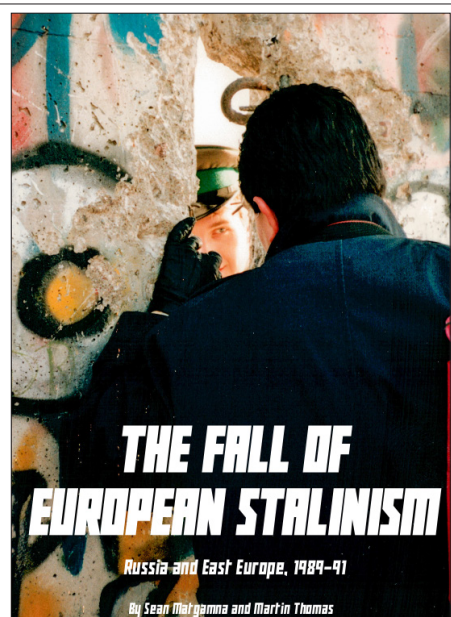
scale Protestant-Unionist assassinations of Catholic at random.

Taaffe and Grant were not even serious or consistent even in denouncing "IRA violence". In May 1972, a 19-year-old British soldier went to visit his people in Derry. He was captured by local Official Republicans, by the "left" Republicans as I understand it, and shot. It was a stupid and blood-happy deed. Even *Workers' Fight* (forerunner of *Solidarity*), which then criticised the Republicans as little as we could, felt obliged to say it was an "ugly act of very doubtful military value" which "could only horrify and demoralise the Catholic population and needlessly widen the already chasm-wide division between Protestants and Catholics".

Militant's response was the surprise. What right, they asked, had the bloody Provisional IRA to criticise the Official Republicans on a thing like that?

Militant had been the scourge of what it called "individual terrorism" (though the war was not "individual terrorism", but a revolt of a part of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland). The Officials had set off the bomb at Aldershot military base, in February 1972, which accidentally killed five cleaning women. Of course Militant denounced that. What had happened to make Taaffe and Grant now, in May 1972, defend the "individual terrorists"? Militant was having talks with the Officials, who would evolve to become the Workers' Party.

Peter Taaffe's tragedy was that he spent 60 years teaching the workers he reached not Marxism, but first Grant's weird and very subjective politics, and then the vaguer Grantism, with some of the rough edges smoothed off and replaced by vague socialist generalities, of the Socialist Party. It called and calls itself Marxism, but it was an odd mix of ultra-leftism (on Ireland), Labour-Party-ism, and Stalinism. Marxism, working-class socialism, it was not and is not. □



In 1991 the USSR collapsed. It was a turning-point in world history. The book surveys socialist responses at the time. £6 □

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The fall of "orthodox" illusions



Book review

By Barry Finger

Leftist political currents have rarely engaged in the kinds of open and public-self-scrutiny that they often demand of others. Many more are those socialists who – faced with a global working class capable of intermittent rebellion, but not, at least thus far, of serving as the pivot of socialist transformation – have, through prolonged ideological compromise, reoriented themselves beyond recognition.

The main object of socialism morphed from raising the working class to the master of society – by winning the battle for democracy – into a credo by which the development of production through comprehensive planning and the elimination of private property and the market would lay the groundwork for an unheralded prosperity. It was enough that Communist workers – as the obedient and disciplined agents of a general staff of existing and incipient social managers – should fight capitalism to its death so that private property could be eliminated and replaced by a collectivised society.

If the working classes had bypassed history by their refusal to accept the "tasks" Marxists placed on them, then history had to bypass the working classes in recognition that the proletariat need have no autonomous and conscious role to play in socialistic transformation. For socialists who were not outright apologists for Stalinism, these transformed societies were if not socialist, at least post-capitalist.

Workers, such socialists (often Trotskyist) argued, limped along on bureaucratic crutches, until, their vitality nourished by bureaucratic beneficence and "socialist" education, they would be able to whisk their authoritarian Stalinist nannies aside and walk with confidence independently.

The authors of this volume, in part because they cut their political teeth in a milieu that shared some of these illusions, present a compelling dissection and repudiation of the motivating conceit that bureaucratically managed societies were a necessary, if lamentable, authoritarian step in advancing working class emancipation; that such societies blindly reasserted the central Marxist dynamic in a roundabout and unanticipated fashion.

By 1989-91, when Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and Russia, the authors of this book and the organisation they are integral members of, had long abandoned all socialist illusions about the class nature of Stalinism. In truth, as the earlier pieces on Vietnam and Czechoslovakia suggest, they never fully replaced working class

politics with the avatar of collectivised property. Bureaucratic societies were class societies and like all class societies they generated multiple conflicts and irrationalities, crises of one kind or another, i.e., breakdowns in the regular functioning of the system. Not business cycles, as under capitalism, but crises of rationality and flexibility, crises of stagnation and torpor, evidence, ultimately, of a fundamental rot.

And when these hollowed out systems cracked and began to collapse, workers rebelled. But they rebelled not to preserve bedrock "gains" of collectivised property – in truth, the collectivised property of a small stratum of overlords – but rather to access the basic democratic rights, long denied them, necessary for self-activity.

Third Camp socialism – the political current that the AWL came to embrace – had long believed that the fight for democratic rights in bureaucratic societies would cascade into a struggle for socialist transformation. They felt confirmed in this by the uprisings of Berlin workers in 1953 and Hungarian workers in 1956, insurgencies that had spontaneously erupted into workers' councils and raised the call for socialism in the hope of fomenting a revolutionary working class mutiny in the satellite states. Independent socialists saw these as failed dress rehearsals, auditions, for the revolutions to come. They were, nevertheless, correct, at least, in one regard: in seeing the interconnectedness of the Stalinist social structure; that its collapse in one country could bring about its downfall throughout.

But by the late 1980s Eastern European workers had shed their remaining allegiances to socialism, so thoroughly tainted as it was by the stench of Stalinism. There were, of course, socialist holdouts in Solidarnosc and elsewhere, but these rearguard revolutionaries could not rally a significant mass of workers behind them. Rather, it was the societies of Western Europe that appealed to them as a civilisational upgrade, a democratic leap forward, and they threw their weight behind a bourgeois revolution against their Stalinist oppressors.

The readers of this concise volume will be rewarded by the lively and revealing engagement with Trotskyist orthodoxy and other currents, where the ideas summarized above are teased out as actual events unfolded: Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Poland.

But a real question mark remains. Can socialism re-emerge as a movement dedicated to the preservation and growth of democracy and gain working class traction by the consistent application of those ideals? Or, will it be forever sidetracked by dead end forces that disrupt capitalism, even at the cost of working class freedom? □

Mass deportations and 14 June

By Tom Harrison

Trump's tariff wars, even apart from disrupting world markets, are a tax on American consumers who will be paying more for their groceries, which he, ever knowledgeable about doing the weekly shop, describes as "a bag with different things in it". The most popular fruit Americans buy is bananas. They may double in price thanks to tariffs. Banana production can't be "brought back to the USA". It wasn't there in the first place, due to climatic conditions.

Yet one person who won't be bothered by the price of bananas is cryptocurrency "entrepreneur" Justin Sun. He forked out \$6.2 million for one strapped to a wall with duct tape and devoured the banana at a news conference, drawing parallels between crypto and conceptual art.

A possibly more substantial and certainly more expensive meal Sun just had was at Trump's tacky Mar-a-Lago residence. Sun spent \$20 million on Trump meme coins making him one of its largest holders. He was top of the guest list for Trump's "crypto dinner" at which those present hoped to gain favour for effectively bribing the President. Total ticket receipts were said to be \$148 million.

It looks like Sun has already received payback on his investment. Under investigation from 2023 by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the FBI for market manipulation, Sun had proceedings against him effectively dropped when Trump's appointees took over the agencies last February. Sun also put \$75 million into World Liberty Financial, another Trump crypto entity.

Regulation of the crypto industry is now in free fall with investigations dropped and several crypto criminals released from US jails. This past few weeks have seen Don jr tour Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania – all countries with high levels of corruption – touting crypto schemes along with plans for Trump hotels and golf courses. Brother Eric has done pretty much the same in the despotisms of Saudi, the UAE and Qatar, helped in his endeavours by Zach Witkoff, son of Trump's Middle East envoy. Vietnam is rushing through plans for a Trump golf course.

On top of all this is that \$400 million luxury jet "gifted" to the US government to be passed on to the as yet un-built Trump Presidential Library once he leaves office. Doubtless the plane will then be used to ferry books, assuming there are any. Seen as an obvi-

ous bribe to anyone but abject Trump toadies, it highlights a main goal of his Presidency, namely propelling him into the ranks of the ultra super rich and giving him the status he has felt hitherto denied.

Attorney General Pam Bondi didn't have a problem with Trump accepting the "palace in the sky", she herself having worked for a firm which earned \$115,000 a month lobbying for the Qatari. So much for draining the swamp! Quack Health Secretary R F Kennedy considerably took his grandchildren for a swim in a creek full of sewage as a Mother's Day treat that could just as well serve as a metaphor for the entire Trump regime.

The regime, combining elements of oligarchy, kleptocracy, and kakistocracy (rule of the worst), will make the American working class pay dearly if allowed to get away with it. Already the tariffs are effectively a tax on consumers. Trump's "one big beautiful bill", passed by a one vote majority by the House of Representatives on 22 May, will burden them even more.

Intent

The Bill's main intent is more tax cuts for the rich. To pay for this are cuts in Medicaid said to negatively affect 14 million citizens. Additionally there will be cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme, which provides food stamps to 40 million low-income Americans.

Those cuts, on top of the tariffs and DOGE sackings, aren't going down well with voters, many of whom suffering remorse after buying into the lie that Trump would end inflation "on day one". A straw in the wind has been the huge Democrat victory in Omaha, which on 13 May elected its first black mayor on a 43-point swing. The mid-terms beckon in November 2026. Trump's best way to forestall defeat via the polling booths is to advance still further down the authoritarian path, so that he can ignore or stall an unfavourable Congress.

An outward sign of Trump's dictatorial urges was a large portrait of him hung outside the Department of Agriculture in Washington DC, reminiscent of the kind of images on public buildings displayed in dictatorships. Trump plans a military parade on his personal birthday, 14 June, with a projected cost of \$45 million which won't be subject to "efficiency savings" enacted by DOGE.

Meanwhile attacks on elected politicians, the media, the judiciary, universities, and the art world gather pace, alongside the suppression (already)



of union rights for federal employees and threats to union rights for all other workers. Harvard University is resisting, if only through legal action, but Trump has responded by moves to stop it taking international students (27% of its total, and a bigger part of its tuition-fee income).

A Republican Congresswoman and a mayor in Newark, New Jersey have been arrested during a protest outside an ICE detention centre. Investigations have been launched against several broadcast networks, and funding cut from public broadcast networks NPR and PBS. That has included an attack on Sesame Street! Trump has also been doing his own suing of various news outlets. On 25 April the FBI arrested Milwaukee judge Hannah Dugan in her own courthouse, accusing her of helping a man evade immigration officials.

Currently the main line of attack on democracy in the US is bound up with a drive against undocumented immigrants. They are regarded as an easy target, the administration considering the drive against them meets with public approval. We have the likes of Stephen Miller, an influential figure in the regime with a track record of pushing white supremacist and neo-Nazi propaganda, talking about suspending habeas corpus on the grounds that the US is being "invaded".

If Trump has anything approximating stormtroopers at the moment, it is primarily the agents of ICE. As well as signing up the National Guard to help ICE, he has called for 20,000 more ICE cops to be recruited to supplement the 6,000 already doing the roundups of "illegals". Just what types persons likely to form the bulk of these new recruits you don't need dare to imagine. Other preparations include securing more detention centres, legal moves against "sanctuary cities", and legal moves to strip immigrants of protections gained under previous administrations.

Enhanced ICE actions pose a danger of implementation of martial law via the Insurrection Act. That may even be a desired outcome. The crackdown on immigrants in sanctuary cities is bound to create a strong reaction. In many ways it will be reminiscent of what went on in the North at the time of the Fugitive Slave Act. Trump's drive to dictatorship must be resisted and a mass movement built to defend working class living standards, to resist the deportations, and to defend democratic rights and to institute a functioning democracy in place of the USA's already semi-monarchical system. The next big protests against Trump are due on 14 June, the day of the Trump-birthday military parade. □

Ignorant and cowardly: PCS leaders on trans rights

From PCS Independent Left

The PCS civil service union met for its annual conference on 20-22 May. The issue of highest controversy was trans rights: the report below is abridged from the [PCS Independent Left](#), with thanks. Ukraine motions were talked out and guillotined, so Israel-Palestine was the only thing discussed in the international section, and PCS policy remains pro-Ukraine.

The General Secretary, President and the National Standing Orders Committee made a number of decisions and statements in the run-up to and during the conference which attacked the rights of trans delegates and blocked the discussion of motions of trans solidarity in the wake of the Supreme Court Judgement on the Equality Act.

The President and General Secretary, without NEC consultation, released a public statement in advance of conference which stated that the union was intent on enforcing their own interpretation of the Supreme Court Ruling, advising trans delegates not to use the toilet of their gender. In doing so they placed PCS to the right of the rest of the trade union movement, the Brighton Conference Centre management, and Civil Service employers.

The Standing Orders Committee (SOC) sent all motions from branches which mentioned "the trans issue" to the union's lawyers, asking for legal ad-

vice "in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling". It subsequently ruled that none of the motions would be put to conference, none of them would be printed, and this decision could not be challenged.

On the eve of conference, SOC ruled that motion A57 on trans rights, which had already been printed and circulated as part of the original motions booklet, would also be out of order. The legal advice for this wasn't forthcoming and had to be fought for on conference floor by the majority of delegates continuously refusing to adopt standing orders.

When the advice was provided, it did not relate to this year's Supreme Court ruling at all.

Accepted

Regardless of the SOC legal advice, the President could have accepted A57, as it had already been printed, and the supposed legal jeopardy already breached, by simply calling for a vote on a previous Standing Order Report which included it, but he did not.

To imbue one individual, regardless of political stripe, with the authority to rule out any motion on the grounds of legal jeopardy is not a tenable or democratic situation.

PCS Independent Left will be proposing rule changes for next year's conference to redress this. We also welcome the election of members of the Coalition for Change to the Standing Orders Committee to challenge such behav-

iour next year.

There is broad consensus that the Supreme Court ruling is detrimental to trans rights. We consider the ruling and the subsequent interim EHRC guidance as part of a cultural and legislative trajectory of erasure of trans people from society.

When unions in the deep south were faced with legally enforced racial segregation through Jim Crow, did they simply accept the law or did they break it in order to organise black and white workers against it? Did unions simply accept the poll-tax when it became law, or did they support the mass campaign of non-payment to oppose and ultimately defeat it?

Did our own union simply accept the law had changed, disallowing union membership at GCHQ, or did they oppose it and support each and every rep who was sacked as a consequence?

There are, of course, many other examples of unions refusing to accept the law when it challenges the rights, or in this case, the existence, of their members.

And some Group PCS conferences in the same week did allow similar motions to be debated and voted on, which almost entirely debases the rationale behind excluding them from national conference.

In behaving as they have, PCS Left Unity [the dominant faction] have not only thrown our trans members under the bus, but have – potentially unwittingly – signalled to transphobes in the

wider trade union movement how to ensure similar situations are played out in other unions.

If there was one incident which demonstrates this the most, it was the emboldening of transphobes to an extent that, for the first time at PCS conference, they felt it acceptable to boast from the podium of misgendering and presuming the gender of delegates and harassing them in the toilets, later providing the same perspectives freely to the *Daily Mail*.

Refusing

We want to pay a huge tribute to the self-organisation of trans delegates who led allies in refusing to back down, despite the force of the leadership, lawyers, the Standing Orders Committee and full-timers acting against them.

We also don't want activists to be disheartened. The power shown on the conference floor during the debate on standing orders and during the Equalities section and the continuous stream of delegates throughout the conference highlighting support for trans siblings should be heartening. There is an organisation here which isn't going away.

PCS Independent Left will continue to back our trans members and the wider trans community. □

• More online: bit.ly/pcs-t for an explanation that the Supreme Court judgement, for all its faults, does not mandate birth-sex checks on toilets.

Wrong on Supreme Court



Letter

It is my view that the responses of *Solidarity* to the recent Supreme Court ruling on how woman and sex is defined in the Equality Act have been wrongheaded. The ruling has led to much debate about what the consequences would be with regards to single-sex spaces for women.

If certain women's spaces wish to include trans women then that's their prerogative, but it is politically wrong to insist that women who wish to have genuine single-sex spaces for certain reasons, including for reasons of political organisation, or safety such as with women's prisons, should not be allowed to do so.

In recent years there have been some negative conse-

quences to not implementing single-sex provisions in the few places in life where it would be appropriate to do so. Sport and female prisons are some well known examples. Rather than campaigning for better provision for, say, trans women in open sports categories or for safety of prisoners including trans women in single-sex prisons, many on the left supported a de facto self-ID model based on gender identity which was both wrong politically and led to a backlash that has been extremely unfortunate for trans people and has allowed right-wing politicians to ludicrously portray themselves as defenders of women's spaces.

The judgment only directly concerned those people with Gender Recognition Certificates, a group which numbers in the thousands and represents a very small proportion

of trans people in the UK. It is the case that, quite rightly, trans people are separately protected from unlawful discrimination by the Equality Act via the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. A trans woman who feels she has been the target of sexist discrimination on the basis of being perceived to be female can also argue that she has suffered discrimination by perception.

The rights of trans people to live their lives free from harassment and discrimination, to be able to receive the healthcare they require, should be defended but the responses I have seen from the AWL seem to counterpose trans rights and the rights of women to have single-sex spaces. This is most regrettable. □

Ayub Jawad,
London

Next strike likely to start 9 June

By John Ryan

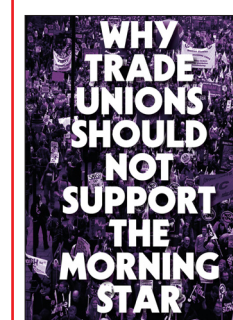
Nottingham University Hospitals Trust has offered a pathetic one extra day of annual leave, just for 2025, to end the dispute over back pay for Health Care Support Workers. The HCSWs were scornful, saying it was insulting.

Support

These strikers have a lot of car-honking support from the public and they should capitalise on that by taking a petition demanding their back pay to the public in local town centres. The Trust is lying when it says that the reason it won't extend the back pay period is lack of proof that HCSWs were working higher grade duties in 2019, and there may now be a way of refuting that by looking at staff competencies. The staff

could use those to draw up a statement of support from MPs and local politicians.

A round of strikes ended on Wednesday 21 May. A HCSW-led committee will discuss what happens next. An impromptu survey of workers carried out on one of the picket lines unanimously supported escalation, and it looks like the next strike will be for five days starting Monday 9 June. □



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“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

Need to pick up the pace

We have the promise of some larger donations in the coming week, but a measly £80 over the last two weeks means that without a renewed push on donations we are in danger of not hitting our target.

Despite the flop of the Great British National Strike, the far-right are on the rise and able to raise funds very quickly. Lucy Connolly, the new cause-célèbre for the far-right as a "free

speech martyr", has had tens of thousands of pounds raised to continue to fight her court case for tweeting "Mass deportation now, set fire to all the fucking hotels full of the bastards for all I care ... if that makes me racist so be it".

To combat and fight the racism of people like Lucy Connolly we need your donations!

• Donate: workersliberty.org/fund

£3,000 a month to look at the depot?



Diary of a Tube driver

By Jay Dawkey

"That's expensive for what you are getting", as we look out from the mess room at the yet new blocks of flats being built. "£3k a month to look at the depot", O scoffs.

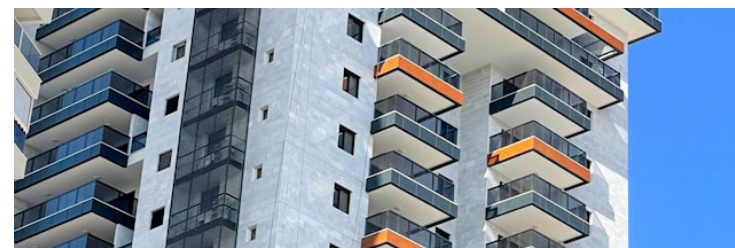
"Some of them are social housing, the ones with the smaller balconies. Probably they can't use all the facilities in the building either. Some will have courtyards and gyms, but they don't all have same access. Separate entrances for the people paying top whack. Mad really".

"Not bad, though, is it? It's all paid for on benefits to get somewhere like that?"

E says. "I don't think many are on benefits, E, not living there. It's just the most affordable thing round here since they got rid of the old estate. Most of them are still working, even in a council flat".

"But if £3k is a lot for us, and most people are on less, it's not sustainable going forward. No one will be able to live here if it keeps going like that."

The depot will be knocked down to make way for more flats. The area will soon be transformed into more and more tower blocks facing each other. "You won't even get a view of the depot then, or the sidings, just a view of the next block of flats". We got an update sent round by the developer and TfL about the current stage of the developments, but still



no mention of exactly what our future will be.

"Perhaps they just don't know, or they think it won't happen anytime soon. But

an update without the crucial info of what happens to us is not really much of an update", E says. □

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Want to be part of an organised long-haul collective effort to spread the socialist ideas you read in *Solidarity*, and to link together activities in diverse campaigns and conflicts around that consistent socialist thread? Then take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell each week, and contact us to discuss joining Workers' Liberty, the group that produces and sustains this paper. Check it out and contact us via workersliberty.org/join-awl □

The 1944 coup attempt against Hitler



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Any notion that the Nazi regime was unopposed within Germany is one-sided. There were various acts of resistance and no less than 15 attempts on Hitler's life. *Valkyrie* (dir. Bryan Singer, 2008), is loosely based on the real events of the last of those.

Severely wounded in North Africa, Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (Tom Cruise – not a popular choice in Germany due to his Scientology connections) is appalled by the Nazis and believes the Reich cannot win the war.

He has lost an eye and his right hand, but after recovering he joins a secret group who want to bring an end to the war. July 1944: von Stauffenberg attends a conference headed by Hitler in the so-called Wolf's Lair in East Prussia. A bomb, disguised as a bottle of Coin-treau, fails to explode. At a second at-



tempt a few days later the bomb, this time in a briefcase, explodes.

Von Stauffenberg quickly heads back to Berlin for Operation Valkyrie – which will mobilise the Berlin garrison, arrest SS and Gestapo leaders, and install a new government. Everything goes to

plan until it is revealed that Hitler has survived the blast, only slightly injured. The coup collapses and those involved suffer terrible retribution. □

• Watch online: bit.ly/valk08

Lambeth ballot closes 29 May

By Wilson Gibbons

Library workers in Lambeth end their strike ballot on Friday 29 May. The decision to ballot came after Lambeth council announced that £1 million of their library budget was facing the chop in the first round of its £50 mil-

lion of cuts. Lambeth's well organised library workers appear to be well over the 50% turnout threshold needed for strikes under the 2016 Trade Union Act.

Experience

The ballot results will follow in the coming weeks.

Lambeth's library workers already have experience of fighting cuts in the borough, having had a lively Save Our Libraries campaign and strikes around the beginning of Osborne's austerity in the 2010s.

Young members of Unison in London, hearing of the ballot and action

taken by teachers and support staff in Lambeth against school closures there, on hosted a fundraiser on 9 May which raised around £800 for Lambeth's fighting fund, and the same amount for the Trans Legal Clinic. □

Care workers strike in Scotland

By Dale Street

Two weeks of rolling strike days by Unison members in the Scottish social care employer Enable, culminating in a lobby of the Scottish Parliament, commence on Thursday 29 May).

Thursday's 24-hour strike in East Renfrewshire will be followed by one-day strikes in Milltown, Aberdeen and Moray (3 June); Ayrshire (6 June); Lanarkshire (10 June); and Glasgow, Edinburgh, East and West Lothian (12 June).

There is a long back-story to the strikes. However, the issue is pay, and the forthcoming action is the first Scotland-wide strike in social care in over a decade. It is also the first strike in Enable in its seventy-year history.

Unison has described Enable as "one of the better employers in the care sector" and has made a point of linking the strike to the Scottish Government's longstanding failure to properly fund social care in Scotland.

Even if the former point is true – but some employees would certainly dispute it – it is not a high hurdle to cross. The latter point is certainly true. It underlines the need for concerted campaigning by the three unions in social care (Unison, Unite and the GMB).

Rather than adopting an attitude of "Let's see how the strike in Enable goes", all three unions should be campaigning for strikes over pay with individual employers wherever possible, and also starting joint campaigning directed at the Scottish Government.

With Holyrood elections less than a year away, the SNP, and all other political parties, are vulnerable.

A start in that direction could be made by all unions – including Unite and the GMB – sending delegations to support picket lines during the strike, and also the lobby of Holyrood on 12 June. □

• More online: bit.ly/senable

Birmingham bins need action to break deadlock

By Jim Denham

Birmingham city council bin workers, members of Unite, have been on all-out strike since 11 March. They are responding to a threatened pay cut of £8,000 a year to around 170 bin workers and a regrading exercise that threatens the pay of hundreds more.

On 9 May a mass picket of the Lifford Lane depot (not called by Unite) was a tremendous success and a massive morale boost to the strikers.

On 21 May a somewhat smaller but still effective, picket at the Atlas depot in Tyseley was held – this time called by Unite itself.

But strikers remain frustrated at the lack of clear leadership from Unite at either national or local level.

Meanwhile, the Labour council, which is effectively bankrupt, has obtained an injunction to stop effective picketing.

The conciliation service Acas has been involved in talks since the start of the month, but the dispute remains deadlocked.

Commissioners

Unite has blamed government-appointed commissioners, who have been overseeing the council's operations since its effective bankruptcy, for the apparent lack of progress.

Commissioners were brought in by the previous Conservative government after the council declared itself effectively bankrupt in September 2023.

Unite said the talks set out a clear timeline for an offer the council claimed was available, to be put on the table.

In a statement, Unite say: "What has become increasingly clear is that the offer is now being blocked by the government commissioners and the leader of the council, none of whom have ever been in the negotiating room."

"Talks aimed at resolving the Birmingham bin strike have been sabotaged by government commissioners."

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "From the council side, the negotiations in this dispute have been a shambles, with the government right at the heart of it."

"The offer briefed to the press for



all affected workers simply never existed and the new ballpark offer discussed at Acas has now been blocked by government commissioners.

"Instead of trying to injunct picket lines and attack workers, the council leader should stop playing games, get in the room and solve

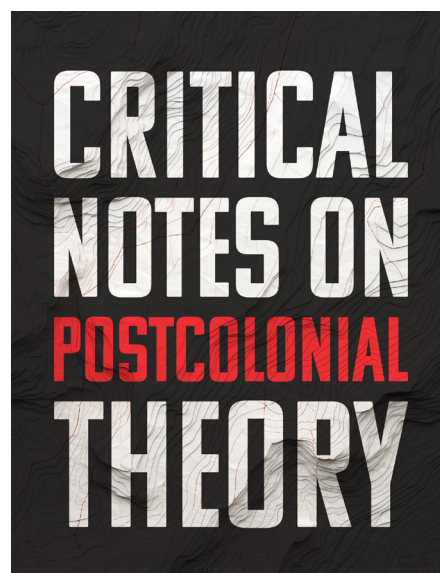
this dispute.

"Birmingham City Council's bin workers, residents and the public at large have all been lied to.

"The bottom line is that our members can't afford to have savage pay cuts of up to £8,000 with no mitigation. Until that issue is addressed the strikes will continue.

"If Labour is truly the party for workers, how can this government be aiding and abetting these cuts and once again allowing workers and communities to pay the price?"

Graham's militant words are very welcome, but what is needed now are more mass pickets and a concerted campaign to build support amongst trade unionists at local and national level. □



A critical look at theories now dominant in leftish academia.

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Doctors ballot from 27 May

Resident doctors (formerly junior doctors), members of the BMA, have announced a ballot for strikes over pay. They seek progress towards restoration of their real-pay loss since 2020. The ballot opens 27 May and closes 7 July.

A BMA activist told *Solidarity*: "Consultants and SAS [speciality] doctors have introduced a rate card (extra contractual/locum) to pressure. The consultants and SAS will be coordinated. Residents are moving sooner, though."

"The RCN is currently calling our mildly higher offer [than nurses got] grotesque despite our efforts at unity, so unity with nurses looks difficult."

"We have more problems than last time due to bottlenecks and NHS cuts causing unemployment and anti-immigrant sentiment disrupting unity". □

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After Winter Fuel U-turn Stop benefit cuts

By Cathy Nugent

Even by the most minimal electoralist criteria, the Labour government is not doing well and ought to be changing political direction urgently. The party's position in the polls has dropped from 37.5% support shortly before the election in July 2024 to 25.2% in March 2025. At the same time support for Reform has risen to around 30%.

Important reasons behind Labour's steep drop in popularity are keeping the two-child benefit cap, cuts to the winter fuel allowance, and proposals to cut disability benefits, including access to the Personal Independence Payments (PIP). These cuts have provoked backlash among Labour's backbenchers and many party members.

Yet the cuts are being opposed by everyone from the Greens to Reform.

Memos from Angela Rayner have been leaked which set out alternative tax-raising measures – and the restriction of legal migrants' access to pensions and benefits to stave off spending cuts.

Gradually Labour's leaders are beginning to shift on the cuts, but only marginally.

Starmer has indicated that the threshold for winter fuel payments could be raised.

The two-child benefit cap will be considered as part of a delayed review on child poverty. Some reports suggest a climbdown, others an increase in alternative forms of support. Starmer is said to have ensured the 11 June Spending Review will include expanded free breakfast clubs, wider eligibility for free school meals, and increases in child benefit.

UK child poverty is now running at a record rate of 4.5 million children, 31% of all children. The rate rose from 27 per cent to 30 per cent between 2010-11 and 2022-23, with families with three or more children most badly affected.

Ex-Prime Minister Gordon Brown entered the debate with his own proposal to raise money and scrap the child benefit cap – a levy on the gambling industry, commercial banks and corporate philanthropy.

These half-measure taxes, on some of the wealth, would be welcome but won't get Labour out of trouble. Across the board taxes on top wealth could fix things in the short term, though we will need more radical measures of public ownership for longer-term redress.



Pic: Mark Simons

With a big Labour MP rebellion likely on the disability cuts (around 100 are said to oppose), the vote on the proposals may be postponed beyond June. As with all the other benefit measures, a complete reversal is unlikely without much more pressure on Labour's leaders.

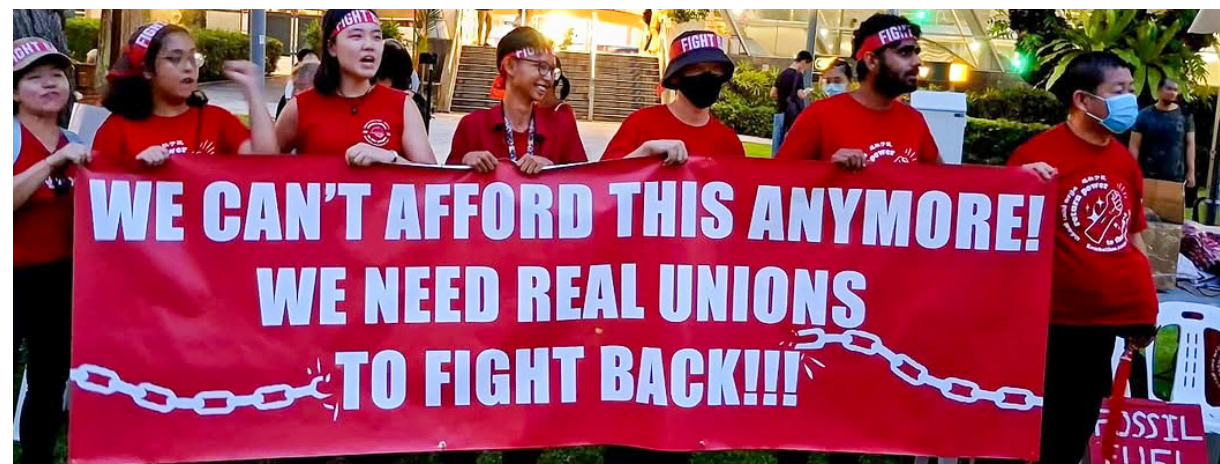
The grassroots campaign against disability cuts, much of it in Labour and the trade unions continues.

On 21 May Disabled People Against cuts (DPAC) organised a lobby of MPs. Local groups have called demonstrations on 31 May against Stephen Timms (11am Stratford Station) and Rachel Reeves in Leeds (10am Bramley Centre). The Leeds demonstration is supported by Unite Community, Wakefield Unison, and many Labour activists. Leicester NEU is organising a lobby of Liz Kendall in early June.

Many local Labour Parties have now passed motions against the disability cuts, including Rachel Reeves' Leeds West party.

Unison, which has a policy against disability cuts, has finally publicly communicated that position, asking members to say how they will be affected by cuts to PIP. The union are also urging members and branches to lobby MPs to vote against the changes, and says it will publish a list of which MPs don't.

Branches should not wait on Unison HQ to get that campaign started; they need to take on the work themselves, and start by supporting local disabled members' groups to get involved. □



Independent Labour Day in Singapore

By Dylan Seah

An independent Labour Day rally took place in Singapore on 25 May, as an alternative to the annual rally held by the state-controlled National Trade Union Congress (NTUC). The independent rally took place at Speakers' Corner in Hong Lim Park, the only legal venue for protests in Singapore. It appeared bigger this year than last, with a stronger presence from Opposition parties, including sitting MPs from the Workers' Party.

The rally, initially scheduled for 1 May, had been postponed due to tighter restrictions on political activity around the 3 May general election. Those, of course, did not prevent the ruling party's NTUC from having its own rally on 1 May. The government banned migrant workers from attending the 25 May rally.

Workers Make Possible organised the rally, alongside several autonomous workers' groups for food couriers, health workers, transport workers and self-employed workers. Since Covid these workers' groups have fought and won campaigns for retail workers at drugstore Watsons to be able to sit down, as well as for food couriers in the financial district to be able to use main lifts to deliver food to office workers (they were previously forced to use cargo lifts.) In both of those campaigns, these independent quasi-unions met formally with management to negotiate.

Workers Make Possible also represents individual workers in disputes with employers regarding non-payment of wages.

As anyone who has experienced the stultifying political atmosphere in Singapore will know,

these developments are spectacular. A banner at the independent rally read "We Can't Afford This Anymore! We Need Real Unions to Fight Back!" As this alternative labour movement continues to grow, it will be necessary for it to develop some orientation to the official labour movement – even if that orientation is "we see no way of democratising and transforming the official unions into fighting unions, so we must set up new ones."

Probably the only way to test this is to combine independent worker organisation with activity at rank and file level inside the official unions. Can Workers Make Possible and other groups build a whole new labour movement from scratch? It will have to do more than exist in parallel with the NTUC as a way to seek refuge from the realities of the regime. It will have to be a combative vehicle for fighting a wider battle for democracy. It will have to be able to "defeat" the NTUC, or maybe partly subvert it from within.

There are some labour activists now exiled from China who still believe that the frequent wildcat strikes in China have the potential to push some of the CCP centrally-controlled state "union" machinery at local level into action. When the fascist Franco government was on the decline in Spain, Stalinists and left Catholics organised within the shell of the state-run "vertical" unions (as well as independently), and led some real struggles. None of this tells us for sure if Singapore left activists should do the same – the only thing that will inform their position is experimentation and experience fighting both within and without the NTUC. □



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AID FOR GAZA! RECOGNISE PALESTINE NOW!



See page 3

TRUMP CALLS IN MILITARY FOR MASS DEPORTATIONS



Pic: ellerieann11

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