



For social ownership of the banks and industry

UNION-LABOUR REBELS CAN BEAT CUTS



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Union-Labour rebels can beat cuts



Union-Labour resistance could still force the government to pull back completely on its disabled benefit cuts. Just before the parliamentary vote on 1 July, the government said it would withdraw (on the next, third reading, of the Bill) the whole section 5 about cutting access to Personal Independence Payments. The Institute for Fiscal Studies now says the Bill will not even save money for the government.

And yet the government could get only 328 votes against a backbench MP's motion to stall the Bill, 75 short of its total of 403. 44 Labour MPs voted for the stalling motion, plus others currently excluded from the whip for voting to scrap the two-child benefit cap. For the Bill itself, the government was 68 votes of its 403.

The third reading is on 9 July, and then it will be rushed through the Lords and back to the Commons. But after that it is a long time until the cuts are to be implemented. The government says it will "co-produce" a review about Personal Independence Payments and only then make proposals about that.

The second reading of the Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill was rushed through Parliament because the Labour leaders were in trouble – under pressure from Re-

form in the polls, under pressure from Labour members, under pressure from the unions, and under pressure from their own MPs. They have been very slow to listen to disabled people.

The Labour MPs who have opposed the Bill over the last weeks were clearly galvanised by Labour's u-turn on winter fuel payments.

The government has now made a number of changes. They are nowhere near good enough. However, they do show that protests and campaigns can force Labour to retreat.

The government shifted to say that it would exclude everyone currently receiving disability benefits from the cuts, and that both old and new claimants will get increases in the health element of universal credit which are in line with inflation. Liz Kendall promised a more fundamental review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments, to be "co-produced" with disabled people and the organisations that represent them though everyone expects that review to include a narrowing of criteria for qualifying for PIP.

There is still a real danger of disability benefits becoming a "two tier" system, structurally unfair and incoherent. Why should one person who can wash themselves below the waist get financial help while another person who can't doesn't?

And if we allow rebellion to recede, we can't trust this Labour government, or future governments, not to make fur-



ther cuts.

An adequate socially-provided financial safety net for human beings who are born with a disability, or become disabled – a potential issue for every single person and family in the UK – should be a human right.

Starmer ploughed on with the Bill, seeing it as a test of his leadership. He got himself into a mess because he doesn't take disabled people, his own party, or even politics very seriously. He is now trying to mend his own damaged reputation and position as leader, as if that's what matters, not the fact that these proposals were always an outrageous attack on vulnerable people.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty (APPGP) assessed 70 submissions to its call for evidence on the Green Paper on welfare reforms. If the original proposals had gone ahead, and affected existing claimants, 800,000 people would have lost PIP support entirely; some individuals would have lost up to £886 per month; a potential £1.1 billion would be cut to unpaid carers' support; 250,000 people, including 50,000 children, would have been pushed into poverty.

We need to keep up the pressure! We must get across the arguments about why a two-tier benefit system is wrong. □

"I am not the accused, I am the accuser"

The following is a lightly-edited transcript of a speech given by Palestinian socialist Ayman Odeh, who represents the left-wing Hadash party in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament). The speech was given at a disciplinary hearing against Odeh for tweeting, in January 2025, that he was "happy over the release of the [Palestinian] prisoners and [Israeli] hostages" in the ceasefire agreement. Some interjections by right-wing MKs are also included.

Right-wing MKs: Our soldiers are fighting on seven fronts. Ayman Odeh is the eighth front. The eighth front must be cleansed [...] You are an enemy, you are part of the enemy. You are a fifth column [...] You do not represent Arab citizens, you should be executed by firing squad.

Odeh: If I back down now, the fascist right will have succeeded in setting the bound-

aries of freedom of expression for Arab citizens, exactly as they want us: subjects, not part of a people, not part of a cause, without political or critical positions. That will not happen!... Those who justified the killing of 54,000 Gazans have no moral right to judge me. Those who never condemned, not even once, the killing of a single Palestinian child have no right to judge me.

Amongst those who signed the impeachment order against me were those who said, "The children of Gaza brought this on themselves"... "Gaza should be burned, there are no innocents there"... "I have no problem if children in Gaza die"... Just two days ago, a political leader from the right said, "The 7 October massacre saved the people of Israel"... and dozens of other appalling statements like these. These are the people who signed the request to impeach me...

It is interesting that those who decided and executed the deal to release Palestinian prisoners and Israeli hostages are considered legitimate, but the one who expressed happiness about it is considered worthy of impeachment. This is the first time feelings have been put on trial. You are not judging the government's decision, you are judging my feelings about it...

Every true democrat and peace seeker accuses you. We accuse you of destroying peace since the Oslo Accords. We accuse you of the siege in Gaza and the checkpoints in the West Bank. We accuse you of continuing the occupation, of the ideology of Jewish supremacy, of horrific crimes against humanity, including the killing of 20,000 Gazan children.

The Knesset Ethics Committee decided to suspend me for two weeks for this statement,

so I repeat it again: the Israeli government has committed crimes against humanity in Gaza. I am not the accused, I am the accuser.

They label me an extremist, just as they falsely claim I did not condemn the 7 October massacre. You are liars. I condemned the massacre, not for your sake, but for the people. They attack me because I always speak to both peoples. Even my tweet was written in Hebrew, and it spoke about the right of both peoples to live in freedom, dignity, and equality. This moral voice, this voice that is considered a global consensus, is considered "extreme" only in the state of Israel. I am not the extremist here; you are the extremists.

Right-wing MKs: There are not two peoples, between the river and the sea there is only one people!

Odeh: It is not "extreme" to fight for the rights of both peo-

ple. The extremists are those who support the regime of Jewish supremacy, people like you. [I fight for] both peoples, for their right to live in peace, based on justice, through the establishment of a state alongside a state. We have never treated; the ones who retreated are those who drifted to the right, even to fascism, in this Knesset.

I am proud of my positions. I will not back down. I will not apologise. I will continue to struggle with my partners until we build a different future here. A better future for all of us, where we live in peace, safety, equality, and true democracy.

Right-wing MK: We will live, you will die.

Odeh: You will back down. But I will not back down from a single word, not a single letter, not a comma or a period. History will absolve me, and history will judge you. □

Israel out of Gaza and West Bank! Peace!

By Ira Berkovic

The 24 June ceasefire between Israel and Iran is holding for now. Some US intelligence establishment say bomb damage has set back Iran's nuclear-weapons chances only by "months". Whatever about that, the only halfway stable way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weaponry is through political change and, in the interim, negotiated treaties between states.

For Israel, the war aimed not only to degrade Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure but to project Israeli power into the wider region. For Iran, retaliation sought to express Iran's own status as a regional power capable of taking on Israel.

The hundreds dead and thousands injured in Iran, and the dozens dead and hundreds injured in Israel, have paid the price for the warmongering of their leaders.

Socialists must not allow justifiable anger at Israeli militarism, and disgust with its war of annihilation in Gaza, to abandon our duty of solidarity with Iranian workers and end up apologising for their regime.

The Islamic Republic is a brutal theocracy, which came to power in a counter-revolution that smashed a working-class insurgency. The clerics' commitments to "wipe Israel off the map" has nothing to do with a desire to see freedom and democracy for the Palestinians, and everything to do with antisemitic ideological commitments and a desire to expand Iran's own imperial sphere.

For the Israeli government, the war served to briefly draw international attention from the atrocities it accelerated in Gaza under cover of the bombing exchanges, and which state-backed settler mobs carry out in the West Bank. Israeli soldiers have recently spoken about being ordered to fire on crowds of Palestinians queuing for aid. Hundreds have been killed in such shootings over recent weeks.

In the occupied West Bank, armed settlers have recently carried out pogroms against the Palestinian community in Masafer Yatta, the area featured in Oscar-winning documentary *No Other Land*. The binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement Standing Together said: "This is not new, it happens on an almost-daily basis in the West Bank. It is part of a state-backed system that allows violent settlers to drive Palestinians off their land and walk away unpunished and

protected. Just a few months ago, *No Other Land*, made by Palestinians and Israelis together, won an Oscar for telling the story of life in Masafer Yatta, of Palestinians' decades-long fight to resist forced displacement and stay on the land.

"The film was powerful, but what does it mean that even after that global recognition, the same people whose stories moved millions are still being attacked in the night, still losing their homes, still living under threat, and the terror is continuing?

"This will not stop as long as Palestinians in the West Bank are living under military rule, while settlers are allowed to act with impunity and our government continues to treat Palestinian life as expendable. The only way the people of Masafer Yatta can truly live safely, freely, and with dignity is by ending the occupation, by ending the system that gives settlers power and strips Palestinians of basic rights, freedom of movement, and autonomy over their own lives."

Speculated

Some Israeli political commentators have speculated that Netanyahu may try to capitalise on the boost to his ratings following the war with Iran by agreeing a new Gaza ceasefire, resuming normalisation negotiations with Saudi Arabia, and calling new elections.

We don't know. But whatever Netanyahu's intentions, every day the Gaza war goes on brings further slaughter to the Palestinian people, and places more at risk of death and disease from the humanitarian crises caused by the war.

Inside Israel, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) has initiated disciplinary proceedings against three Palestinian MKs, Ayman Odeh and Aida Touman-Sliman, who represent the left-wing Hadash party, and Ahmad Tibi, the leader of the secular-nationalist party Balad.

Standing Together said: "Just because the Israeli government has been focused on Iran doesn't mean it has forgotten its regular programming: strengthening fascist policies and silencing Palestinian citizens and lawmakers.

"Over 20 months of killing, destruction, and starvation in Gaza, top right-wing ministers in Israel's government have openly called for massacres, for dropping nuclear bombs on Palestinians, and for a freeze on all humanitarian aid.

"Not one of them has been reprimanded, let alone officially sanctioned.



Pic: Yahel Gazit

But for Palestinians, any statement against this brutal reality can lead to arrest and dismissal. Recently, the Knesset Ethics Committee issued several disciplinary decisions against Ayman Odeh, Aida Touman-Sliman, and Ahmad Tibi, who are all Palestinian members of the Knesset.

"Touma-Sliman and Tibi were suspended from the Knesset for three days after social media posts where they referred to Israeli soldiers as 'murderers' and 'occupiers'.

"The double standards regarding free speech for Knesset members

makes it crystal clear that the campaign is simply about silencing Arab-Palestinian lawmakers while giving far-right extremists free rein to incite. This has nothing to do with democracy or security, it is about control. Silencing voices of dissent is a danger to every single one of us."

"Odeh will be suspended for two weeks for stating that 'what the army is doing is murder and massacre', and faces a further hearing after tweeting in January that he was 'happy over the release of the prisoners and hostages' in the last ceasefire and hostage deal". □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Wed 9 Jul: China, Taiwan, and the US trade war. 7pm, London: email awl@workersliberty.org for venue

Sun 20 Jul: AWL eco reading group on agriculture. 8pm, Zoom bit.ly/eco-rg

At work or on campus

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

Template motions

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



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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs

6 Jul: Manchester. Straight Sex. 3pm, Art Gallery, Mosley St M2 3JL

7 Jul: Sheffield. Talking To My Students About Porn. 6pm, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

Campaigns

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

“No vote for Labour”... but does it matter?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

According to *Morning Star* columnist Andrew Murray, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) has changed its “default electoral policy” of calling for a Labour vote “where no communist is standing.”

In his *Eyes Left* column of 11 June, Murray (a leading CPB member) reported that “a speech delivered by party general secretary Rob Griffiths at a recent meeting of the political committee indicates that this long-standing position no longer applies in the prevailing political situation.

“Rather, the party rightly anticipates that Labour will be challenged by a diverse range of forces to its left at future elections, and many of those will be worthy of support in preference to Keir Starmer’s candidates.”

The column is headed “Labour is no alternative” and the strap-line reads “We have finally reached the end of Labour’s claim to be the political wing of the labour movement, and the diverse left forces challenging Starmer’s austerity deserve our open support – but what happens next?”

In reality, this “change” is far from

dramatic: at the last general election the CPB and *Morning Star* supported a motley crew of “independent” candidates supposedly standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza (in reality, many simply anti-Israel) with Murray himself particularly enthusiastic about the lawyer and Andrew Tate fan with no socialist or labour movement credentials, Akhmed Yakoob. Murray also gave uncritical coverage to George Galloway and his so-called “Workers Party”, stuffed full of racists, antisemites, Putin enthusiasts and conspiracy theorists.

Meanwhile, one of the “pro Gaza” independents so enthusiastically supported by the CPB and MS, Ayoub Khan (now a Birmingham MP) has called for the army to break the Birmingham bin strike.

The fact is, that ever since the political demise of their friend Jeremy Corbyn, (for whom Andrew Murray formally “resigned” from the CPB in order to become a key adviser) the CPB and MS have been all over the place on voting Labour. In local elections since 2019, they have failed to call for a Labour vote (except, unaccountably, in Wales) and, since 2023 have become very excited about various “pro Gaza” independents and Labour councillors who resigned following Keir Starmer’s initial comments apparently supporting the denial of water to the people of Gaza.

Nevertheless, Robert Griffiths, writing in the MS of 12 September 2023

declared: “A Labour victory at the next general election would be a better outcome than a Conservative victory, raising working-class morale and demands”.

Griffiths’ next comments merely caused more confusion: “But this cannot mean voting for those Labour candidates who have played a prominent part in turning the party to the right, purging the left and advocating neo-liberal and pro-war policies.”

This wording was used in the resolution on the general election passed at the CPB’s November 2023 congress.

(By the way, Labour leaders being bad on wars is not new: they supported the British government in World War One).

Circumstances

Under what circumstances, and in which constituencies, the CPB and MS advocated a Labour vote remained unclear right up to the 2024 general election itself.

Meanwhile, the MS supported George Galloway in the February 2024 Rochdale by-election and when he won, proclaimed it “a victory for the Palestinian people”!

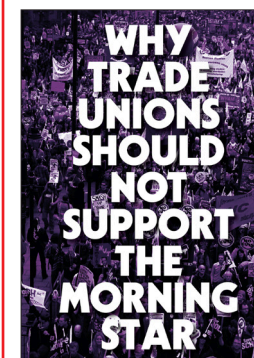
What the CPB’s “new” electoral policy will mean in practice is presently a mystery, even to Andrew Murray. He writes that “the broad politics” of the oppositional forces that the CPB will support will draw upon the “immense

movements of solidarity with the Palestinians, 15 years of capitalist crisis, the legacy of Corbynism and anti-austerity mobilisation.”

But “the form and focus of any challenge remain moot, with no guarantee of any common conclusion emerging.”

Given that Murray seems to think that the desired electoral alternative to Labour may not be “explicitly socialist”, the obvious conclusion would seem to be “Vote Green”. And sure enough, Murray asks: “Can there – should there – be some form of pact [with the Greens]? Without it, electoral results will be more meagre than otherwise.”

But does any of this matter? Even Murray is realistic enough to admit “it cannot be pretended that masses of voters have been swayed by the [Communist] party’s advice for decades now, no more than they have been persuaded to back its own candidates, alas.” □



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Zohran Mamdani wins the primary



Eric Lee

If elected in November, Zohran Mamdani will be the third democratic socialist mayor of New York City in the last 35 years.

His predecessors included David Dinkins, a member of the Democratic Socialist Organising Committee (DSOC) in the 1970s, who served one term in City Hall, having been elected New York’s first Black mayor in 1990. Bill De Blasio, a self-described democratic socialist, served two terms, leaving office in 2021. When Zohran Mamdani was asked who he rated as New York’s best mayor in his lifetime, he [named](#) de Blasio.

All three men, whatever their views about socialism, made their electoral careers through the Democratic Party. The efforts by the Socialist Party and other left-wing groups to rise to the top of New York politics

were consistently met with failure. At the Party’s peak in 1921, its candidate, the well-known Morris Hillquit, won a respectable 22% of the vote, but a Democrat was elected.

In 1997, another former DSOC member, Ruth Messinger, won 43% running – as a Democrat – against Rudy Giuliani. Even this vote was far larger than anything any Socialist candidate ever received.

Mamdani is absolutely right to campaign as a Democrat and his victory in the Democratic primary practically ensures his election in November. But he may find that winning the election is the easy part.

Back in 1969, the liberal Republican (yes, there were such things) John Lindsay was campaigning to win a second term as mayor. His campaign slogan was the memorable “It’s the second toughest job in America.” Lindsay had come under fire for a series of crises, including teachers’ strikes that shut down the schools for

many weeks.

Mamdani, like Lindsay, is young and charismatic. He seems to have captured the enthusiastic support of thousands of young New Yorkers who have rallied behind him as they did for Bernie Sanders in 2016 and 2020. His proposals to make life more affordable for residents of the city are hugely popular.

Problem

But he has a problem. Mamdani is an outspoken supporter of Palestinian rights. When at university, he founded a chapter of Students for Justice for Palestine -- a group that in recent years has become notoriously pro-Hamas. Mamdani has foolishly used the slogan “Globalise the Intifada!” He openly supports boycotting Israel.

Many in the Jewish community have expressed concern. But many have not.

Mamdani has a significant base of support among New York’s Jews, and swiftly

won the endorsement of city Comptroller Brad Lander, who also ran in the mayoral primary. Lander is one of number of Jewish politicians who have chosen to support Mamdani. This is essential for Mamdani’s electability, as New York City has one of the largest urban Jewish populations in the world.

Mamdani’s opponents on the Right are having a field day, branding him an antisemite. His main primary rival, former governor Andrew Cuomo, facing defeat, also used the charge against him. Cuomo was desperately trying to divert attention from the fact that four years earlier he had been forced to resign after the state attorney general concluded that he had sexually harassed multiple women.

Mamdani’s sizable support within the Jewish community has been linked to declining American Jewish support for Israel. Netanyahu’s policies -- and particularly the conduct of Israeli forces in Gaza -- have

played a role. It might even be argued that if Mamdani is elected with significant Jewish support, ironically he owes some of that to the Israeli prime minister.

Mamdani’s election is not yet in the bag. The incumbent mayor, the corrupt Eric Adams, is running as an independent. The Republicans are running Curtis Silwa, the founder of the red-beret-wearing “Guardian Angels” set up in the 1970s. Andrew Cuomo himself, though soundly beaten by Mamdani, is weighing an independent campaign.

For working people, none of those are palatable options. Mamdani will win the support of liberals and working-class voters. But if he wants to take his progressive vision further, he needs the support of the city’s Jewish community too -- and to get that, he needs to listen to their concerns. □

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

Why do “enemy feminisms” abound?



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

We are facing a growing far right and an authoritarian backlash to social gains. One unpleasant aspect of the moment is the fact that some of those at the forefront of reactionary attacks are self-proclaimed feminists.

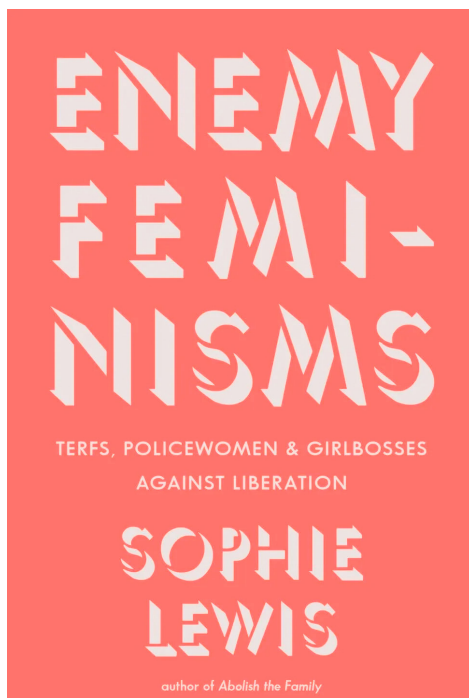
Sophie Lewis situates her book *Enemy Feminisms* here:

“And as the twenty-first century descends to new depths of anti-trans horror, knowing how to draw lines that say, this feminist is our enemy, is increasingly indispensable.”

The book argues this moment of reactionary, anti-liberational feminism is not a historical aberration, but a current running through the history of feminism. Lewis tracks these enemy feminisms – from 19th century imperial feminists and police officers, to 20th century KKK feminists and anti porn feminists lining up with religious reactionaries, to today's anti-abortion and TERF feminists.

Some of it is reasonably well-worn ground. Critiques of white feminism and boss feminism are in many recent popular left feminist books and even the mainstream press. I'm not convinced most of these are stronger than the original critiques by black feminists active in the US women's movement decades ago. I was worried that the book would be boring or samey, but the accounts in her “encyclopaedia” of enemy feminisms the narrative is well researched, with lots of characters and details far less well known.

We meet “white queen” May French Sheldon, a rich American feminist who in 1891 traveled “alone and une-



scorted” – in fact carried by 150 hired African workers (but no white people) – through Kenya and Tanzania. On returning home she claimed Africans were “entreating her to remain and rule over them” and became a propagandist for Belgian imperialism, denying their crimes in the Congo. I had never heard of Alma Bridwell White, the USA's first bishop and founder of feminist journal *Woman's Chains* and member of the National Women's party, but she was also a fanatical supporter of the Klu Klux Klan.

Thoughtful

A less thoughtful author might have produced an encyclopedia of enemy feminism that was pure virtue signalling or finger-pointing. But Lewis does not seek to disown the enemy feminisms. She believes facing the anti-liberatory feminisms gives us the tools to build a better feminist movement and politics.

It is certainly true many historic and

current “feminisms” are our enemies. The book does not try to articulate an argument for why feminism is littered with enemies within.

It might not be necessary in an encyclopaedia, but the sense lingers in the text that Lewis has a theory that she hasn't quite outlined. There are hints. In writing about the suffragettes who went on to become fascists, Lewis argues that the violence they themselves carried out and fanaticism may have paved the way.

It is not clear if Lewis thinks that there is something more intrinsic to feminism that is at the root of its checkered history, or if you could also have an “encyclopaedia of enemy anti racism”. Certainly the history of feminism is littered with racism.

Before the separation of progressive eugenics (access to contraception and abortion) from the eugenics racial improvement, there was considerable support among feminists (as well as leftists) for eugenics in general. Focus on violence against women, in a world where that is wrongly framed as largely a question of “stranger danger”, means “protection of women” and has been cover for attacks on other groups facing oppression. I would have liked to read more of Lewis's thoughts on that.

It feels a little glib to say the answer is that you can't just be a feminist, that we need politics and movements which centre class, but it's true. Our oppressions, perpetuated and particularised by capitalism, are interconnected. There are many commonalities between the ways in which people in different groups are oppressed, although there are differences. There is the basis for common struggle on many specific issues, as well as in the struggle to replace class society with a socialist alternative.

Any politics that fights only one specific form of oppression is vulnerable to building a politics that ignores the liberation of other groups. The universal nature of our project is because the working class have the interests and abilities to win, but that universalism also points to (but does not guarantee) a politics of universal liberation.

Lewis assumes a feminist audience pretty well versed in feminist debate. The remit of the encyclopaedia of bad feminisms limits the book somewhat in that Lewis rarely presents a positive view of good feminism. Her feminism is only shown through the negation of enemies. She rightly criticises Ayaan Hirsi Ali for her right wing politics on immigration and her place in the war on woke. But there is no account of other women's rights activists opposing honour killing and female genital mutilation who aren't allied with the right. The inclusion of the kind of feminism Lewis wants to see would improve the book.

It's a lively interesting read but “knowing how to draw lines that say, this feminist is our enemy,” isn't an adequate answer to the authoritarian backlash. □

• Letter to *Women's Fightback* about the article on Gisèle Pelicot in #33: bit.ly/ltr-wf



Oppose the Palestine Action proscription!

By Ryan Gates

The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, has announced the government's intention to proscribe Palestine Action, placing it on the list of banned terrorist groups and making it illegal to be a member.

This is in response to supporters of Palestine Action breaking into the air base RAF Brize Norton near Oxford and spraying red paint into the engines of two military aircraft. The extent of the British military's support for Israel's war of destruction on Gaza is unclear, but according to Declassified UK the RAF conducted

over 500 surveillance flights over Gaza between December 2023 and March 2025 (the RAF has also been used to airdrop aid into Gaza). When open war between Israel and Iran began last week, additional fighter jets and refuelling aircraft (it was two refuelling aircraft which were targeted at RAF Brize Norton) were transferred to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus.

Keir Starmer called the paint-throwing “disgraceful”, and counter-terrorism police have been investigating the incident. This proposed ban comes at a time when there are almost daily massacres of civilians in Gaza trying to ac-

cess the limited aid that has been allowed in, and when Israel has started a destructive and bloody war with Iran.

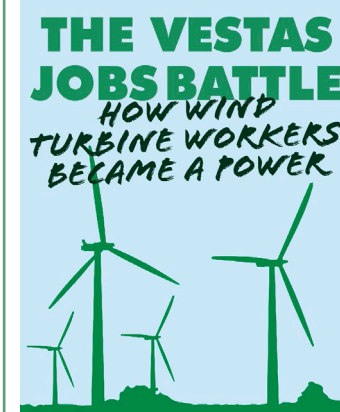
Symbolic

The strategy that Palestine Action have pursued is of limited symbolic value at best, and we reject many of the assumptions that underlie their work: for instance, they explicitly reject the idea of talking to workers in arms factories such as Elbit, arguing that “if they haven't left their jobs this long into the genocide then frankly there isn't much hope of winning them over”. Beyond that, we are strongly critical of much

of their broader politics on Israel and Palestine.

However, these disagreements should do nothing to temper our solidarity with Palestine Action activists who have already faced state repression and harassment. This proposed ban comes in a context of growing clampdowns on protest, such as police raids on Youth Demand and Just Stop Oil meetings, and wildly disproportionate sentences for activists carrying out civil disobedience.

Solidarity with Palestine Action against state repression! Scrap the proposed ban! □



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

Travelling without trashing the world



Environment

By Neil Roberts

Battles against airport expansion are likely to be on the agenda for the environmental movement again.

Flying benefits from huge tax breaks. The environmental impact of air travel is significant and growing faster than any other major contributor to anthropogenic ecological damage.

Intense use of air travel by the super rich is a big part. Restrictions on high-end consumption, both for private leisure and to facilitate the “work” of the ruling class, should represent comparatively low-hanging fruit in terms of winning the argument.

More broadly, most flights are short haul, and aircraft consume most energy taking off and landing. Those short-haul flights are massively concentrated in North America, Western Europe, and

Eastern Asia; areas which have existing viable rail infrastructure or have done so historically and remain geographically well suited to it.

But as with rail as an alternative to domestic road travel, the obstacle for many people in Britain with European rail travel is cost. London-Paris by rail is only 2 hours 20 minutes, city centre to city centre, yet often costs £150 per passenger one way. Schemes to unlock the potential of overnight passenger train across the continent have been proposed but as yet these have not become significant. An integrated, publicly owned and at least heavily subsidised European network would clear away many of these fetters on the development of this kind of longer distance travel and deliver the upgrades and expansion of the infrastructure as required.

If a major transition away from aviation is to be achieved, the applicability of the skills of those presently employed needn't be a major obstacle. The skills and equipment used to build and maintain aircraft can for the most

part be used for almost any other complex machine.

Infrastructure is a different story. Airports are some of the largest construction projects in the world. They represent commitment of decades to the current model and could not be easily re-purposed for other forms of transportation. As yet no-one proposes scrapping existing airports, but the labour and resources now proposed for a new wave of airport expansion would be far better applied to more efficient technologies, principally rail.

Rapidly

Kerosene is presently the energy source for aircraft, due to its low weight and ability to release energy rapidly to power jets. Methods to synthesise alternative fuel to refining kerosene from crude oil have been proposed.

The leaders of Unite, who organise workers in both the airport and refining sector, have been among those to acclaim Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), refined from crops. However, serious questions remain about the scalability

of the technology due to the farmland required and therefore competition with the imperatives to produce food and protect biodiversity.

E-fuels, where massive amounts of [ideally renewable] electricity are used to mimic photosynthesis and separate the oxygen and carbon in atmospheric carbon dioxide, have also been proposed. This technology is not yet proven at scale and currently being chiefly advocated as various proprietary schemes.

In a world threatening to reverse much of globalisation, and without forgetting all social and ecological qualifications, it is worth remembering the progressive impacts widening of access to international flights has had. Insofar as it can be viably achieved within the constraints of our planet's capacity, we are in favour of maximising access to travel. The labour movement needs to develop an independent perspective based on enabling travel with minimum eco-damage. □

• Sources: bit.ly/tr-w-tr

Socialist Party equivocates on Israel-Iran



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

On paper, the Socialist Party has a halfway reasonable position on conflicts in the Middle East. They don't fantasise about the destruction of Israel but see a “socialist Israel” within a socialist federation of the Middle East.

There are problems, though. While they call for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, they describe the only possible Palestinian state as a socialist one alongside a socialist Israel. This makes the demand for a Palestinian state more abstract declamation than real politics which might unite Arab and Jewish workers, and opens doors for them to welcome almost any violence against Israel on the grounds that it is against the actual capitalist Israel, not the socialist Israel of the future.

An article in *The Socialist* #1326 (19/6/25) by Shahar Benhorin of the Socialist Struggle Movement, the Socialist Party's affiliates in Isra-

el-Palestine, declares “yes to a cross-border struggle for equality” and the article tells us of Israel and Iran, “Both are reactionary regimes...”. But there the good news ends.

We are told that Israel is the “aggressor” and the underlying driver is that it is “a ‘forward outpost’ for western imperialist interests in the region.” Iran is presented as the wronged party. The tone on Iran's missile attacks on Israel is apologetic. These were “limited missile barrages launched... ostensibly focused on military targets... it may now attempt to ‘equalise’ costs by directing fire at the civilian population.” Israel's attacks on Iran are described as “a show of force, initiated by the region's sole nuclear power” while Iran views its “military nuclear programme as a strategic defence mechanism against military aggression.”

Entitled

In short, the article edges toward – but never quite reaches – the view that Iran is entitled to gain nuclear weapons to use against Israel, rather than calling on the working classes of both countries to demand nuclear disarmament.

Presenting Iran's theocracy



as only defending itself against imperialism does not square with its record. Since the 1979 revolution, the regime has made destruction of Israel a dogma, helped create and fund Hezbollah, and armed Hamas. It supported Assad's civil war against the people of Syria from 2011 (alongside Russia – does this make Iran an “outpost” of Russian imperial designs in the region?). And it oppresses large national minorities within its borders, like the Kurds.

Yet the article contains nothing on Iran's support for reaction. Such condemnation is reserved for Israel.

Another article in *The Socialist* #1327 (27/6/25) by Robert Bechert of their German sec-

tion is worse.

Bechert builds up a one-sided condemnation of Israel with no criticism of Iran. He writes, “Iran has been presented to Israelis as the major threat behind Hamas, Hezbollah, and Assad in Syria etc.” Presented? Netanyahu has certainly used the threat of Iran to consolidate his authoritarian populism – just as Iran uses “anti-Zionism” to legitimise its rule. But Iran actually has supported Hamas, Hezbollah, Assad.

On building cross-bor-

der working-class solidarity Bechert is largely silent, though some balance is restored by a quote from the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Workers Syndicate (bit.ly/teh-bus).

It appears the Socialist Party's vision of a socialist federation has become a distant maximum programme. For the short term, i.e. for now and foreseeably, they've fallen into the “campist” trap of seeing Israel solely as a Western outpost. That cuts against working-class unity in the region. □



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A reply to Michael Chessum

By Simon Nelson

Several activists have looked to the Electoral resurgence of the Greens, and Lib-Dem-turned-left-winger Zack Polanski's bid to become Greens leader (voting 1-30 August).

Michael Chessum, who has often worked with us, from the student National Coalition Against Fees and Cuts (2010) through to Momentum Internationalists (2020), has written "Why I'm Joining the Green Party" for Left Foot Forward (bit.ly/ch-gr).

Chessum writes "The [Green] party's painstaking electoral wins are an important starting point. Its progressive base in rural communities, often misunderstood, is also important. But the prize [will be] a landslide, backed in large part by young urban voters. Polanski clearly gets this. He is bold in his policy agenda, and sharp in naming the enemy as the super-rich. It is fashionable to frame this as populism; really, it is plain old class politics".

I would argue that the Greens' rise to power in places like East Hertfordshire is much more about opposition to housing developments than any left-wing economic policy, let alone working-class politics.

I do not propose plugging away in a diminished Labour membership as a better path to socialist consciousness and working-class power. I propose Workers' Liberty and our activity – in workplaces, in unions, on the streets (and also in Labour).

To build a mass movement, a political party capable of overthrowing capitalism, is a question primarily of politics, and it starts with organising those with working-class socialist politics into an effective force, with publications, political meetings, street activity, interventions in the unions and in industrial disputes, demonstrations, etc., none of which the Greens even attempt. To be sure, the Greens have a better chance of being part of a winning electoral coalition in 2029 (with the Lib-Dems, presumably) than a loose network of "local

independents" does. Maybe their opinion-poll gains (currently much smaller than Reform's, and to a level less than their 2019 Euro-Parliament score) will increase. But none of that is a great prize if we aspire to greater political wins than the Greens becoming part of a UK government coalition modelled on the Scottish Greens' alliance with the SNP 2021-4.

Chessum writes: "In the coming years, there will be mass movements against austerity and the wider policy of the Labour government. The Greens' strong internal democracy will be a boon, allowing movements to shape and own the Greens from the bottom up. Social and industrial struggle must be viewed as a primary method for doing politics. Without a mobilised local community, left-wing councillors will be fighting a losing battle. Without a mass movement engaged in something other than electioneering, electoral projects lack a legacy."

Strikes

But strikes and disputes have never been what the Greens do, even in places where the Greens have long been much more left-wing than here, or have even won support from some left-wing unions (as in the Queensland and NSW components of the world's oldest Green Party, the Australian).

And there is [no method](#) by which branches of the Green Party can submit motions to their national conference, unlike Labour.

A strategy that seeks to put the Greens in the leadership of a struggle that they sit outside of has little grip. What are the prospects of turning the Greens into a party of strikes and defiance against the government, when it wasn't that in 2022-3, or in the anti-cuts battles of 2010-2?

Discontent with capitalism is widespread today, but we have not yet been able to build mass desire for socialism. The social-democratic offerings of Corbynism were popular, but fatally limited, and by 2019 few believed that



a Corbyn would in fact deliver them. A Green Party under Polanski with a Corbyn-rerun platform will carry less conviction, not more.

Building a workers' movement equipped with the ideas and the culture adequate to win requires starting elsewhere than with Polanski. The Marxist left can measure our success by the extent to which socialist consciousness takes root in workplaces and unions and becomes a transformative force in society.

Our strategic orientation is toward the organised working class, especially within mass organisations such as the trade unions and the Labour Party, and towards direct socialist activity on streets and campuses.

Chessum has experience at relatively high levels of the extra-parliamentary wing of the Corbynism project. His experience of Momentum has surely taught him that Greens Organise cannot just seek to build good relationships with labour movement figures and their staff as a short-cut way to transformation of the labour movement.

Exploration of the Green party by the organised socialist left may be useful some day. But the structural relationship between Labour and the trade unions, degraded and weak though it is, remains. The battle within the labour movement remains central.

Will the Greens thrive electorally and be able to form a coalition government with the Lib Dems in 2029? I doubt it. However, that prize is in any case not such a prize. Everywhere the Greens have got into power, they have accommodated. The German Greens were once left-wing, with many of their activists coming from the Maoist movements of the early 1970s as they dispersed. They had enough attractive power to draw in revolutionary leaders from 1968 like Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Now they have peaceful coalitions with the German Tories (CDU) in a number of states. The Austrian Greens have done well enough electorally to hold the country's presidency, but used those gains to get into coalition governments with the Austrian Tories (ÖVP). Chessum notes the French Greens are on the moderate wing of the not very left-wing NFP coalition in France. The Green Party of England and Wales remains in a bloc with all these parties in the European Parliament.

We are for left unity in action, and that includes left-wing members of the Greens. We are surely not buried in the Labour Party. But we are sure that socialist revival will start with working-class socialists organising as socialists, forthright about our ideas, and orienting to the labour movement and to activity on streets and campuses. □

Hong Kong left forced into disbanding

By Ben Tausz

Hong Kong's most prominent working-class political party, the League of Social Democrats, has dissolved.

LSD organisers, including its chair, Marxist and feminist veteran Chan Po-ying, and leading LGBT+ rights activist Jimmy Sham, announced the disbandment to a press conference on Sunday 29 June.

Clutching red roses, they cited "draconian suppression of dissent", "immense political pressure" and the safety of members. Sham was only recently released after a four-years prison sentence from the landmark "47 democrats" case. Fellow defendant and LSD co-founder Leung Kwok-hung remains behind bars.

The LSD consistently linked the battle for political democ-

racy to struggles against social and economic injustice. It leaned more toward confrontation, protest and civil disobedience than other major democratic parties.

It was the largest remaining opposition party after the Civic and Democratic Parties folded under the intense repression of Beijing's 2020 National Security Law. Barred from running in "patriots-only"

elections, the LSD continued to hold street stalls and small demonstrations. These were met with aggressive police surveillance, intimidation and arrests. HSBC closed the LSD's bank accounts in 2023, preventing them from collecting donations and forcing them to shutter their office.

The party's statement warned: "The terrain ahead is even more treacherous. LSD

now closes its chapter in Hong Kong's history of dissent. Yet, as members of this society, our spirit remains. Even as we step aside, we stand with those still struggling in the shadows." Protests, strikes and other struggles continue to boil up across China and Hong Kong. Workers' organisations around the world must do everything possible to assist them. □

Marx on breaking the chains



Book review

By Martin Thomas

Bruno Leipold, in his book *Citizen Marx*, examines Marx's early political writings and shows that "republican freedom suffused Marx's critique of the social domination of capitalism". Marx defined his "republican communism" in opposition to "the anti-political socialism and anti-communist republicanism" which figured large when Marx entered left-wing politics.

In *The German Ideology* (drafted 1846, but abandoned and not published until 1932), Marx scorned the anti-political proto-anarchist Max Stirner because he "imagines that citizenship is a matter of indifference to the proletarians... The workers attach so much importance to citizenship, i.e., to active citizenship, that where they have it, for instance in America, they make good use of it, and where they do not have it, they strive to obtain it. Compare the proceedings of the North American workers at innumerable meetings, the whole history of English Chartism, and of French communism and reformism".

("Reformism" here means the people around Alexandre Ledru-Rollin's newspaper *La Réforme*, otherwise described as "social democrats". Marx, as Leipold shows, would sharpen his criticisms of them after 1848).

"Democrat" and "republican" then, in Europe anyway, had more revolutionary connotations than "socialist". Everyone, left and right, thought that votes for all and supremacy for elected assemblies could be won only by mass rebellion or even armed uprising.

"Socialism" or even "communism", on the other hand, might be won by persuading well-meaning upper-class people of its advantages. Or by building bit-by-bit from below: producer and consumer co-operatives, fair-exchange shops. Or by force of example from pioneer communist "colonies", in England or more often in the USA or Paraguay.

William James Linton

Leipold tells us about William James Linton, the foremost in England (after 1866, in the USA) in Marx's day of radical republicans, and Karl Heinzen, a German radical republican mostly active in the USA. They were political (unlike most socialists and communists) but wanted an equal society based on small property, and opposed common ownership.

Heinzen argued that "injustice in property relations is only maintained by power" (i.e. bureaucratic or monarchic power). Marx retorted (1847): "Prop-

erty, at all events, is also a kind of power. Economists call capital, for instance, 'power over the labour of others.' Where Heinzen's maxim, "Power also controls property", was true, that meant "property does not control the political power but rather it is harassed by it, for example by arbitrary taxes, by confiscations, by privileges, by the disruptive interference of the bureaucracy in industry and trade and the like" under old monarchic-bureaucratic regimes. Yes to changing that!

But then, as "bourgeois property relations [come to be] 'maintained' by the state power which the bourgeoisie has organised for the protection of its property relations [the] proletariat must... overthrow the political power where it is already in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It must itself become a power, in the first place a revolutionary power".

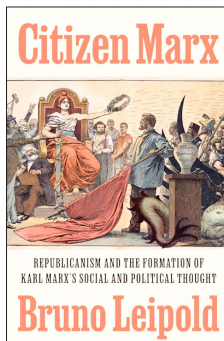
Britain

In an early article on politics in Britain (1852), Marx wrote: "The six points of the [People's] Charter... contain nothing but the demand of Universal Suffrage, and of the conditions without which Universal Suffrage would be illusory for the working class; such as the ballot, payment of members, annual general elections, etc. But Universal Suffrage with its adjuncts is the equivalent for political power for the working class of England, where the proletariat forms the large majority of the population, where, in a long, though underground civil war, it has gained a clear consciousness of its position as a class, and where even the rural districts know no longer any peasants, but only landlords, industrial capitalists (farmers) and hired labourers. The carrying of Universal Suffrage in England would, therefore, be a far more socialistic measure than anything which has been honored with that name on the Continent. Its inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class".

In fact, the Chartists were already in sharp decline. We had more to learn on how capital can atomise the working class, drive it down into sectional and individual concerns, set sections in competition with each other, foster bureaucratisation of workers' movements, and empty out formal democracy.

Leipold shows that in his study of the 1848 revolutions, Marx refined his commitment to combining democratic with economic battle. He now distinguishing between the "bourgeois republic", the "democratic republic", and the "social republic".

In *Capital*, Marx developed a critique of capitalist exploitation as not just economic inequality, but class domination and unfreedom. "Just as little



as better clothing, food, and treatment... do away with the exploitation of the slave, so little do they set aside that of the wage worker. A rise in the price of labour... only means, in fact, that the length and weight of the golden chain the wage workers have already forged for themselves, allow of a relaxation of the tension of it." The social republic was about breaking the chain.

In his analysis of the Paris Commune, he drew out three political features setting that social republic apart from an ordinary democratic republic. Official tasks all done at workers' wages; right of recall over representatives; and an executive directly controlled by the elected assembly rather than standing above it.

Marx disliked US-constitution-style "separation of powers" as a device to make "government... complicated and mysterious" and shield it from democracy. He did not counterpose high-handed universal dictation from a centre. Rather, democracy must "let civil society and public opinion create organs of their own, independent of the governmental power" and allow local autonomy. When the German socialists' Gotha programme of 1875 called for "elementary education by the state", Marx objected that public funding, etc. were all very well, but "government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school".

Paris Commune

Leipold ends his exposition with his discussion of the Paris Commune (1871), but the "anti-political" socialism of the 1840s revived a bit in the "anarchist" wing of the First International (1865-72). The main leader of that wing (by the mid-1870s) of that wing was Paul Brousse. He soon, and revealingly, pivoted his radical-sounding localism ("do it by autonomous initiatives from below") into minimalist "possibilism", a focus on achieving what was "possible" in municipal councils.

Those who came to be called Marxists argued, like Rosa Luxemburg in 1899, that the "daily struggle [which] offer[ed] the only means of engaging in the proletarian class war and working in the direction of the final goal" was "for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions", with the widening of democracy no less vital than economic struggle, and a class-wide rather than localist orientation.

Over time, workers' movements bureaucratised, and many Marxists of that era slid into cautious and one-sided orientation to electioneering and re-

form-seeking within existing (very limited) parliamentary, quasi-parliamentary, or municipal democracy.

In rebellion against that slide, the Russian Bolsheviks, German revolutionary socialists, and others, after 1917, counterposed soviets (workers' councils) as Paris-Commune-type democracy.

Within a few years, the stresses of civil war in Russia, the isolation of the workers' revolution there, and the developing Stalinist counter-revolution, had added that counterposition of radical democracy against formal and trammelled democracy. Especially after "Bolshevisation", from 1924, the counterposition increasingly came to be of arbitrary supposedly-revolutionary power against all democracy.

Trotsky would revive the pre-1917 advocacy of battle for democracy in writings like *Our Present Tasks* (Nov 1933 bit.ly/ldt-de) and the 1934 *Program of Action for France*. That argument, however, got largely lost for post-1940 "Orthodox Trotskyists" as they said that Stalinist revolution in China, for example, was (deformed) "permanent revolution", i.e. identified "democratic revolution" with the (notional) element of "democracy" in the Mao's social transformation.

Meanwhile, the Stalinists, from the Popular Front time of the late 1930s, started talking about democracy again, but by reducing its meaning to "anti-fascist", "allied to the USSR" or "conducive to Stalinist sway". They called the Republican regime during the Spanish Civil War "democratic", while the Stalinist murdered "Trotskyites" (POUM) and anarchists there. They named as "people's democracies" the East European states where the Russian army had installed Stalinist bureaucracies as rulers, "salami-slicing" away all political breathing-space.

For a whole era the mass French Communist Party defined its aim as "advanced democracy". It meant no sizeable reform of electoral democracy, but instead an alliance with the "middle class" to secure nationalisation of the bigger corporations and a big part for CPers in state administration. To this day, North Korea is officially the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea".

Marxists in Europe and the USA have tended to take the "bourgeois republic" (or constitutional monarchy) democracy in those countries more or less for granted, and to make the "political" side of their agitation one about expounding its limitations, while the positive push for improvements is on the "economic" side.

The whittling-down of civil liberties and trade-union rights in recent decades, and now the new far-right surge, should spur us to recover the radical-democratic, social-republic, workers-republic strand in Marxism. □



We still need to think about Stalinism



Book review

By Oscar Davis

It has probably always been difficult for younger socialists to understand how events just a few decades beforehand have shaped the outlook of the middle-aged comrades that lived through them.

But there's no getting away from this task for those coming to the labour movement for the first time and discovering the kind of history that doesn't feature on school curriculums.

I well recall being in that position in the 1980s. I was particularly fascinated by the brutal suppression of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the subsequent exodus from the Communist Party and the formation of the New Left, for instance. But that was a bit before I was born. It all felt a bit unutterably ancient.

Similarly, much of the then-leadership of the left had been radicalised by the pivotal moment that was May 1968. But I had been just a small boy. My personal memories of that year are dominated by Lego, Action Man and the outlandishly groovy garb of an older cousin who had embraced hippiedom, hashish and the Grateful Dead.

So why should a new generation bother to read a book on *The Fall of European Stalinism*? Isn't it enough simply to clock that the regimes discussed were brutal dictatorships that were brought down either by popular uprisings or the capitulation of entire ruling elites?

Well, no. Sorting out what to think about Stalinism is essential for anyone seeking clarity on a clash of visions of

socialism that resounds even in this century.

It's impossible to overstate how central this question was in an era when idiots would sometimes still yell "get back to Russia" at you while you were selling leftwing papers.

The taxonomy of how to classify these states was, alongside whether or not to join the Labour Party, a major point of differentiation between socialist groups.

If you believed Actually Existing Socialism – as it was known – was about as good as it got, you ended up in the Young Communist League, as a couple of my more politically aware teenage pals did once our horizons expanded beyond the purely hedonistic.

Those drawn to Trotskyism had to make up their minds whether Russia was a degenerated workers' state – as Trotsky himself maintained until his death – and its satellites therefore deformed workers' states, or all state capitalist, or perhaps not really none of the above.

Label

At gut level, I didn't feel either label was entirely accurate. I was vaguely aware of Max Shachtman and his concept of bureaucratic collectivism, but only through polemics against it, most notably in a collection of Trotsky's essays called *In Defence of Marxism*. Even so, it somehow sounded about right.

But no group in the UK espoused the theory, and meanwhile, the leadership of the Trotskyist group I first joined vaccinated me thoroughly against such centrist nonsense. Start down that road and you will inevitably end up as a rightwing reformist cheerleader for US imperialism, they warned.

So I overcame my doubts and always duly "argued the line of the organisation", seen as an inestimable democratic centralist virtue among leftists of the period.

Three decades after European Stalinism went pear shaped, bureaucratic collectivism increasingly looks like the best analytical framework to apply to the phenomenon.

Scholastic types will still nit pick, I guess. Models only ever approximately describe reality, of course. But neither the position that "proletarian property relations" predominated in these countries, or alternatively that they were capitalist in the sense specified by Marx, have much intuitive appeal.

Socialist Organiser – the predecessors of today's Alliance for Workers' Liberty – deserve credit for being the first to pick up the Shachtmanite ball and run with it.

This book reprints what SO wrote as it was all kicking off, and almost all of it solidly stands up. These are the ideas of socialism from below in which revolutionary socialists are supposed to

believe, taken to their rational conclusions.

But then – and not yet now, at this considerable distance – this hasn't completely clicked with much of the far left, who expended much energy in failed efforts to square the circle.

I remember Fourth International leader Ernest Mandel's last major rally in London before his death, at which he ended his speech with a rousing peroration to the effect that the workers of Russia had yet to say their final word. The trouble is, a new class of oligarchs had already said theirs.

Meanwhile, Workers' Power insisted until relatively recently that Russia had magically remained a "moribund workers' state", whatever that means.

These are the very articles penned by Sean Matgamna and Martin Thomas as things fell apart, and some of them have inevitably proved unduly optimistic.

"Right now there is a mass stampede away from discredited 'socialism,'" we are told at one point. "But the ground is being cleared for real socialism and unfalsified Marxism".

That might be correct, important in the abstract. But anyone watching the rise of populist politicians and parties with nostalgic fascist factions in Hungary, Poland, Romania and the former East Germany right now will know that revolutionary socialism is just as marginal in those places as it remains in western Europe.

Was the collapse of European Stalinism "the best thing that has happened for socialists in fully half a century"? Well, it was overall a good thing, a healthy and historically necessary development.

But there have been negative consequences too. Many Moscow-backed national liberation movements moved rapidly towards neoliberalism as the only game in town.

Shadow

And in ideological terms, Stalinism still casts a long shadow. It represents almost as much of a gift to bourgeois propagandists as it did when still in place, reinforcing the hegemony of anti-socialist ideas and free market reaction at a mass level.

As Matgamna has nicely chronicled elsewhere, it even exerts a continuing zombie presence across most of the British left. Many activists cling to a sort of diet Stalinism, ludicrously insisting that Russia's invasion of Ukraine by definition cannot be imperialist and that China is demonstrating some kind of progressive future for the poorer parts of the world.

If we do get a new Corbyn party in the next few months, this is likely to be its default world view, taking us back to square one. Meanwhile, the Young Communist League has returned to

flirting with the cult of personality of the man himself, even if their responsible adults have administered them a mild bollocking for saying the quiet part out loud.

But taken as a whole, the book cuts through the confusion many of us stumbled around in with some precision. I remember how disoriented I was in thinking about Russia in the 1980s and 1990s.

Could Yeltsin have brought about the political revolution that Trotskyists favoured in the USSR, introducing basic democratic freedoms into a post-capitalist system? A case for critical support, surely?

That position was seriously advanced by many leftwing luminaries, led by Tariq Ali in a hastily-penned and best-forgotten work called *Revolution From Above*.

Or should the Yanaev coup have been supported as a Hail Mary pass last ditch attempt to uphold nationalised property, as a minority of my organisation asserted? My heart said no; orthodox Trot logic seemed to half say yes.

Or were the Soggies – as sectarians like me referred to Socialist Organiser, only half in jest – right to brand it a "neo-Stalinist quasi-fascist backlash"? With 20/20 hindsight, that assessment seems spot on.

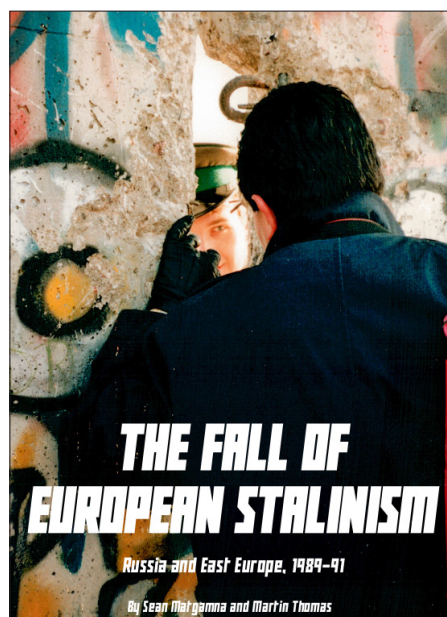
Few people in politics will ever admit they have ever been seriously wrong about anything, and that their former political opponents broadly got things right. But I am now old enough to be magnanimous. How could I have been so bloody daft? □

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USA: the unions can stop



Debate

By Claireen Ryan

Donald Trump, the fascist president of the US, is trying to use the position of central executive of the US government to make the US an authoritarian state.

He is conducting himself as an authoritarian president, and daring the other branches of government whose power he is usurping to do anything to stop him. He launched a war on Iran which legally was the prerogative of Congress.

The possibility of Congress doing anything depends on members of the Republican party defying the Trumpites.

Trump, who was found guilty in a civil court of raping E Jean Carroll, and has many felony convictions, was nevertheless elected. He has the executive power. He has appointed to the key government positions, not only people who have rightly been called "unqualified" but people who are wildly unsuitable or whose only qualification is a willingness to do whatever Trump wants.

For a terrible example, he has put crank anti-vaccine campaigner Robert F Kennedy Jr in charge of health. (Kennedy is also a hypocrite. Campaigning about vaccines, he has had his own children vaccinated).

Republicans, people at Trump's political beck and call, have a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, which are supposed in the US constitution to be, along with the Supreme Court, autonomous centres of power. When it has suited him, Trump has ignored Congress, grabbing its powers for the office of president.

Trump has started a trade war with the entire world, and there again he acts by usurping Congress's powers. But will Congress do anything?

The third branch of government, co-equal with the presidency and the Congress, the Supreme Court of nine members, has no fewer than three appointed by Trump, two by Republican president George W Bush, and one by George H W Bush.

The Supreme Court has just given cover to Trump's defiance of the constitutional stipulation that people born in the US have (as in many other countries) a right to citizenship. It has said that federal court judges' injunctions against Trump's measures have validity only for the specific individuals going to court.

The Supreme Court voted to give the president additional immunity as president which no other president except then ex-president Trump had ever asked for. The Supreme Court repealed Roe v Wade, which for fifty years had made abortion legal in the US. As a consequence, abortion is now near-illegal in many of the 50 US states.

Trump's authority in the Republican party comes not only because he can command votes and threaten politicians in the primary elections, though he can. Much of it also is based on Trump's followers inducing physical fear in the candidates and the candidates' families. On 14 June a Minnesota Democrat state rep and her husband were killed, and a state senator and his wife shot, by a right-wing assassin who had a list of other politicians to attack. On 12 June a California Democrat senator was wrestled to the floor by thugs and handcuffed after he heckled Homeland Security Sec Kristi Noem. On 13 April the Democrat governor of Pennsylvania had his house firebombed.

Trump has done two things of long effect to the USA. He has massively increased the power of the presidency by usurping the rights of Congress. That is not stable – Trump's budget bill has difficulties as we go to press – but so far the Republican majority in congress has let him do it. And he has taken a wrecking ball to the institutions of the US state which might impede him. Using the unelected Elon Musk as his cutting edge, Trump has gone berserk through US government agencies, sacking people indiscriminately from such agencies as that which ensures as much safety as possible in US aviation. Bill Gates says of Musk-Trump's scrapping of USAid that it shows the richest man in history starving the poorest children in the world.

Wildly indiscriminate sackings have led to Trump's administration having to rehire many of the workers.

Trump has seized control of the National Guard in California despite the objections of the state's governor, and put Marines on Los Angeles streets – and the courts have backed him, that is, empowered him to do the same all over the USA if he wants to do that, to brandish and establish his growing power.

It is in his treatment of Latino immigrants and the children of immigrants, many of them US citizens, that the sheer viciousness of Trump and his minions and enablers has shown itself. Groups of armed and masked men from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) have roamed round the US, and in the name of the US government stopped and kidnapped large numbers of people, locking them up, ignoring the protests that has provoked.

Such bodies of armed masked men are the shock troops of American fascism on the march and now trying to entrench itself.

Trump wants all the power, and has gathered a lot of power in the Presidency, at the expense of Congress and US legality. It is difficult to think of a creature more unfit to have any power than Trump is. 79 years old and showing some of the signs of dementia, he is a man of startling and spectacular ignorance and probably pathological self-centredness.

He thinks there were airplanes in the 18th century American war of independence against Britain. He lies all the time. Journalists tallied over 30,000 lies in his four years as president. Literally nothing he says, ever, can be taken as true without investigation.

Trump is conducting himself like a man who does not plan to hold a Presidential election in 2028. He is openly and spectacularly corrupt.

In his first four years as president, hundreds of thousands of Americans died needlessly because of Trump being in charge at the height of Covid. Yet he was re-elected in 2024, though a formidable coalition of forces around former vice-president Kamala Harris warned against him, and



though he himself said openly that he would be "a dictator".

Why? How? Trump had the backing of a large part of the American ruling class, including a large part of the media. They were justly accused of "sane-washing" him for the electors. They translated his ramblings, his incoherence, and his frequent lurching into straight-out nonsense. They cut and edited film of his speeches in the same cause. They hid from the electorate what Trump was and as president now is.

Fox News, which is not news but often lying right-wing propaganda, backed and boosted Trump. A fatal combination of Trump's TV celebrity and the backing of the media-owning ruling class got Trump elected.

Abstract

Harris campaigned for an abstract democracy that many of the electorate did not think was serving them. They should have rallied against Trump, but they did not. One of the astonishing things in the election was that Trump ran as an outspoken rebel against "the system". A lot of people deferred to Trump as a rich man who knew the system; they thought he would be a knowing man who would act for them in power. It was all nonsense, spin, spurious media celebrity.

In power, Trump wants to cut the health care of tens of millions of Americans, and reduce the taxes of the rich. In power, Trump has launched an attack on existing American elements of a welfare state and even on state activities to ensure that capitalist society runs stably, like air safety, for example.

This has been a wilfully blind, ignorant lashing-out at much of American civilised life. Trump, on all the evidence, is a malevolent, as well as ignorant and self-obsessed, old man. He has spent his life as a very rich man who has had money and power for every whim.

Perhaps it required such a creature to launch the assault on the US's way of doing things and the formal rights of its citizens. For the American system is sick, and was sick before Trump.

Trump didn't win the 2016 presidential election. Hillary Clinton did. The then director of the FBI, James Comey, a Republican, spoke out against Clinton on the eve of the election, and probably won the contest for Trump. Trump later fired Comey for being too independent.

The Electoral College made Trump, the man who lost the popular vote, president. In 2000 George W Bush lost the popular vote, and the Supreme Court stopped the recounts that might have shown him to lose the Electoral College too. Bush won in 2004 because he was the incumbent president. Congress is finely balanced every time.

Between them, George W Bush and Trump got to appoint a majority of the Supreme Court, as vacancies occurred. Appointed for life, the Supreme Court judges form an element of monarchism within the American system.

The rich in the USA, led by the super-rich, are impatient with electoral vagaries. One part of the 2024 presidential election showed how things stand. By sane-washing him and boosting him, the media

Trump

moguls helped a visibly half-crazy old man get elected.

The expenditure of money in the election campaign may have been decisive. Where did Elon Musk come from? This white South African, fully armed with Trump's power, was allowed, before he fell out with Trump, to rampage through US life brandishing his symbolic chainsaw because he gave the Trump election campaign \$260 million. Musk bought his "influence". What he did to many US state agencies and millions of Americans, he bought the opportunity to do.

Political power nominally resides in the people, but in fact it resides in the rich, whose money gives them many, many votes. The USA has long been a plutocracy, not a democracy.

American workers should examine what has passed as democracy in the USA, but was in reality plutocracy – the rule of the rich. If it was ever "rule of the people, by the people, for the people", that ceased sometime in the 19th century. It gave place to the system where now, from on top, Trump is trying in effect to make the USA his kingdom.

Many Americans know this. Many Americans bow to the fact, accepting it, with some Trump voters deferring to Trump's much-touted but spurious expertise with money.

And so a rich rapist and felon became president again, despite the record of his first term.

But Trump didn't do it all on his own, nor even only with the help of the rich. The Democrats also played their part.

It is preposterous that Trump, who tried on 6 January 2021 to decide the presidency by insurrection and mob violence, could stand again. There are laws banning people who do such things from office. They should have been invoked against Trump. Attempts to do that got little support.

In the four years 2020-4 Trump should have been brought to book on many counts. He used his money to procrastinate and impose delays. And now the attempted coup-maker of 2021 is President again, and rampaging through the American republic, doing his best and his worst to subvert it. The Democrats in

power let this second attempt at a Trump coup happen. Now all the charges against him have gone away, in the avoidable victory for a fascist old man and those who enable him. Now he again has executive power to use against the American people.

A cultural war being fought by Trump, the Republican Party and the Supreme Court against the political achievements of the liberal left over the last more than 50 years. Already a deep divide exists between the coasts, East and West, and many middle US states. Under Trump and the oligarchs and the ruling plutocracy, the cultural backwardness to which US capitalism condemns a large part of the US people – ignorance, credulity, religiosity, belief in the "American Dream" (that every citizen can become seriously rich) chauvinism, popular culture such as the TV show that gave Trump his initial popularity – has come back on liberal America and is choking it.

The sight of Americans demonstrating against this attempted coup – perhaps eleven million in total on 14 June – and the way American people have rallied to defend and support immigrants and their offspring, are warming and inspiring. They can defeat this coup.

The trade unions, who still have great power, have been relatively silent. Trade unionists have taken part in the No Kings protest, but the unions should come out as trade unions plainly against Trump (and Vance, and the second in line to replace Trump as President, Mike Johnson). The anti-Trump trade unions are the counterpart to Trump's possession of executive power and of Congress and the Supreme Court. They should be ready to use their real power, industrial action, to stop the attempt of the oligarchies and Trump to Make the US Authoritarian Again. □

• I should say here that I was and still am one of those in AWL who said that American socialists should work around and in the Democratic Party. That was never a matter of thinking the Democratic Party was good. It was an argument of class – the progressive unions are there – as against sectarian criteria (seeing how much of our programme this or that marginal candidate shared, and going by that).

Story of a long Covid battle

By Asad Khan

Dr Asad Khan is a respiratory consultant who retired on ill-health grounds due to Long Covid. He spoke to Solidarity about his experience and the ongoing battles sufferers face for recognition, justice and recovery.

I contracted Covid-19 during the second peak in November 2020. I was working on an acute Covid ward looking after 28 patients, all coughing and spluttering all day. I have absolutely no doubt that I got infected while working on the ward.

At work we were just given a loose-fitting fluid-resistant surgical mask (FRSM) and told it was sufficient. That was based on the idea promoted by Public Health England (PHE) that Covid-19 only spread by droplet transmission and that tight-fitting respirator masks (RPE) were only necessary when performing so-called "aerosol generating procedures" (AGP).

This was utter nonsense. Humans do not require special procedures to produce aerosols. The droplet-transmission-only line was an attempt to justify the rationing of RPE during the first wave when there was a national shortage.

By the second peak there was plenty of RPE, but PHE was extremely reluctant to admit its mistake and the droplet-only line continued. PHE continued to say that loose fitting masks were sufficient unless doing an AGP.

Race

There was also a race element here. The standard disposable RPE is made for Caucasian face structures. Like many Black and Asian colleagues, I failed every fit test. I finally got my own reusable RPE, but whenever I put it on local management accused me of frightening the nurses and misleading the juniors. After a while, it became one battle too far, and I complied with their request to wear the FRSM.

As I have said, I got infected. I had asked my employer to report my exposure under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) and to be allowed access to the NHS's Injury Allowance scheme. My employer was a large NHS Trust who had had three staff deaths and hundreds of employees with Long Covid, yet had not reported a single exposure under RIDDOR. They were reluctant to set a precedent.

Both the reporting and the injury allowance are considered on the basis of the balance of probability. I argued that I was infected during lockdown when I was only ever at home or at work. I was the first person in my household to get Covid-19, then my wife got it, and then my children.

It was much more likely that I was infected by my 28 Covid-positive patients on our poorly ventilated ward with inadequate PPE, than at home by my three symptom-free family members. But the Trust argued that it was possible one of the other three got it first, remained asymptomatic, passed it to me, then developed symptoms. Or that I had got it in a shop, even though we were shopping online. A formal panel sat for both cases, and both requests were denied.

Covid-19 weakens your immune system and makes you more susceptible to re-infection. From December 2021 to February 2024 I was reinfected six more times. In March 2023 occu-



pational health agreed that I was fit to work and provided a plan for a phased return. My manager insisted that I should take up 80% of my previous work within four weeks. They would not consider reasonable adjustments. That was a breach of the Equalities Act 2010 and I won my grievance on this basis.

Part of the reason here was financial. Covid absence pay was protected until September 2022 then reverted to normal sick pay. In March 2023, it dropped to half-pay and in August 2023 it would stop all together. I was being prevented from starting work unless occupational health could reassure the department that I would be back to 80% duties within 4 weeks. I therefore alleged discrimination on grounds of disability.

My grievance hearing lasted until November 2023. I had good representation from the HCSA union and was able to draw on expert evidence from aerosol specialist David Osborn and others. It was a very tough process, but we won on RIDDOR and Injury Allowance, and I was allowed to attempt a phased return.

I returned to work in November 2023, and off the back of these battles I applied for and was granted the right to take NHS ill-health retirement. Under the scheme you have one year to access it.

Long Covid is very strange as you may find that you can work and undertake some physical or cognitive activity, but if you overdo it then you can get a delayed worsening of your symptoms, often without much warning.

I was 47 years old when I started my return to work and wanted to continue so I spent one year working a maximum of six hours a week. I found anything beyond that impossible.

I took the decision to access the ill health retirement in November 2024 in my last week of eligibility. □

• More next issue

The Supreme Court did think it through



Letter

I write in support of the letters from Ayab Jawad (issue 744) and Jackie McDonough (issue 745) criticising the coverage by *Solidarity* of the Supreme Court judgement in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers*.

My only criticism of the letters is that they are not critical enough.

According to issue 741: "The Supreme Court ruling has been claimed as a victory for transphobic campaigns and the 'movement' around them." But many people and organisations who cannot be dismissed (i.e. slandered) as "transphobes" have welcomed the judgement.

Three lesbian organisations intervened in the hearing. Their case was presented by Karon Monaghan KC, acting on a pro bono basis. Karon Monaghan is a transphobe? I wish you well trying to argue that one.

The same article claims: "There are multiple legitimate criticisms to be made of how the hearing was handled. Most notably, not a single trans person was heard from in the courtroom."

That's right. It was a hearing of the Supreme Court to interpret a piece of legislation, not a radio show phone-in. But that's your idea of "a legitimate criticism"?

Then the article prophesises: "Individual companies, sporting bodies and various other institutions may now feel encouraged or emboldened to discriminate against trans people."

But trans people who suffer discrimination as trans people continue to enjoy legal protection. Try reading the actual judgement. For example, para. 264:

"This conclusion does not remove or diminish the important protections available under the EA (Equality Act) 2010 for trans people with a GRC as we

have explained. To the contrary, this potentially vulnerable group remains protected in the ways we have described."

The article concludes with the bold assertion: "This Supreme Court ruling will not do anything to 'protect women'." But saving lesbianism from erasure, to give just one example, most definitely counts as an example of protecting women's rights.

The discussion about the right of lesbian association was, by all accounts, a pivotal moment in the hearing. The Supreme Court was not impressed by the Scottish Ministers' argument that lesbian organisations could remain biological-women-only associations by never having more than 25 members or by redefining themselves as belief associations.

An article in issue 742 informs readers: "This judgement is part of a long series of attempts to advance bigotry via the judicial system." I am unaware of earlier attempts to "advance bigotry via the judicial system." I look forward to being provided with examples.

As for the supposed "bigotry" of the Supreme Court judgement itself, its opening paragraph states: "The trans community is both historically and currently a vulnerable community." This, along with other similar statements peppered throughout the judgement, is a manifestation of anti-trans bigotry?

And then there is the article in issue 745: "Gender-critical groups like Sex Matters have sought to influence the implementation of the ruling, advising employers to ... tolerate transphobic harassment. ... The Supreme Court obviously did not think it through."

Just where and when has Sex Matters, or anyone else, "advised employers to tolerate transphobic harassment"? Did *Solidarity* check that statement with its lawyers before publishing it? I hope so.

It also takes some chutzpah to claim that the Supreme Court, in its 88 page judgement, did not think things through, given that *Solidarity* itself has yet to show any understanding, or even

knowledge, of the arguments in the judgement.

Consider the section in the judgement on the protection against pregnancy and maternity discrimination which is contained in the EA 2010.

Do those sections of the Act refer to biological women or certificated women? Given that only biological women can get pregnant and give birth, they must refer to biological women.

That is why a woman claiming pregnancy or maternity discrimination does not need to identify a comparator. A comparator, if one were required, would be a biological man who is pregnant or has just given birth. Obviously, a scientific impossibility.

This example illustrates the overall thinking of the Supreme Court (i.e. they did "think it through"): Anti-discrimination legislation, dating back to 1975, does not "work" unless women and sex mean biological women and biological sex.

The Scottish Ministers, by contrast, argued for a "pick and mix" approach to the EA 2010: Sometimes women and sex mean biological women and biological sex (as in the above example), and sometimes they do not.

But just as nature abhors a vacuum, so too law abhors ambiguity. It cannot "work" if the same term means different things in different contexts.

The paper's incoherent coverage of the Supreme Court judgement also raises broader issues.

I recall former member Andrew Hornung speaking at a meeting in London in the late 1970s: "I am a Marxist and therefore a supporter of the Enlightenment. No Enlightenment – no Marxism."

Butlerian queer ideology, by contrast, is batshit crazy. Her epigoni – with their claims that Newton's *Principia Mathematica* is a "rape manual", that $2+2=4$ "stinks of white supremacism", or their women-erasing definition of lesbianism as "a non-man attracted to non-men" –

manage to be even worse.

Marxism is for the Enlightenment, science, rational thought and universalism. It is irreconcilably hostile to a regression to pre-Enlightenment mysticism. But, unfortunately for trans people, trans identity has been adopted as a cause celebre for exponents of the latter.

We are also for the historical gains of the women's movement. When Trotsky wrote that we should learn to see society "through the eyes of women", I'm pretty sure he had biological women in mind.

Supporting trans rights is right and proper. Ceding even an inch to the kind of people who equate fighting for trans rights with trying to shut down the Carrot Cottage Rabbit Rescue is not.

The most recent article on the Supreme Court judgement (issue 745) ends with the words: "Trans people are people." But no-one – not even people who deserve to be defined as transphobes – denies that trans people are people.

In any case, the sentence is meaningless. Nazis were/are people. Genocidal antisemites were/are people. The Israeli, Iranian and US governments are people. In fact, all people are – people.

On the other hand, I suppose I should be relieved that *Solidarity* has not endorsed the celebrity slogan of the day: "Protect the Dolls!"

The platitudinous truism that "trans people are people" is of no assistance in explaining and understanding the Supreme Court judgement.

The judgement may or may not be subject to a successful legal challenge.

But ignoring what it actually says, failing to engage with its legal reasoning, pretending that it is something other than what it is, tilting at windmills, throwing in your own tuppence-worth of panic-mongering – and, even worse, suggesting that the Good Law Project has anything of value to say on the matter (issue 741) – helps no-one. □

Dale Street, Glasgow

Reform UK is "Nationalist Authoritarian Right"



Letter

Racist, Islamophobic, transphobic are all terms that can I think with good reason be given to many of Reform UK's utterances and policies. But that's not enough.

I think it's unserious to describe Reform UK or its leaders as Nazi or Fascist. There are no doubt both in the ranks of the party, but Farage has never advocated for a violent national

revolution to overturn the entire political system. Reform UK do not even follow Trumps rhetoric of locking their opponents up. They do not have a street force or adopt the rhetoric of violence beyond the "normal" violence of a bourgeois state – police, army, border forces, prisons etc.

Many on the left call Reform UK "far right". The problem with this is it is imprecise and relative. Reform are clearly not the furthest right in UK politics. There are several groups and parties to the right of Reform. Meanwhile the "mainstream",

the Conservative Party, is on many issues almost indistinguishable from Reform. And Labour apes some policies and rhetoric that was originated with Reform.

Some like Cas Mudde call this the "populist right" or "populist radical right". Reform UK has definitely long adopted a populist approach to much of their politics. Populism is a political tactic or style used by people across the political spectrum. However there are clearly aspects of Reform politics that are not populist. They are pro many hi-

erarchies, elitist in many ways, pro tradition, pro-fox-hunting, pro-grammar-school etc. Calling Reform populist is giving them too much credit.

Identify

I think we should identify reform as the Nationalist Authoritarian Right. English and to a lesser extent British Nationalism is at the core of Reform's politics, based on a narrow nativist version of Britishness. The Tory Party has always had a nationalist fringe but at heart is a party based on the class and economic interests

of parts of the ruling class and middle class.

Reform is Authoritarian. Many Reform politicians would say they are libertarian. However a libertarian party would not want to ban discussion of gender in schools, freeze almost all immigration, leave the European Convention on Human Rights, etc.

This is why socialists need to make the argument for internationalism and for human rights central to their battle against Reform UK. □

Luke Hardy, Leeds

Debates at rail union conference

By Daniel Randall

Daniel Randall is a Tube worker and an RMT rep and branch official. He was delegate to the union's 2025 AGM. This report is written in a personal capacity.

The annual general meeting of the RMT union, Glasgow 22-26 June, passed policy committing the union to a bold, pro-active fight for a transformation of the rail industry: full renationalisation of freight and rolling stock production, the reopening of closed lines, improvements to accessibility, and the insourcing of all outsourced work.

The AGM also reaffirmed RMT policy on the abolition of anti-strike laws, and committed the union to campaigning against disability benefit cuts, for a mass programme of council house building, and for improved menopause and breastfeeding policies in workplaces where the union organises.

With attacks on frontline transport workers rising, the conference committed the union to considering industrial action to demand improved workplace safety.

Conference also committed the union to producing "in-house" educational and campaigning resources for reps and activists to counter the rise of Reform.

The conference saw the announcement of the election of the union's new Assistant General Secretary: Daren Ireland, formerly a regional organiser in the North West.

The losing candidate was Primrose Jeanton, would have been the first woman, and the first black person, to hold a national officer position in the RMT. Yet I backed Daren over Primrose because I felt his record showed him to be a more independent voice, less aligned with the current head office leadership.

Several delegates rightly commented on the fact that the AGM itself was overwhelmingly white and male. My own regional delegation was exclusively white and exclusively male. RMT needs serious reflection on how to improve diversity and equality within the union.

Discussion of national industrial dispute strategies in Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), two major areas in which RMT organises, was strangely absent from the conference. The AGM took place shortly after the narrow acceptance of a be-

low-inflation pay settlement on Network Rail, and with TOCs at a variety of different stages in a patchwork of company-by-company negotiations.

A motion from my branch, proposing that the union engage with campaigns calling for fare-free public transport, was overwhelmingly defeated. Arguments focused on the assertion that removing fares would threaten jobs. Yet in his address to the conference, John Samuelson, president of the Transport Workers Union, which organises bus and subway workers in New York, emphasised his union's support for fare-free travel, one of the key policies of victorious Democratic mayoral primary candidate Zohran Mamdani. Samuelson explained that fare-free travel will lead to a reduction in assaults against staff.

Two resolutions from the union's LGBT+ conference were passed on trans rights, one opposing the BTP's policy for male officers to strip-search trans women, and one demanding stronger reform for a legal right to gender self-identification and recognition.

One resolution passed unanimously, the other with only two abstentions. These overwhelming votes are positive developments in a union where our former president is a Communist Party of Britain leader opposed to trans identity and equality, and our current general secretary has previously promoted "gender-critical" positions.

Standing Together

A motion from my branch proposing the union support the binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement Standing Together was lost, with 17 votes for, 34 votes against, and 14 abstentions. Opponents of the resolution cited the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and BDS movement's opposition to Standing Together, but gave little evidence for why delegates should oppose them beyond repeating claims that Standing Together "normalises" and "whitewashes" Israel's actions.

On the ground Standing Together does civil disobedience at the Gaza border, defends aid trucks from settler attack, and mobilises anti-racist community defence against settler mobs in occupied East Jerusalem.

A further intense debate took place over a motion which called, in the context of a general opposition to militarism and war, for the union to campaign for "the withdrawal of military and

financial support" for Ukraine. I conveyed statements from railway worker trade unionists in Ukraine, opposing the neoliberal policies of the Zelenskyy government, but affirming the desperate need for aid.

The vote was the closest of the entire conference, tied at 27-27 with 10 abstentions. The motion passed only because of the chair's casting vote.

There is a strong Communist Party tradition within the RMT, which has substantially shaped historic union policies on issues such as Ukraine and Brexit/the EU in particular. But AGM votes including this one, and the 2021 votes for a resolution supporting the Uyghur people against China, and against a CPB-inspired motion promoting the tacitly pro-China "No Cold War" campaign, show that these politics are by no means entirely dominant or uncontested.

An emergency motion on the Israel-Iran war was debated on the final day of conference. It rightly denounced Israeli and US bombing, but said nothing about the nature of the Iranian regime and contained neither condemnation of its attacks on civilians nor solidarity with Iranian workers' struggles against it. The motion passed overwhelmingly, with two dissenting votes and one abstention, following a speech by the general secretary which implied that anyone critiquing the Iranian regime must support US-Israeli "regime change" efforts.

The general secretary also used one of his contributions to effectively denounce my membership of Workers' Liberty, arguing the motion on fare-free transport was a Trotskyist transitional demand I was attempting to smuggle past the AGM. I have no issue with open criticism, but object to a political culture where political narratives derived from a Stalinist tradition are presented merely as "traditional labour movement values", and opposing perspectives as alien.

I also spoke to oppose an increase in union officers' pay. The general secretary's response on this was less hostile, saying he respected the "workers' representatives on a workers' wage" position and noting that he had supported the proposal by his predecessor, Mick Lynch, to cut national officers' pay by 10% in 2021. Since that step by Lynch, there has been more openness to discussion around this issue in the union than previously.

Clashes at the AGM between perspectives inspired by opposing left traditions matter; they will determine how the union intervenes on key international questions, and on some domestic issues too. But the primary and fundamental role of a trade union is to organise its members to fight their employers.

Pay and conditions disputes in the TOCs and on London Underground; fights over outsourcing across the rail sector; battles over what the renationalisation process under Great British Railways will look like; the fight for a worker-led transition into renewables for the union's offshore oil worker members; fights over pay, conditions, and regulation in the bus sector; and resistance to low pay and hyper-exploitation in the maritime sector are just some of the struggles faced by RMT members in the immediate term.

It is up to rank-and-file reps in all these sectors to develop strategies for action that can win, and hold our Executive to account to ensure these strategies are adopted and carried out by our elected officials. □

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Scarlett Letters bookshop goes into occupation

By Dylan Seah

We reported that the workers of Scarlett Letters Bookshop, in East London, were balloting to strike.

Since then the owner has announced the shop's closure. The workers occupied the shop to get the stock of books and bargain to run the shop as a cooperative. Now, as of 4am

on 1 July, the owner has illegally broken the locks on the shop and had movers move the stock out. We are in solidarity with the workers who stood up to their boss and

who took direct action to win. Those of us who have organised against our own bosses understand that no matter what the dispute is about on paper, ultimately what moti-

vates us is the bitterness of being disrespected and deciding we will not be pushed around. Solidarity with the workers! □



“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.

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- 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! □

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A renewed push on subscriptions

As we enter the summer and *Solidarity* transitions to a less frequent schedule, now is a great time to subscribe. Some sales will be less frequent as campuses quieten down before the new term, and the tempo of weekly street sales and stalls may take a slight hit.

To avoid missing any issues, consider taking a new sub-

scription or renewing your existing one.

All the details are on workersliberty.org/sub

Thanks to James, Bob and some other donations this week, we are now on £16,620.

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Why not a mess room for all?



Diary of a...

By Jay Dawkey

Cleaners at the depot have their mess room. A friendly nod, a little greeting, maybe a small chat, is the most you will get day-to-day. While we drivers tend to be sitting around and not having to work our hardest while we are in the depot, they are doing their job.

It is unusual when, while working cover shifts, a new cleaner decides just to use our mess facilities. At first, I wondered who the latest driver I had never seen before was. My suspicions were further aroused when I saw them make more elaborate food than most of us ever do. And by this I mean they used the hob and toaster, not just the microwave. If they had used the oven, it would have been the first time I would have seen it opened!

And because they were sitting around the "drivers'" tables, they were more

a part of the conversation, for the few days they were around. And it raises an important point about the workplace. Why can't we just have a messroom big enough for everyone (except management) where we can all eat, drink, and chat together? Most depots have more than just drivers working there, and a significantly larger staff than just drivers and cleaners. But we remain hived off from each other.

Train technicians, cleaners, and signal staff in their own designated spaces, ex-

changing only nods on the stairs.

Management could in theory like such an idea. They might even suggest it would be good for the "workplace culture". I would argue it would be better for collective organising, having a better understanding of what we all do, and perhaps the opportunity to speak and listen to different people.

Maybe even the oven would get put into regular use. □

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M*A*S*H and Loretta Swit



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

The recent death of the excellent actress Loretta Swit, best known for her role as Major Nurse Margaret Houlihan (or "Hot Lips") in the US series *M*A*S*H*, brought back memories of this excellent comedy, set during the Korean war.

Usually I don't find US comedy all that funny but *M*A*S*H* (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) was an exception. It first aired in 1972 and was something of a ground breaker. The major US comedy featuring the military prior to *M*A*S*H* was the Phil Silvers Show (1955-1959) starring Silvers as the coniving Sergeant Bilko in the sleepy US base of Fort Baxter. *M*A*S*H* was very different. The hospital unit was not directly on the front line, but the stream of casualties was a constant reminder



of the nearness of war.

As the series progressed it became progressively more engaged with the horrors of the conflict. To cut a long story short, *M*A*S*H* was funny and occasionally serious at the same time. With excellent co-stars such as Alan Alda ("Hawkeye"), Gary Burghoff

("Radar") and Mike Farrell, Loretta Swit appeared in all but 11 of the 256 episodes. If you have not seen *M*A*S*H*, check it out. □

• Watch online: bit.ly/m-a-s-h

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Nottingham strikers are stronger

By Rob Hudd

Health support workers (HSW) at Nottingham hospitals are striking for two weeks to Friday 4 July and are getting stronger despite the hardline Chief Executive Anthony May scaremongering that there is no money for their back pay. When I was a HSW during Covid back in 2020 it was already the norm for us to be asked to work to a level way above our minimum pay rate. In fact, as Simon from endoscopy told me on the picket line, even level 4 work is often done by level 2 workers. They are doing skilful and stressful life-and-death monitoring whilst being paid only for much less skilled care.

This week I'm having major surgery for prostate cancer in the hospital, so I'd rather not see vital workers on strike. But management trying to scapegoat the workers, rather than paying the money due, is a divide and rule tactic. Better pay and morale helps staffing levels. The real danger is when staff shortages, exhaustion and low morale are allowed to go without scrutiny. That was the case in maternity services.

When my children were born there over 20 years ago, they were brilliant and well-staffed, but regular short-staffing became the norm, and now the biggest inquiry is showing over 2,000 families suffered in Nottingham alone with many unnecessary deaths and injuries. The inquiry will cost millions and compensation probably tens of millions.

It's not just Nottingham. Wes Streeting the health secretary announced that it's a national scandal and there will be a national inquiry.

Raoof on the picket line said the impact will be bigger now as all the 650 strikers will be on strike now and managers are struggling to get senior staff to cover.

Women on the picket line had been down to Westminster and met with Labour MPs to put pressure on the Trust and government. Now is the time for more workers to be seen on the picket line. □

Doctors ballot over pay

By Wade Ferguson

The British Medical Association is balloting (27 May – 7 July) its resident doctors (formerly known as junior doctors) on renewed industrial action for fair pay, after their pay review body announced its recommendation in May.

In 2024, residents voted to end their 11 rounds and 44 days of historic strike action in what they hoped would mark the first step toward restoring pay to 2008 levels. The total pay increase they had won amounted to an average of 22%, or one-third of full pay restoration.

Uplift

With this new offer, however, they would receive an uplift of just 4% plus £750 that, according to the BMA, would still leave real-terms pay down 22% when compared to 2008.

When speaking to resident doctors, it is clear that their frustrations are about more than just pay. Last year's deal also included a review of the state of medical training, which is expected to report its initial findings in July.

This postgraduate training is widely felt to be in crisis by resident doctors, as competition for limited posts has soared since 2019. For some specialties the applicant ratio doubled between 2022 and 2024, and the BMA projects

that 20,000 qualified doctors will be unable to enter specialty training this year, left either to plug rota gaps, seek more precarious short-term work, or leave the profession altogether.

Even those who have completed training are not guaranteed security: the BMA estimates that 1,000 newly qualified GPs will be unemployed this year, at a time when the public are struggling to find GP appointments.

Last year's deal also included a commitment to make it easier to flag and be paid for the hours that doctors work overtime. However, this reform is months behind schedule.

Morale

Morale is low, especially when the government appears committed to expanding the "medical associate professions" – the collective term for physician associates and anaesthesia associates – in the face of mounting safety concerns. These roles entail studying for two years, rather the usual five years of medical school, and then working without a clear scope of practice and with more favourable starting pay and conditions.

The outcome of the government-appointed Leng review into these professions is highly anticipated. So too is the High Court's ruling in the unprec-

edented case against the GMC, the medical regulator that stands accused of failing in its statutory duty to set standards by ensuring a clear scope of practice for physician associates.

Misled

The case was brought by Anaesthetists United and Marion and Brendan Cherterton, whose daughter died at the age of 30 after two appointments with a PA whom she believed was a GP. Earlier this year a coroner warned that the public is being misled over the PA role, after a patient with a nosebleed died four days after being misdiagnosed by a PA.

The GMC has long been accused of treating doctors unfairly – being more likely to investigate complaints against Black and Asian doctors, for instance. In one recent example, a GP was suspended for wrongly requesting a laptop – a suspension that was later withdrawn alongside a public apology.

At the BMA's main annual conference in June, a majority of representatives said they did not have confidence in the GMC's ability to fulfil its primary function of protecting the public. They called for its leadership to resign and for a new medical register to be created. □

Sheffield mass picket on 9 July

By Joel Mayfield

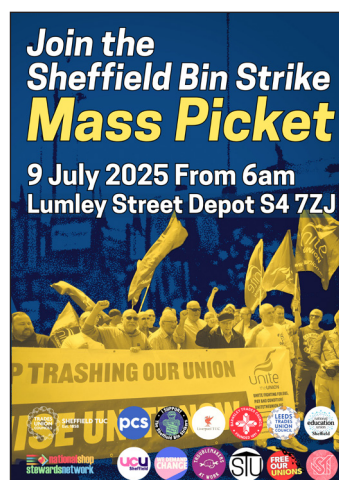
Refuse workers at Veolia's Lumley Street Depot are now entering the eleventh month of indefinite strike for union recognition. The media won't tell you this, but the Sheffield bin strike has lasted nearly as long as the 1984-5 miners' strike!

Veolia has violated basic democratic rights by intransigently refusing to allow its workers to be represented by the union of their choice. Terms and conditions have been degraded for too long: average real terms pay at Veolia's Sheffield subsidiary has fallen by 22% this decade! That's why the strikers want to be represented at the negotiating table by Unite, who'll stand up and fight.

This dispute is easily resolved, because all Veolia has to do is reinstate their own recognition agreement which they put to the workers in December – only to withdraw it at the last minute! There's widespread

support for the strikers' demands; a petition circulated among all workers at the depot has collected nearly 150 signatories calling on Veolia to recognise Unite.

When the Central Arbitration Committee refused to help resolve the situation in early April, a decision was taken to escalate this dispute and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion. From April to June, this consisted of "slow walking" picketing similar to the tactics seen in Birmingham. But then Veolia complained to the High Court because the company wants to prevent effective protest. The bosses prefer to drag people through law courts rather than talk reasonably – but why seek injunctions instead of negotiations?



We've come too far to back down now. The only way is forwards to victory! Last week's re-ballot showed 96% in favour of carrying on the fight on an 83% turnout. So we think now is the right time to ask for broader help from the wider movement beyond what we can mobilise in Sheffield or South Yorkshire alone. On 9 May, a delegation of Sheffield binmen and supporters attended the "mega-picket" in Birmingham; we liked it and want to try something similar here!

Through our local Trades Council, the labour movement in Sheffield is calling for a massive display of trade union solidarity on Wednesday 9 July. Please join our mass picket at Lumley Street Depot (S4 7ZJ)

from 6am. This mass picket will be the start of a day of action culminating in a huge demonstration to lobby a meeting of the City Council due to debate our petition about the strike. □

More online

SWP and political Islam

Criticism from Dashty Jamal of Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan
bit.ly/swp-is

Trump's USA

Larry Cohen, from Temps Critiques
bit.ly/tr-lc

Dave Ward CBE

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Dain Street, 2024

Setbacks at Unison conference

By Katy Dollar

The conference in mid-June, in Liverpool, of the public services union Unison was overshadowed by the undemocratic removal of two of three of the Presidential Team (who chair the conference), Steve North and Julia Mwaluke.

Julia, a migrant care worker in Salford and outgoing Unison Vice President, won re-election to the National Executive (NEC) in the Black Members "Low Pay Reserved" section. The Unison bureaucracy has declared her disqualified and her opponent elected on an absurd pretext about her being sent to a better-paid job for a month, as well as removing her from the outgoing NEC.

Steve was removed from all Unison roles following Unison process arising from a complaint made in 2023 in relation to his role of chair of Unison's NEC Staffing Committee. The panel overseeing his removal was made up of Unison paid staff. Steve has long championed lay control of the union against bureaucratic over-step by unelected senior staff.

The chairs replacing the regular charring team were former union presidents. Aligned with the right of Unison, repeatedly turned off the microphones of delegates speaking from the podium.

Demonstrations were called throughout the conference for Julia's reinstatement.

However, motions on cuts and pay felt flat, with exception of the only motion on Higher Education, which almost didn't get heard because it was so far down the agenda.

Three motions on the police were prioritised above Higher Education cuts, for example. Two were nominally about respecting police staff. Of course no union member should experience personal abuse at conference. However, those motions were in fact in response to criticism of role of police in society from conference podium in recent years.

The first motion had just one speaker against, the second had ten up to speak against before debate was cut short.

Every motion on trans rights mentioning the EHRC "interim update" following the April Supreme Court ruling was ruled out of order by an over cautious Standing Orders Committee (SOC). Several speakers on trans rights criticising the SOC or the union's cautious approach had their microphones cut off by the Chair.

Two motions for trans rights made it to the agenda and were passed, but the mood on conference floor was that the Supreme Court ruling had produced a set back for trans rights in the union, which has previously clearly supported those rights.

In the conference debate on Palestine, an amendment proposing the union support the binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement Standing Together, which has been the most active campaigning force within Israel against the Gaza war, lost massively.

The organised right and the majority of the left opposed it. The Socialist Party and the RCP voted with us to support Standing Together, plus a handful of others.

Opponents of the resolution variously called Standing Together a movement that thought the war could be ended with peace and love or unwitting agents of the "Zionist state". Some cited the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and BDS movement's opposition to Standing Together.

Many speakers told lies about the group – that it is opposed to BDS (they have no position), that it does not oppose the occupation (it does, vehemently), that it supports the status quo in Israel (some of its leaders are in prison for opposing the Israeli government a sight more effectively than the British left).

The most cited reason to oppose Standing Together was that to support it meant "normalising" Israel. In the words of one speaker, "normalising" Israel is allowing Israel to "infiltrate the unions".

The fact that Standing Together defends aid trucks from settler attack, organises civil disobedience against troop movements, and mobilises anti-racist community defence against settler mobs in occupied East Jerusalem, was not addressed by the motion's opponents.

The Communist Party has increasing influence on the National Executive following the election of the "Organised Left" slate in the Northwest, and the CP are growing in confidence since the win.

Opposition to the CP has also increased. The union nationally is not a "shareholder" in the *Morning Star*, but some regions are. Withdrawal is being raised in many regions, and has already been successful in some. □

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/unis-c

Solidarity 748

Solidarity 748 will be out on 16 July. We are now in the summer period when we skip some Wednesdays because our small staff are working overseas or on holiday. Our draft schedule is: 16 July, 748; 6 August, 749; 27 August, 750; 10 September, 751; 24 Sep, 752. □

Union win in Lambeth

By Katy Dollar

The Unison strike in Lambeth Libraries has been suspended as management have conceded on all of the union's "red lines". The strike mandate remains live, and Unison will not officially close the dispute until all agreements are in place.

Unison launched a trade dispute following the announcement of a restructure in the service. At all-members' meetings the following red lines were agreed: • Upgrading lowest-graded posts • No compulsory redundancies • Safe and adequate staffing levels across all Registrars, Libraries and Archives • No reduction in working conditions for any staff.

During consultation the council agreed the upgrading of the General Assistants (Porters) and Library Assistants. A timetable has been set for review of pay for the next lowest paid staff in December 2025.

Reinstated

Posts have been reinstated into the structure to avoid redundancy and improve staffing levels. Management have given a commitment to fill vacancies from next week to improve chronic understaffing in the area. There are three staff awaiting interviews for matched posts on Friday 4 July and Unison have committed to call new strike dates if any member of staff is potentially redundant following these.

The council has maintained terms and conditions, including a last-minute agreement that no staff will be forced to change timetables. Any changes to working patterns can only be implemented with the agreement of the individual staff members.

Red lines

The "red lines" were decided and voted on by an all-members' meeting which also elected a negotiating team who reported to the strike committee and all-members' meetings throughout the dispute.

It is unusual to see union victories against local government cuts, but it is also unusual to see live strike ballots against cuts in local government. The Lambeth Libraries dispute should motivate other groups of workers to fight back collectively against local government austerity.

Unison Branch Secretary Simon Hannah said: "We know this has only been possible because staff were determined to stick together and take collective action to protect their jobs and their workmates. Thank you to everyone who did work on reaching the ballot thresholds and preparing pickets. In addition, we have had fantastic support from the local community, with campaigners and Friends of Libraries groups out in the community and at council meetings." □

EHRC "update" still in limbo

By Simon Nelson

Whatthetrans has [reported](#) that Durham University college accommodation form requested students give their "biological sex at birth" and asked if they were trans.

Durham's University and College Union (UCU) branch criticised the change, and urged the university to apologise and reverse the policy. Management have also removed the gender identity policy without replacement. Concerns were also raised about plans to segregate single-sex spaces by "biological sex" – a move unsupported by the EHRC.

Uni bosses claim that the questions are optional and align with the Equality Act 2010 and its privacy policy. They claim the purpose is to respect

students' gender identities and to allocate accommodation appropriately. It emphasised that no student will be housed in facilities contrary to their identified gender.

Confusion and worry will persist as long as the existing unworkable EHRC "interim update" remains in place. The EHRC consultation closed on 30 June. However, the date for revised guidance to come out, let alone be approved, is likely to be at least many months away.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has given official clarification regarding the provision of single-sex toilets. It's a minor clarification rather than the big victory some may claim, but it highlights the rushed nature of the unworkable "interim update". □



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