



For social ownership of the banks and industry



Stefanie.reinhart.kunst 2025

"If I must starve"
painting by
Stefanie Reinhart
Instagram:
[@stefanie.reinhart.kunst](https://www.instagram.com/stefanie.reinhart.kunst)

GAZA: STOP THE KILLING

Resident doctors broaden dispute

While NHS sags, many
qualified doctors can't
find stable jobs

Page 7

Many millions have long Covid

Governments are
brushing the suffering
under the carpet

Page 6

Turmoil in the Unite union

After the report on
the Birmingham hotel
debacle

Centre pull-out

Stalinism vs Trotskyism

Not with the pen, but
with the bullet or the
bludgeon

Pages 8-9

Back the anti-war protests in Israel



Israel's war of annihilation continues in Gaza. Shootings at aid distribution centres have continued, and dozens of Palestinians have died of starvation.

On 31 July, 10,000 people demonstrated against the war in Tel Aviv at a rally called by Standing Together. The movement has also stepped up campaigns of direct action, blocking traffic and picketing major media organisations to protest the failure to report the facts about Gaza. Standing Together has also helped organise smaller anti-war protests in Palestinian communities throughout Israel.

On 4 August, Standing Together supporters in Jaffa, a city adjoined to Tel Aviv where around one third of the population is Palestinian, supported a business strike that saw multiple shops close for the day. They wrote: "We stood with businesses in Jaffa which were striking in protest of the annihilation in Gaza. While our government starves millions of people, abandons

the hostages, and sets its sights on expanding the war, we can't have business as usual. We need to disrupt and refuse this horrific reality.

"That's why we're organizing disruptive actions throughout the country. Because this situation is catastrophic for Palestinians in Gaza and the Israeli hostages and it's only bringing all of us immense grief – we have to end it now."

Major economic disruption by workers at the centre of the Israeli economy and social life, in industries such as tech, transportation, education, and healthcare, could play a role in hastening a ceasefire. Teachers recently struck against a pay cut imposed on them due to the economic cost of the war. Israel's main union federation, Histadrut, is generally right-wing and nationalist in its politics but has previously called a one-day general strike to demand the government conclude a ceasefire and hostage-release agreement.

The official death toll has now surpassed 60,000, but the real figure must be much higher, with uncounted bodies trapped in the rubble of destroyed buildings.

Air drops of food by the Jordanian air



Pic: [Oren Ziv]

force have had a negligible impact. Aid agencies say these are an inefficient, dangerous, token alternative to the big powers forcing Israel to accept sizeable deliveries by truck.

The surviving Israeli hostages who remain in Hamas captivity are also suffering. A video released by Hamas shows Eyvatar David, clearly emaciated and weakened.

Genocide

The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem has produced a report arguing the destructive tactics Israel has employed throughout the war, including the deliberate use of starvation as a weapon, means the war constitutes a genocide.

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinian community activist Awdah Hathaleen was murdered by a Jewish settler on 28 July. Settler violence, tolerated and sometimes directly abetted by Israeli security forces, has continued to increase. Awdah's body is being held by Israeli authorities. His family and supporters are campaigning to demand its release. Meanwhile his murderer, Yinon Levi, has been released to house arrest. Levi had previously been sanctioned by several foreign governments.

Standing Together, the left-wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) grassroots social movement, said: "Awdah was a deeply respected father, community leader, and activist in his village Umm al-Kheir. He brought many people there to teach on the reality of settler violence and attempts to displace Palestinians from their land, and his horrific killing is such a hard blow to so many. But he didn't need to be any of these titles for his life to be precious and for this to completely horrify all of us.

"While Awdah was killed, several other residents of the village were wounded and arrested.

"Settler violence is part of the infrastructure of the state – supported by the government and accepted by the army – and this terror is commonplace across the West Bank. What happened isn't random, it's state policy." □

• UK Friends of Standing Together is raising money to support Standing Together's Tel Aviv chapter, as part of a global fundraising campaign. Every pound donated will be matched: bit.ly/20-fost □

Why recognising Palestine matters

The "State of Palestine" is a diplomatic entity which claims sovereignty over the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. These are the territories which, according to numerous United Nations resolutions, the consensus understanding of international law, and myriad peace-process proposals, should comprise an independent Palestine.

The State of Palestine already has observer status at the UN, and is formally recognised by 147 out of 193 UN member states. Politically, it is controlled by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), a coalition of various Palestinian nationalist groups dominated by Fatah, the main secular-nationalist party in Palestinian political life.

Formal recognition of the State of Palestine is a way for foreign governments to signal their diplomatic opposition to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, and affirm their commitment to Palestinian self-determination.

In late July, French President Emmanuel Macron an-

nounced that France would recognise Palestine at a UN conference in September. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has since said Canada will do likewise. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said Britain will recognise Palestine, but only if Israel fails to meet certain conditions.

Negotiated peace

Some governments, including Britain's, have held back from recognising Palestine by saying Palestinian statehood should be the result of a negotiated peace process, rather than simply declared from outside. But there are no meaningful peace negotiations. For decades now, the principal barrier to any steps, however incremental, towards Palestinian sovereignty has been the increasing hegemony of a politics of Jewish supremacy within Israel. Israel's current government declared in its inaugural statement that it sees Jewish sovereignty over the whole territory of pre-1948 Palestine as exclusive.

No government other

than Israel's accepts that position. Recognising Palestine is the bare minimum, in diplomatic terms, that foreign governments can and must do to express their opposition to the ethno-cratic project of the Israeli government.

Diplomatic recognition does not make a Palestinian state a reality. It is largely a symbolic gesture. The material benefit it does bring is that Palestinian ambassadors have access to higher-level diplomatic channels in countries that recognise Palestine. But even as a symbol, it is an important one.

For some currents on the radical left, the momentum towards wider recognition of Palestine, seen as positive by many who oppose Israel's war and want to support Palestinian rights, presents a problem. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which has perhaps the most visible presence of any socialist organisation on the large pro-Palestinian marches, opposes not only Israel's policies, but its very existence. Recogni-

tion of Palestine necessarily implies a two-states framework. Some left groups accept recognition of Palestine as a staging post; others, such as the Workers' Power group, oppose it as a compromise with the existence of Israel.

Independent

Workers' Liberty and Solidarity's view is that establishing an independent Palestine alongside Israel remains the best-available next step towards a levelling-up of democratic rights between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews. Future confederation, let alone a joint unitary state, is inconceivable unless both peoples feel their rights are secure. We campaign for the UK government to recognise Palestine immediately and unconditionally, not as a bargaining chip in negotiations, but as part of a commitment to the principle that both peoples have an equal right to national self-determination. □

• More: bit.ly/aw-is

Correction

Contrary to *Solidarity* 747, Green local and regional parties can now submit motions to Green Party conference. The provision is in the Green Party *Standing Orders* (which also include a welter of hurdles for motions to jump before getting to the floor of conference) though not in the constitution. □

Solidarity 750

We are on our summer schedule: 750 will be 27 August; 751, 10 Sep; 752, 24 Sep. □

Court review granted on Palestine Action ban

By Will Roberts

The High Court has granted Palestine Action a judicial review on their proscription. The review will take place over eight days in November. Until then the proscription remains in effect.

Though it was likely on the cards for a while, the proscription came after Palestine Action activists broke into RAF Brize Norton in June and sprayed red paint on a military plane.

Over 200 people have been arrested since then for expressing support for Palestine Action. None so far have been charged with an offence, or remanded to prison.

Retired headteacher and Work-

ers' Power supporter Jon Farley was arrested and later released without charge at a [protest in Leeds](#) after holding a placard showing a graphic from *Private Eye*.

A number of groups led by Open Rights Group and Index on Censorship have [written](#) to media regulator Ofcom voicing concerns about the proscription of Palestine Action – and the recent Online Safety Act – posing a risk to freedom of speech. Ofcom published advice to social media companies effectively encouraging them to “play safe” by aggressively over-enforcing the law and preventing any expression of support for Palestine Action. This will almost certainly result in over-policing

or pre-emptive censorship of posts expressing support for Palestinians more broadly, which would encroach on freedom of speech.

The Online Safety Act overlaps here because it has been applied in circumstances that seem politically motivated – users must now verify their age through a third-party application before accessing the page “r/IsraelExposed” on the forum website Reddit, for example.

Anti-terrorism acts have proved something of a Labour government tradition. The first laws were introduced in 1974, to allow police to search individuals travelling from Northern Ireland to Britain after the first wave of IRA bomb-

ings in the early 70s. The next major updates were in 2000, then again in 2005, with the Blair government introducing much more punitive rights to arrest individuals and proscribe organisations beyond Northern Ireland.

In proscribing an organisation for peaceful protest, Starmer is severely exacerbating these laws' application, and in doing so, following in a sordid party tradition. Palestine Action is an organisation with a number of political flaws, but proscription for peaceful actions is an attack on the freedoms of the activist left in Britain. Socialists should defend the right to freedom of speech and the right to protest. □

Suwayda: violence and autonomy

By Simon Nelson

July has seen some of the worst violence in Syria since the massacre of Alawites by government-backed militias in March.

Syria's southwestern Suwayda province, home to the Druze minority, has become a battleground between Bedouin tribesmen and government-aligned forces, against Druze militias and civilians.

On 13 July, an alleged Bedouin armed attack on a Druze grocer turned into a wider dispute about the future of Syria and the government's rejection of any federal settlement.

Israel began air strikes on 15 July, the Israeli air force struck Syrian military installations in Damascus, including the

Defence Ministry and Army Command, and across Suwayda. Netanyahu claims they had a duty to protect Druze communities. Israeli Druze citizens bolstered calls for intervention, staging protests and briefly breaching sections of the Golan Heights border fences. Israel's manoeuvres are entirely cynical. They continue to occupy territory seized after the fall of Assad, and want to degrade any potentially damaging military capabilities that government-supporting militias may hold.

By 19 July, nearly 260 people had been killed – civilians, soldiers, and tribal fighters.

Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's use of the army to quell the unrest unsurprisingly did not work. Druze residents said they were subject to arbitrary arrests and detention.

There were reprisal executions. Human Rights Watch has reported widespread displacement, up to 128,000 people, and severe damage to basic infrastructure in the fighting.

While government forces may have withdrawn on 16 July as part of a US-brokered ceasefire, tension remains high. The Druze in Suwayda have now resumed day-to-day security. Some Bedouin militias have been reportedly disarmed.

SDF

Syria's Kurds may use the situation in Suwayda to continue to press the Syrian leadership for ongoing autonomy.

Mazloun Abdi of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) met with the US Syria envoy in mid-July. If Damascus is conced-



ing partial autonomy to Druze communities, then Kurdish regions may also receive constitutional recognition, inclusion

in the national army, and a guarantee of local autonomy. Turkey has appealed to Sharaa not to grant autonomy to the Druze, so as not to encourage Kurdish aspirations.

Amnesty International reported that at least 36 Alawite women and girls have been abducted between February and July across Latakia, Tartous, Homs, and Hama provinces. Only two have returned. Families accused local authorities of ignoring pleas or discouraging public disclosure. Many cases involved forced marriage or trafficking, with ransom payments demanded sometimes without securing a safe return. The abductions highlight the wider issue of security in areas previously shielded or loyal to the Assad regime.

The situation remains highly volatile. □

Iran's Islamists scapegoat Afghan refugees

By Dan Katz

In the month following 22 June the United Nations estimates 920,000 Afghans have been expelled from Iran and forcibly removed to Afghanistan. Many Afghans have been robbed and beaten by Iranian officials during mass round-ups. Some Afghans who have valid visas have had their papers ripped up.

Iran claims that up to four million Afghans, many without documentation, were living in Iran at the time of Israel's “Twelve Day” war against Iran in June 2025. Israel, with US help, aimed to destroy the Islamist regime's nuclear weapons programme. Iran has claimed – without evidence – that Afghan migrants were responsible for helping Israel by

spying and trafficking weapons. By doing so the Iranian regime hopes to cover up its own disastrous failures.

Israel killed 20 senior military commanders and at least nine leading nuclear scientists during the war. Clearly the Israelis had detailed information about the whereabouts of Iranian state officials. In all likelihood that intelligence will have come from informers inside the Iranian regime and sophisticated monitoring of Iranian communications networks, not from impoverished Afghan migrants.

Despite being hated by a substantial majority of the Iranian public, the regime has – unfortunately – significant support for the persecution of Afghan migrants and refugees. The regime's media has for many years run anti-Afghan campaigns,

claiming the Afghans are an “economic burden” on Iran.

Many Afghans have been living in Iran for decades, or were born in Iran. The initial large influx of Afghan refugees followed the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Another two million arrived when the Taliban returned to power in August 2021.

Those Afghans who have been expelled face persecution from the Taliban regime, which is even more repressive than the Iranian state, and will have to find a living in an economy which is in even worse shape than Iran's. In particular life for single women is a nightmare in Afghanistan: women find it almost impossible to legally find formal work. □

Not so keen after all... ?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Now that Zarah Sultana and her supporters have bounced Jeremy Corbyn into agreeing to a jointly-led new party, the *Morning Star* and the Communist Party of Britain might be expected to be very happy.

Corbyn, after all, is a long standing friend of theirs, and Sultana has been repeatedly held up in the MS as the charismatic representative of a new generation of left wingers.

But in its editorial of 5-6 July, immediately following the declaration of the new party, the MS welcomed not a new jointly-led party, but "a left alliance around Corbyn" before warning: "We should not get ahead of ourselves. Organisational disputes over the shape of any new alliance, even whether it will be a political party in the traditional sense, remain unresolved. There is no programme or even outline statement of principles" (a very minimal "statement" has since appeared).

Leading CPBer Andrew Murray, writing in the MS of 16 July, gave a detailed and rather downbeat account of the formation of the Corbyn-Sultana party. Here are the main points:

- "[M]oves to actually establish the party remain fraught. Discussions are continuing as to how or whether to carry forward the principle of 'co-leadership'"

- "The decision of the organising committee... to seek co-leadership, taken by 17 votes to five abstentions, appears to have caught some of Mr Corbyn's strongest personal supporters by surprise... a number have now withdrawn from the committee"

- "Mr Corbyn ... did not take any part in the final vote" and "was surprised by Ms Sultana's announcement, which he had not signed off on and believed should not have been issued, insofar as it mentioned him too"

- "Mr Corbyn favours an alliance of already existing local independent initiatives and is more reluctant than Ms Sultana to directly attack Labour"

- "A meeting of Collective, the body whose members have mostly withdrawn from the committee, heard calls for reconciliation and a consensus view

for patience and waiting to see how the situation develops".

Given that Murray, then Len McCluskey's chief of staff at Unite, was drafted into Corbyn's leadership team (part-time) in early 2018 and helped run the 2019 election campaign, I think we can take his account of the "fraught" early days of the party as well-informed. In particular, he has a close political relationship with Karie Murphy, a political associate (and partner) of Len McCluskey. Murphy is the leader of the Collective grouping, outmanoeuvred by Sultana's supporters, that advocated delaying the announcement of a new formation and who wanted Corbyn as sole leader.

Worse

It has been suggested that Murphy and her associates saw the project as a means of exerting "leverage" for the left and the unions over the Labour government, rather than as a new party. Sultana and her people, by attacking Starmer in shrill terms (as a de facto war criminal who "belongs in the Hague", and "worse than the Tories"), and by directing their main fire at Labour, have effectively scuppered that strategy.

Thus the *Morning Star's* reservations, as expressed by Murray.

Murray's piece was headlined "A Corbyn-Sultana Party 'Would Poll Equal To Labour'" and opened by reporting, with apparent enthusiasm, an early-July opinion poll that put the new party neck and neck with Labour on 15 per cent (the most recent has it at 6%). But Murray closed with this:

"The same poll underlined the stakes, since it put Reform on 34 per cent of the vote and the Tories on 17, making a hard-right government after the next election much the most likely outcome as things stand." (More recent polls are similar).

Two further points of relevance to this: the MS has been silent on the recent report into corruption within Unite involving Len McCluskey. A solitary article has noted the reactionary statements (e.g. on private and faith schools) of some members of Corbyn's "Independent" group of MPs. There has been no mention of the fact that one member, Ayoub Khan, asked for the army to be called in to break the Birmingham bin strike (although since then Khan has come to the 25 July mass picket to back the strikers). □

Lenin in Zurich, 1916-7 and 2025



Eric Lee

A little more than a century ago, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya left their two-room apartment at Spiegelgasse 14 in Zurich, never to return.

They travelled to Russia through Germany at the height of the First World War in the infamous "sealed train." That train had been provided for them and several of their comrades with the approval of the German General Staff. The Germans hoped that Lenin would be able to force Russia to leave the war.

Here is how Winston Churchill described it: "Lenin was sent into Russia by the Germans in the same way that you might send a phial containing a culture of typhoid or of cholera to be poured into the water supply of a great city, and it worked with amazing accuracy."

When the war broke out in 1914, Lenin had been living in Galicia, a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and was arrested as a possible Russian agent. Eventually, his anti-tsarist credentials got him released and he made it to Switzerland, initially to Bern. In February 1916, he moved to Zurich, attracted by the city's libraries, especially the Central Library.

Lenin used his time in Switzerland to build the foundations of a new International, one committed to ending the imperialist war. He attended two small international conferences held in neutral Switzerland (at Zimmerwald and Kienthal) at which socialists from warring countries could meet as comrades.

With the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917, Lenin made arrangements to return home to Russia – and the rest is history.

I was in Zurich last week and decided to look for traces of Lenin's time in Switzerland. I

could find none. There is a sign on the building Lenin lived in, but it has been defaced and is no longer readable. I had heard that Lenin's writing desk, where he wrote two of his more important works, was viewable in the Swiss National Museum.

But as we were told at the museum, there was no such desk in their collection. It turns out that the desk was briefly displayed there in 2017 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Russian revolution. As a museum official wrote at the time, the desk belonged to "the landlord of the two rooms, Titus Kammerer ... the furniture belonged to him and remained with him even when the Soviets tried later to buy the furniture off him. They were particularly keen on taking the writing desk to Saint Petersburg, but Jean Kammerer held firm. These days, this piece of furniture is part of the collection belonging to his son, Bruno Kammerer."

The Swiss National Museum



Lenin's landlord's desk, Zurich

is currently promoting an exhibition about visiting royals, using a photograph of Britain's Queen Elizabeth on the poster. As for the Russian emigres who flocked to the city in the years before 1917, there is not a word. And as a friendly museum staffer told us, there is also hardly anything at all about the Second World War, as Switzerland "did not participate".

With Lenin's desk now apparently in private hands, and no access to his rooms at Spiegelgasse 14, there is little to remind local people and vis-

itors of a man who was among the most famous to have lived in Zurich. Regardless of what one thinks about Lenin – and socialists have been divided on this issue since the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 – no one disagrees with Lenin's enormous importance.

What a pity that the city that he called home for his final year of exile has not found a way to remember him. □

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

A history of trans misogyny



Women's Fightback

By Cathy Nugent

Jules Gill-Peterson has written a provocative extended essay drawing on historical personalities and events: *A short history of trans misogyny*.

Her central theme is that the “trans panic” has been invented over time through a few contexts in which trans women and trans feminine people were repressed. These include:

- the colonial suppression of hijras – feminine-identified people who once lived ascetic lives and played a spiritual role in Indian society;
- black sex workers in antebellum North America, navigating their way through the huge uncertainties of life in a country where slavery had either not yet been abolished or had violent legacies;
- the simultaneous desire for, and violence against, trans feminine people and sex workers by male partners and clients in late 19th century North America;
- how a defence of “panic” for violence against and even murder of trans women has been successfully used right up to the present day.

The trans panic is linked to individuals’ fear of acknowledging a com-

mon humanity with trans women or trans-feminised people; such openness risks being put into the same social category as marginalised, criminalised and stigmatised people. This is not a psychological explanation but a social one, Gill-Peterson insists:

“When a straight man lashes out after dating or having sex with a trans woman, he’s often afraid that his sexuality is joined to hers... It is felt as a fear of proximity [to marginalisation].”

The fear of a “stigmatised femininity” distinguishes trans misogyny from “ordinary” misogyny which is about policing and punishing women for not being sufficiently subordinate to men, although no doubt trans women experience ordinary misogyny as well.

I am not wholly convinced that this is wholly a social explanation. What is stigmatisation if it is not both a social



process (the creation of in-groups and out-groups) and the generator of psychological responses (e.g. violent attacks which prove you are part of the in-group)?

Gill-Peterson is keen to emphasise the diverse and distinctive ways in which human beings have lived out gender variance across the world and over time. That diversity has been flattened in recent times by small-c conservatism, even of mainstream liberals, such as NGOs in their “outreach work” with sex workers and other communities of male- and female-bodied gender-variant people. There is of course a history of more violent suppression.

Uncovering that diversity is not helped by activists’ (perhaps understandable) singular focus on the truth of internal feelings about gender. For Gill-Peterson this is a zero sum strategy which obscures the “shared world” we all inhabit and our potential to find points of solidarity across differences. Her socialistic sensibility is a strength of the book but it could have been more boldly stated.

In our London socialist feminist reading group the book was criticised for romanticising the experiences of *travesti* sex workers in Latin America. By embracing the “high femininity” of *travestis* Gill-Peterson risks over-emphasising resistance

at the expense of not fully recognising the precarity and danger of their lives.

The point Gill-Peterson wants to make is interesting however. By being more open to the feminine in cultures of resistance we can learn how to practice solidarity:

“What’s common across homophobia, trans misogyny and misogyny directed at non-trans women is the targeting and suppression of femininity as excessive.”

Gill-Peterson’s answer to the trans panic is not to present trans womanhood and trans femininity as an inevitable path to victimhood. Rather, a stronger answer to the buttoned-down violent authoritarianism of the panic is a positive and transgressive femininity. Perhaps. □

Rachel's Rules: a cautionary tale



Poetry

Rachel was that kid at school who stuck to each and every rule She never borrowed, never lent tried to save and never spent

Boasting she’s no fiscal fool Rachel’s economic rule would not let her intervene when playground bullies, rich and mean,

Picked on poor kids, thought it funny to take away their dinner money Ruled the playground, bold and brash their blazer pockets full of cash

Now Rachel is the one in charge Her fiscal rules are written large Inscribed in flesh and carved in stone She’ll never borrow, spend or loan

And when she found the money tin had nothing but some nutshells in She knew exactly what to do Her fiscal rules would see her through

She let the playground bullies be She bowed to them and bent the knee She grabbed the little kids and took them Turned them upside down and shook them

But Rachel was surprised to find the little kids were of a mind to fight back, cut her down to size bringing tears to Rachel’s eyes

The moral of poor Rachel’s tale? The “vulnerable” are not so frail So learn from Rachel’s woeful story – If you’re Labour, don’t be a Tory. □

Janine Booth

New codes coming without full debate

By Simon Nelson

On 15 July the Department for Education released the statutory “Relationships, Sex and Health Education guidance” due to take effect in September 2026. Although it [removes](#) the Tories’ draft ban on teaching about gender identity, the final version still marks a significant step back for trans visibility.

It moves away from the concept that schools should support students by affirming their chosen gender identity. Students will be taught about the protected characteristics included in the Equality Act, including gender reassignment, but schools are instructed not to “teach as fact that all people have a gender identity”, and materials that could encourage pupils to question their gender or express

gender distress should be avoided.

The guidance suggests that discussion of trans identities is a matter of “significant debate” rather than the reality for trans students.

An [open letter](#) from Pride in Education has over 2,500 signatures. It calls on the DfE to withdraw the guidance.

Meanwhile, the government and the EHRC look to avoid democratic scrutiny over changes to the statutory code of practice.

The handling of proposed changes will likely benefit the “gender-critical” movement and push back the limited gains made for trans rights over recent decades.

As Ian Dunt has warned, there is a real risk that once finalised, the government’s legal advisers may warn that it risks breaching the

European Convention on Human Rights. Still, ministers are under no obligation to heed that advice.

It looks like the code will be introduced via statutory instrument, a mechanism intended for technical measures but now routinely used for contentious policy to evade parliamentary debate. The “draft negative procedure” to be used means the code will automatically become law unless either House explicitly votes it down within 40 days. That is almost unheard of. The government controls parliamentary time and can easily prevent any such vote.

The interim guidance would exclude trans people from all “single-sex” spaces. That is scarcely enforceable, but it would hinder trans people’s ability to participate in public life and make difficulties

for them in workplaces. It would increase forced “outing” and vigilante harassment of anyone looking gender-atypical, or even prevent trans people’s access to basic facilities.

The EHRC’s own consultation received 51,000 responses, despite attempts to limit participation. That was in part due to the pressure put on it by Parliament’s Women’s and Equality Committee and the campaigning of trans rights organisations. Despite this small concession, it looks like neither the EHRC nor the government is going to shift the balance in favour of increased rights for trans people.

With the potential for almost no parliamentary scrutiny and a stitched-up process, campaigners and the labour movement must step up their fight for trans rights. □

Hundreds of millions have long Covid

By Zack Muddle

The interview with Dr Asad Khan on long Covid (*Solidarity* 747-748) highlights the contribution to the growth in mental ill-health of widespread long Covid, which affects hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide and maybe two million in the UK.

A great and sudden reduction in ability to socialise, exercise, get out of the house, work, or pursue hobbies would depress most people; as would symptoms from daily nausea to debilitating fatigue, from ongoing loss of taste or smell to muscle- or headaches. Uncertainty about when or whether you might recover and get (some of) your old life back – and how to manage the condition and the treatment – would increase almost anyone's anxiety. Stigma, lack of sympathy, and reduced incomes for long Covid sufferers are not rare, and emotionally challenging.

On top of this, some evidence suggests that for many serotonin may be reduced as a direct impact, with consequent lower mood and increased anxiety; alongside other neurological symptoms like cognitive dysfunction or "brain fog".

However, other factors beyond experiencing long Covid have likely also contributed to increasing anxiety and depression across society, I believe. Having loved ones dying or being disabled by Covid impacted many. And fear about a scary new disease – or of sudden serious societal change – often compounded other anxieties.

The two lockdowns were, as Dr Khan said, "brief", at least in comparison to the isolation, semi-lockdown, and other suffering that many with long Covid experience. But lockdowns, alongside wider and longer-lasting social distancing, surely harmed some people's mental health – even if they were, overall,

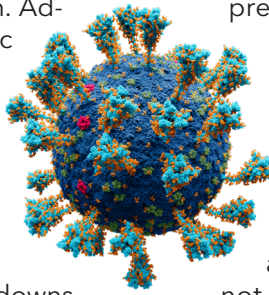
necessary for limiting infection. Adjustments to the new pandemic accelerated longer-term trends of atomisation and reduced in-person interaction. Pandemic mitigation measures particularly impacted young people beyond the two or three years in question.

As social distancing and lockdowns receded, society was hit by post-pandemic inflation while many workers' wages fell far behind the cost of living. Austerity, and austerity-lite have compounded the impacts of this. Valiant strikes for the most part lost or had only limited victories, as workers were sold out by union leaderships. The NHS has taken a hammering. Brexit hasn't helped. We can both recognise widespread mental health harms from often unrecognised long Covid, and from many other factors.

Denialism

Denialism about long Covid is due to medical misogyny, to underreporting, to insufficient understanding. Additionally, it is promoted by sections of the right. Sections who were sceptical about Covid, its severity, and about lockdowns or social-distancing seek to dismiss inconvenient facts; others seek to dismiss sufferers as "benefit scroungers". This is harmful and offensive for obvious reasons.

Misdiagnosing most long Covid as "psychological" is dangerous in an additional way. Long Covid often involves or causes Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) and/or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) (and often anxiety or depression too). If you have a psychological condition, it isn't less "real" or debilitating: but the treatment is very different. More exercise, social activity, getting out of the house, and other such "exertions" often help you if you suffer from anxiety or de-



pression alone. But with CFS and similar, that's generally harmful: it will often exacerbate your symptoms in the short term, and harm your recovery in the longer term. Where long Covid involves POTS or other autonomic dysfunction (but not CFS), navigating exercise and exertion is problematic and complicated too, though slightly different. "Pacing", consistently and often severely reducing daily activities to limit post-exertional symptom exacerbation, is often both necessary and *incredibly* challenging.

Understanding PASC

In my view, "Long Covid" isn't the best term, but it is currently the dominant one. "Post-acute sequelae of Covid-19" (PASC), "post-Covid conditions", or "long Covid" are really umbrella terms for a variety of conditions, encompassing probably hundreds of symptoms, often found in distinct clusters. Underlying these clusters of symptoms are very likely multiple distinct, though far from mutually exclusive, mechanisms.

The risk factors for individuals developing PASC (long Covid) after infection are not the same as those for individuals being hospitalised or dying with an acute Covid infection. Acute infection disproportionately kills older individuals and men; PASC (long Covid) more often hits younger to middle aged people, disproportionately women. There is much still to be learned about other risk factors.

Vaccination (and boosters), plus antiviral cocktails such as Paxlovid, significantly reduce the risk of developing long Covid (or its severity), as well as of hospitalisation or death with acute Covid. But significant risk remains. Nor does having weathered a previous bout of Covid with no lingering after-effects

mean individuals are safe from PASC/long Covid following future infections.

Dr Asad Khan points out the complete inadequacy and sometimes absence of long Covid support on the NHS, even before most long Covid services were decommissioned. The tests that anyone who has suspected PASC/long Covid is (or should be) given by their GP are indispensable, not just to prescribe long Covid treatments, but to rule out further complications or other co-occurrent or similarly presenting conditions.

But Dr Khan is also correct to point out that potential treatments with a relatively weak evidence base or understanding as of yet are often not prescribed or recommended. Individuals already juggling the extra costs of living with PASC/long Covid, and often with reduced incomes, frequently seek private healthcare where they can afford it to get what treatment they can.

Treatments

But the vacuum left by as-yet weak evidence and scant public provision also attracts all sorts of pseudoscientific sharks, exploiting desperate people with questionable "treatments".

There are some evidence-based treatments for many symptoms (see online version of this article, bit.ly/100-m-lc). Many or most who develop long Covid can eventually recover, partially or completely.

Additional treatments, without high-quality evidence, should neither be ignored nor handed out willy-nilly. A serious well-funded research programme must be integrated into re-expanded long Covid services. Purported or weakly evidenced treatments should be offered to all interested sufferers, via clinical trials; and become better evidenced, discarded, or otherwise refined. □

• Notes and links online: bit.ly/100-m-lc

Extreme heat is workplace violence



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

Hundreds of street cleaners and their supporters marched through Barcelona on 16 July to protest the death of Montse Aguilar, a 51-year-old street cleaner who died during the June heatwave as temperatures exceeded 35°C. Their banner read "Extreme

Heat Is Also Workplace Violence!"

A team of researchers, led by Imperial College London and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, looked at 10 days of extreme heat between 23 June and 2 July across 12 European cities, including London, Paris, Athens, Madrid and Rome. They found 2,300 heat related deaths, including 200 of working age people.

According to analysis by the International Labour Organisation, Europe has seen a 42%

increase in heat-related deaths in the workplace since 2000. The European Trade Union Confederation has highlighted studies which show the risk of work-related accidents increases by 5 to 7% when temperatures exceed 30°C.

Coordinated

The TUC and Heat Strike planned a week of action on workplace heat 13-18 July. The TUC organised its biggest ever coordinated workplace health and safety inspection focused on heat. The dates

were chosen for, statistically, the hottest week of the year in the UK but this year the week was relatively mild, so action was limited. Safety reps really needed to be ready with their thermometers a few weeks earlier when temperatures exceeded 30°C.

We need to be doing the ground work in advance and be preparing workplace campaigns so workers are aware of their rights to take collective action when the hot weather arrives.

As climate change acceler-

ates, there are two options, even in the UK with our relatively mild weather. Either the capitalist class will be forced to pay to make our workplaces safe, or we will pay in working-class lives.

Workers' Liberty activists in schools, hospitals, and kitchens have been organising at work around extreme heat and levelling demands to their employers. These negotiations take place alongside an organising drive to win climate-resilient workplace buildings. □

• More online: bit.ly/ultra-hot

For a NHS where we can all thrive



Interview

By a resident doctor

A resident doctor talked with Solidarity in the run-up to their strike starting 25 July.

Training to become a doctor was intense, but nothing fully prepares you for the demands of the actual job. As a resident doctor now, the responsibility has increased dramatically – not just clinically, but emotionally and physically as well. Because of chronic staffing shortages and difficult working conditions, we often end up doing the work of more than one doctor. It's not uncommon to be covering multiple roles, especially when others are off sick or when positions go unfilled.

The workload can be overwhelming – juggling a heavy list of patients, managing acute issues, handling difficult family conversations, and still being expected to stay on top of documentation and learning. There are days that feel like you're constantly running, without enough time to process everything you're seeing and doing. What makes it even more challenging is that despite the intensity, we're only allowed a limited number of days off – including sick days. If we exceed that limit, there's a real risk we'll have to repeat the entire training year.

Pressure

That kind of pressure creates a culture where people push through illness and burnout, just to avoid falling behind. It's emotionally draining, especially when you're already dealing with life-and-death situations daily. Still, there are moments that remind me why I chose this path – when a patient improves because of something I did, or when a family expresses genuine gratitude. But

it's hard not to feel the weight of a system that often demands more from us than is sustainable.

When I speak to other doctors and those involved in the BMA, the general mood is of deep frustration, exhaustion, and a sense that we've been pushed to a breaking point. I really want to make it clear, nobody wants to strike – that's something everyone agrees on. But there's also a very clear understanding that continuing as we are isn't sustainable, either for staff or for patients.

There's a lot of anger about how little has changed, despite years of warnings about burnout, staffing shortages, and worsening conditions. The system demands so much from us, but gives so little in return. People feel demoralised. We're losing colleagues to other countries, other careers, or simply to burnout. There's a real sense that we've tried everything else – meetings, negotiating, highlighting the issues – and none of it has led to meaningful change. Strike action has become the last tool we have to try to force a conversation that actually results in progress.

Criticism

At the same time, we're all aware of the criticism we're getting from some parts of the public and media. That adds another emotional burden. But what people don't always see is that after the strike days, we are the ones who return to even more pressure, picking up the pieces in the same broken system. It's not a win for us – it's just a desperate attempt to make things better.

It's actually quite difficult to get a clear sense of how other unions feel about our strike action, especially when so much of the response we see online is negative. There's been a lot of criticism – people calling us greedy or saying we're striking again after "already getting a pay rise." That kind of reaction can be disheartening, particularly when we hoped that others in the trade union movement would understand the rea-



sons and frustration behind our actions.

But the truth is, we didn't agree to a pay rise – we agreed to a process of pay restoration. That's a crucial difference. Pay restoration is about gradually returning our salaries to the equivalent value of what doctors used to earn, before over a decade of real-terms cuts. It's not a one-off boost, it's an ongoing negotiation to correct the erosion of our pay and recognise the value of the work we do. So yes, it's disappointing when the public narrative ignores that reality. But at the end of the day, we know what we're fighting for – fair pay, safe working conditions, and a sustainable NHS. And if we have to take that step alone, we will.

The NHS just isn't what it used to be – and that's something I hear time and again from both newer and more experienced colleagues. People are exhausted. When you're working back-to-back 12-hour shifts, often without proper breaks, it becomes incredibly difficult to stay motivated. That constant pressure wears people down. It creates a tense atmosphere, where frustration between team members is high, not because anyone wants to fall out but

because everyone's running on empty and trying to hold the system together with whatever energy they have left.

On top of that, dealing with increasingly complex patient care, rising demand, and sometimes ungrateful or even abusive behaviour from the public makes the emotional toll even heavier. We come in to help people, but instead we often end up feeling unappreciated, blamed, or just worn down. People don't enjoy their jobs the way they used to, and many are actively planning ways to leave – whether that's going abroad, switching careers, or reducing hours just to cope. That's the reality we're facing. The system is driving out the very people it relies on most, and unless something changes soon, I really worry about what will be left.

But despite all of this, we want to be able to provide the best care possible, in a system that supports and values its staff. We want to work in an NHS where doctors and other healthcare workers can thrive again, where patients get the care they deserve, and where the hope and passion that brought us into medicine can be restored. That's what we're fighting for. □

Resident doctors broaden dispute

By Wade Ferguson

As resident doctors finished their five-day walk-out (from 25 July) for full pay restoration, the British Medical Association (BMA) announced a new linked dispute over the crisis in postgraduate training and lack of jobs.

Resident doctors have seen their real wages cut by 21% since 2008, according to the BMA. Over recent years, it has also become increasingly difficult to progress in their training. After completing a two-year foundation pro-

gramme they are able to apply for specialist training, yet over 30,000 applications were made for just 10,000 places this year.

Doctors who don't get a place can apply for work filling rota gaps as a "locum" or for stand-alone non-training posts, usually for six months to a year. Both these options are precarious and becoming increasingly competitive.

In a recent BMA survey of 4401 resident doctors, a third reported that they had nothing secured after their current

jobs finish (6 August). 52% of doctors finishing the foundation programme reported they have no substantive employment or regular locum work whatsoever from then.

The UK has one of the lowest rates of doctors per capita in Europe, and the BMA estimates that England alone would need an additional 40,000 doctors to reach the OECD EU average. The number of UK medical graduates has increased by over 3,000 since 2023. Yet the government plans to create just 1,000

additional training posts over the next three years.

Wes Streeting has so far refused to negotiate on pay and has argued the doctors' strike "enormously undermines the entire trade union movement," a charge that was criticised by several trade union general secretaries. Jo Grady of UCU, for example, responded on X: "What really undermines our movement is a Labour government that turns its back on workers and lashes out at unions instead of listening to them. This is a defining mo-

ment. Stop attacking those who keep our public services running." □

• More online: bit.ly/residoc

"No silence in the arts for Gaza" is a global art initiative launched by artist Stefanie Reinhart, whose art is on the front cover. Featuring hundreds of artworks in Palestinian colours, the exhibition opens September 6, 2025, at Mama's Café in Oslo: bit.ly/no-silence-arts



Stalinism vs Trotskyism: not with the

By Rhodri Evans

The USSR under Stalin murdered almost all the known steadfast Marxists in the country. Those whom Stalin called “Trotskyites”, the activists who stayed loyal to the working-class and democratic aims of the October 1917 revolution and opposed Stalin’s counter-revolution, were killed by the tens of thousands. *Solidarity* 748 carried an account of the killing by the Stalinists of the Marxists in the Vorkuta labour camp.

The Stalinist war against revolutionary Marxists did not end there. Outside the USSR, some of its most murderous moments came in the turmoil around and after the end of World War Two.

Greek Stalinists killed Greek Trotskyists because of the Trotskyists’ opposition to the imposition on Greece, as German occupying forces withdrew, of a British-sponsored government-in-exile.

After late 1942, German military-occupation rule in Greece was shaky. There was a large resistance movement, not yet controlled by the Greek Communist Party (KKE).

As the war moved towards an end, Stalin did a deal with Churchill for Britain to allow Stalin a free hand in Eastern Europe, in return for Russia recognising Greece as within Britain’s sphere of influence. A Greek government-in-exile under Georgios Papandreou existed in British-occupied Cairo.

The KKE was unhappy. A Russian mission led by Colonel Popov pushed them into agreement, but then in December attempts by Papandreou to disarm all opposition led to rebellion. Churchill announced that he was intervening against “triumphant Trotskyism”.

By February 1945, the Stalinists accepted the Varkiza agreement, providing for the disarmament of all resistance forces.

In a tragic mirroring of Stalinist conduct during the Spanish Civil War (1936-9), the Stalinists backed the forces of “order”. Just as in Spain, they also extended the methods of the Russian secret police, forming the Organization for the Protection of the People’s Struggle (OPLA), which was accountable directly to the Politburo of the KKE.

Before and during the “December Events” of 1944 the OPLA murdered revolutionary opponents of the KKE, particularly Trotskyists, but also Archeio-marxists [a longstanding Greek revolutionary group, briefly associated with the Trotskyist opposition] and anarchists. “We killed more than 800 Trotskyists”, boasted KKE Politbureau member Barzotas. In the period before December, Loukas Karliaftis (“Kostas Kastritis”), the secretary of the united Trotskyist organisations, narrowly es-

caped an assassination attempt. Many more were not so lucky.

Amongst those murdered by the Stalinists included the whole Archeio-marxist group in Agrinio, and cadres from the Opposition faction of the KKE. According to the memoirs of the one-time Trotskyist Agis Stinas, they murdered the leading Trotskyists Dimosthenis Voursoukis, a member of the Organisation of International Communists (OKDE) and later of the International Communist Union (KDEE), “one of the most devoted, active and competent militants, and one of the best trained, an escaper from [the prisoner of war camp] Acronauplia.”

Greece

Pierre Broué writes that “throughout the country OPLA agents abducted, tortured and murdered such militants as Stavros Veroukhis, the Secretary of the Association of the War Wounded, and Thanassis Ikonomou, former Secretary of the Communist Youth at Ghazi. Workers, dockers, metal workers and teachers all suffered alike.”

The murder of genuine revolutionaries by the Stalinist forces during the Greek struggle for liberation was the horrific extension of the KKE’s counter-revolutionary policies. Long transformed into an instrument of Kremlin diplomatic intrigue, the Stalinists in Greece confirmed their role as border guards for the new Russian empire and the “syphilis of the working class movement.”

In Vietnam, two sizeable Trotskyist groups were wiped out by the Stalinists in 1945-6.

In March 1945, as the end of World

War Two approached, Japanese control in Vietnam frayed.

The Stalinist-led Viet Minh nationalist movement established a guerrilla base along the Chinese border in the north.

As soon as news of the defeat of Japan reached Indochina, the Viet Minh rapidly took over government in the capital, Hanoi, and appealed to the old colonial power, France, where the Communist Party was now part of the government, for gradual independence. Stalinist leader Ho Chi Minh would sign an agreement in early 1946 for the reintroduction of French troops.

The Stalinists had less control in the south, and in Saigon an independence demonstration on 21 August drew more than 300,000. A Trotskyist group, the International Communist League, drew support with banners calling for “Land to the Peasants! Nationalisation of the Factories under Workers’ Control! Toward the Workers’ and Peasants’ Government!”

The ICL set up a printshop and issued bulletins every three hours. But within days the Viet Minh took over the city hall and police stations and declared: “Whoever encourages the peasants to take over the landed properties will be severely and pitilessly punished... Those who incite the people to arm themselves will be considered saboteurs and provocateurs”.

The ICL managed to initiate some 150 “People’s Committees”. They said they would ally with the Viet Minh against the British, but the Viet Minh organised a demonstration on 2 September to greet British troops due to arrive soon to manage handing back Vietnam to France.

On 7 September the Stalinists ordered that all weapons be turned over to the Viet Minh’s “Republican Guard”. When the British arrived, they banned the Vietnamese press, proclaimed martial law, imposed a strict curfew, and banned demonstrations.

The Stalinists sent a detachment of Republican Guards to surround a People’s Council meeting, and were able to disarm and arrest the ICL people there.

An uprising soon followed against the British clampdown, involving the ICL-led workers’ militia of the Go Vap streetcar depot. After retreating to the countryside, and several battles with French and Indian troops they reached the regroupment area, the militia was eventually overwhelmed and several of members stabbed to death by the Viet Minh.

The Stalinists now moved on another Trotskyist group, La Lutte (Struggle). They arrested the entire group, interned them at Ben Suc, and then shot them as French troops approached.



Shortly after this the Viet Minh were forced out of Saigon by the French.

In the North, the Struggle group had had a daily newspaper in Hanoi in late 1945. Eventually this group, too, was wiped out entirely by the Stalinist repression.

Ta Thu Thau, the leader of the Struggle group, was repeatedly arrested, and then shot in Quang Ngai in February 1946.

Ho Chi Minh later told the French socialist Daniel Guérin: “He [Thau] was a great patriot and we mourn him... All those who do not follow the line which I have laid down will be broken”.

The Chinese Trotskyists had some hundreds of activists, mostly in the cities, when Mao Zedong’s Stalinists conquered the country in 1949.

Mao’s coming-to-power was not a people’s uprising. Mao had built up his Stalinist army by battles against the Japanese occupation of China and for land reform which did involve popular mobilisation, but the events of 1949 were a military conquest of the country by that army. Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists were widely-hated and corrupt, and offered little resistance: their leaders fled to Taiwan.

Mao took over wholesale much of the machinery of Nationalist rule – police forces, administrative bureaucracy, nationalised-industry management. The majority were minded to welcome anyone who might put a definitive end to foreign rule and to decades of on-off civil war.

Over the next few years Mao reshaped governance from above to purge the non-compliant and ensure Stalinist control everywhere. The eight “democratic parties” which notionally formed a coalition government with the Stalinists in 1949, and notionally still do (with a break from 1966 to 1978), were brought under firm Stalinist control. The fate of the Trotskyists was described in

Our pamphlets

Browse, download, buy, or listen to [our pamphlets](https://workersliberty.org/publications/) including:

- China and Trotskyism
- Women’s Fightback
- The German Revolution: selected writings of Rosa Luxemburg
- For Workers’ Climate Action
- Two Nations, Two States
- Workers Against Slavery
- How to Beat the Racists
- Shapurji Saklatvala: Socialist Rebel in Parliament
- Stalinism in the International Brigades
- The story of Sylvia Pankhurst
- Left Antisemitism: What it is and How to Fight it
- Arabs, Jews, and Socialism: Socialist Debates on Israel/Palestine
- The Occupation of the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead 1984
- When workers beat the fascists
- Automation & t/working class □

workersliberty.org/publications/

pen but with the bullet or bludgeon

an article which they smuggled out in January 1953, and was published in the US Trotskyist paper *The Militant* of 19 October 1953.

We five, the signatories of this document, are up to the present the only ones lucky enough to have escaped the recent wholesale arrests of Trotskyists... We are all communists: one of us has formally joined the Chinese Trotskyist party and the rest have been in the Trotskyist socialist youth... This document is written in Shanghai and will be taken to Hong Kong at the risk of death.

No sooner did the Chinese Communist Party overthrow the reactionary Guomindang regime and establish the People's Government of China than several local organisations of the Chinese Trotskyist Party were raided. In August 1949 most members of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang Emergency Committee of our Party and several other responsible comrades were arrested, but were later instructed to cease political activity and released.

Meanwhile, the CP mobilised an anti-Trotskyist campaign in two districts, Wenzhou of Zhejiang Province and Shunshan of Guangdong Province – where the Trotskyists had a long tradition of broad activities and had considerable strength in numbers – and arrested many of them. Some were shot on the false charge of being “Guomindang agents”.

When they were bound and dragged to execution grounds, they demanded that the signboard hung on their backs should be marked with the name “Trotskyist”, but this just demand was denied to them. Their mouths were stuffed with cotton to prevent them from shouting at the moment of execution.

In 1950, a new wave of similar general arrests occurred in another place (Jiangsu Province) where the Trotskyists had the most profound traditions and influence. The fate of dozens of arrested comrades is not yet known to this day.

The Trotskyist organisations which were not raided during these years were constantly persecuted in all sorts of ways, such as tracing their daily activities, constant surveillance, withholding of letters, etc.

From December 1952 to January

1953, wholesale arrests of Trotskyists were staged throughout the country, from Beijing to Guangzhou, and from Shanghai to Chongqing. These arrests occurred at midnight of two different days, 22 December 1952 and 8 January 1953.

Such a simultaneous action on a national scale clearly indicates that it was by no means a “local incident”, but a planned action conducted directly by the supreme authority of the CP.

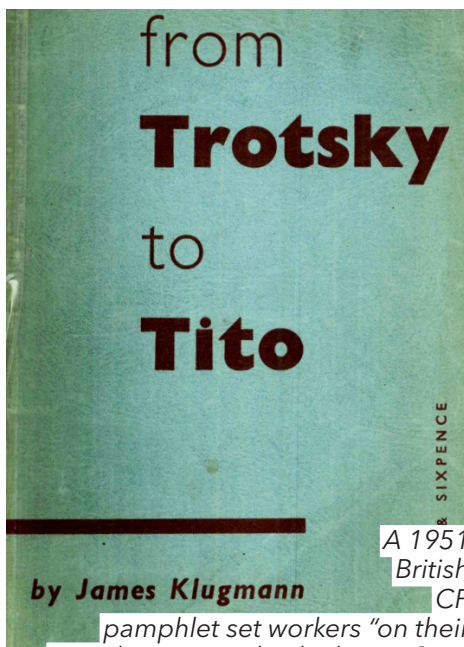
Up to now we have not yet learned exactly how many were arrested, but there are at least a few hundred already... Among the arrested, ranging them in revolutionary generations, there are old militants over 50 years of age, like Zheng Chaolin, Yin Kwan, etc, who were leaders in the 1927 revolution and passed a number of years of their lives in Chiang Kai-shek's prisons... Among those arrested are factory workers, trade-union officers, university professors, teachers in colleges or primary schools or in the “work of social education”, students, land-reform workers, functionaries in state financial or economic institutions, etc...

This nationwide series of arrests was carried out secretly and brutally. In the dead of night, CP agents came to the victims' homes under the pretext of taking a “census”. These were frozen nights; snow fell heavily in Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing, and even in the south, the city of Guangzhou was also under the cold wave.

The agents drove the families out of doors and proceeded to cross-question them for several hours while ransacking their homes. Then the victims were bound with their hands behind their backs and taken away without being allowed to either dress themselves or pack any necessities...

The high point of Stalinist demonisation of “Trotskyites” outside the USSR was in the early 1950s. In many countries, the Stalinists were not strong enough to kill or jail Trotskyists at will, or were restrained by a more-or-less functioning bourgeois-democratic rule of law. But take France.

Alain Krivine, who after 1968 would become maybe the first Trotskyist since Trotsky himself known as a “household name” (at least in France), joined



the Communist Party youth in 1955, at the age of 14, and became prominent there.

An older brother and his twin had, unknown to him, become Trotskyists. They were also Communist Party members. They had a tactic (which hardly anyone approves in hindsight) of burrowing away within the then-huge CP (500,000 members) while a few of their comrades kept a visible Trotskyist presence by publishing a very small paper outside the CP.

His brothers dared not tell Alain Krivine they were Trotskyists, because as a loyal CP member he would denounce them. They sent him the small paper anonymously. Alain refused to read it because the CP had told him Trotskyists were “Trotsky-fascists”.

Eventually Alain Krivine became critical of the CP's failure to support Algeria's battle for independence from France, and bit by bit he was won over.

But as late as 1968 Trotskyists distributing leaflets at factories where the CP was strong had to go in large numbers and ready for a physical fight. Otherwise they would be beaten up and have their leaflets destroyed, not by management thugs but by CPers.

In the street revolt and mass strikes of May-June 1968, the CP at first denounced the students clashing with the streets in Paris. But then the Trotskyist groups grew from dozens to thousands. The CP had to modify its tone. It still denounced the Trotskyists as “false revolutionaries [on whom] we should energetically blow the whistle, because, objectively, they serve the interests of the government and the big capitalist monopolies”. How? The Trotskyists were supposedly always unrealistically “ultra-left”. They were “anti-communist” and “anti-Soviet” because they criticised the USSR.

Even a decade later, it was routine for the then-CP-run major trade-union organisation, the CGT, to expel activists as soon as it was “proven” that they were Trotskyists.

The British Communist Party was never as strong as the French. However, Stalin-derived anti-Trotskyism is still an issue, even now, and even in Britain.

The Communist Party of Britain (CPB), which controls the *Morning Star* daily newspaper, is weak in active membership but influential in areas of union officialdom. Originating in a 1988 split from the old Communist Party of Great Britain, it is more Stalinistic than that old group had been for a long time before it wound itself up in 1991. Its Young Communist League is more Stalinistic again.

Although Jeremy Corbyn has kept some distance from Stalinism on issues like Tibet, he chose CP member Andrew Murray, and other people with a background in the most Stalinistic wing of the 1980s CP, such as Seumas Milne and Steve Howell, for his Labour “Leader's Office”. It looks like some of those may figure in the new Sultana-Corbyn party.

At the height of the Corbyn surge in the Labour Party, a Stalinist detachment called Red London (outriders, but including a journalist on the *Morning Star* staff) specialised in anonymous smears against Workers' Liberty and *Solidarity*.

Stalin died 72 years ago, Mao Zedong 49 years ago. It is 42 years since Labour Party general secretary Jim Mortimer made the official speech at Labour conference for a ban on a left-wing group in the party in old-Stalinist language, explaining that the group were Trotskyists and so “undermined left unity” as allegedly they had done in the Spanish Civil War. The USSR which Stalin's counter-revolution shaped collapsed 34 years ago. But the Chinese government to this day assesses Mao as “70% right, 30% wrong”. The ghosts of Stalin and Mao still hold sway.

To exorcise them we need to understand that the difference between Stalinism and the Marxist politics (Trotskyism, Bolshevism, etc.) which informed the Russian revolution of October 1917 and the efforts since to make similar workers' revolutions in other countries is not a nuance within left-wing debate.

As Trotsky put it in 1937, “Stalin revises Marx and Lenin not with the theoretician's pen but with the heel of the GPU [secret police]... Between Bolshevism and Stalinism [there is] not simply a bloody line but a whole river of blood... not only a political but a thoroughly physical incompatibility between Bolshevism and Stalinism”. □

• Links for references: bit.ly/st-v-tr





TURMOIL IN UNITE THE UNION: FOUR ARTICLES

Unite the Union: what's wrong, and how to fix it

By Ann Field

In late July 2025 Unite the Union published its "Interim Report into Allegations of Historical Corruption".

The report covers the Birmingham project – the conference centre and hotel built during Len McCluskey's terms of office as General Secretary – and the lack of control exercised over its construction from within the union, especially the national Executive Council.

One section of the report, into the union's affiliated services (such as cheap home and car insurance, retail discounts, etc.), has been redacted in its entirety. This is because of ongoing police investigations.

The initial estimated cost of the Birmingham project was £58 million. In the event, Unite paid over £110 million for its construction. It is currently valued at just £38 million. The union therefore ended up spending £70 million more than the value of the project. At least £30 million of that amount was down to excessive building costs by the contractor.

The contract with the construction company, the Flanagan Group, was not put out to tender. It was signed off by the then General Secretary Len McCluskey, despite the fact that, by his own admission, he had not read the contract before signing it.

And despite the fact that the Flanagan Group had a poor record on previous contracts with Unite. And also despite the fact that some senior members of Unite staff and the union's own lawyers advised against signing the contract as it did not represent "value for money".

McCluskey claims, says the report, that responsibility for the Birmingham project lay with the then Finance Director, Ed Sabisky. He, McCluskey, merely signed off whatever paperwork Sabisky wanted signed off and relied on Sabisky to keep track of the project.

But emails referenced by the report show Sabisky to have been repeatedly critical of, or even hostile to, the Flanagan Group's practices and standards of

work. Sabisky himself could not be interviewed – he died in March of 2020.

Some of the reasons for the losses which Unite incurred as a result of the contract and the additional charges to which it was subject are identified in the report.

The profit mark-up on the contract was 12.5%, although the norm in the construction industry is 5%. Nearly £34 million was paid out as "adverse weather payments", although nothing in the contract required such payments.

The estimated cost of preliminaries (such as scaffolding) was £10.5 million. But Unite was charged £22.4 million. The estimated cost of drilling holes in blockwork walls was £91,000. But Unite was charged £1.3 million. The estimated cost of screeds was £79,000. But Unite was charged £404,000. The estimated cost of rainscreen cladding was £700,000. But Unite was charged £3,310,000.

The awarding of the contract, the creation of the Black Horse Company (the "special purpose vehicle" which was the mechanism through Unite paid the Flanagan Group), and the exploding costs of the project were never discussed by the Unite Executive Council (EC).

Only in January 2021, after a series of media exposés, did the union's EC discuss the project. McCluskey and Beckett (who had taken over as the union's Finance Director) attributed the explosion in costs to the Flanagan Group's use of directly employed union labour on nationally agreed rates of pay.

But, says the report, such factors would or should have been factored into the initial estimated costs. In any case, they would not have sufficed to account for the subsequent explosion in costs. Even worse, there is no evidence that the Flanagan Group actually used only directly employed labour on appropriate rates of pay.

The report points to the friendly relations between McCluskey and the Flanagan Group bosses. One of the latter "consistently organised and paid for" McCluskey's tickets for Liverpool foot-

ball games, as well as arranging flights for McCluskey, "including at least one private jet flight".

The report gives seven specific examples of games when this (allegedly) happened, including tickets and a private jet booking for McCluskey and his partner Karie Murphy for the 2019 UEFA Champions League Final in Madrid. Four of the games also included matchday hospitality.

McCluskey has denied these allegations. He claims that he always paid for his own tickets and travel costs. If true, this is arguably even more damning. How many Unite members can afford to pay £45,000 – the cost of travel to/from Madrid by private jet – to watch their football team play away from home?

Underlying problems

The closing section of the report looks at "the deeper underlying problems with the union's governance structures and the dominant culture which developed under Len McCluskey as General Secretary."

The report's conclusion: The Unite EC failed to hold McCluskey to account over the Birmingham project because it was dominated by the United Left (UL) faction.

The UL, to which McCluskey himself belonged, used its domination of the EC and other union committees to protect McCluskey against criticism and calls for transparency. The result was "a blind eye culture".

Membership of the EC and other constitutional bodies often depended on toeing the UL party line: "Lay representatives on Unite's internal committees risked losing their seats if they made their opposition to the UL known."

The UL also had control of the selection panels which interviewed people for jobs as Unite officers. For any candidate looking for a job, "membership of the UL was a clear advantage". The "vast majority" of successful applicants between 2018 and 2020 were UL members or supporters.

After Graham's election as General Secretary in 2021, the report contin-

ues, the UL attempted to block investigations into the Birmingham project, including by "deliberately trying to make meetings inquorate and stop the normal business of the union."

The report quotes from an interview with the current EC chair Andy Green (formerly a member of the UL):

"He was fed with a narrative by UL and the Progressive United Left Scotland (PULS) that Graham was not the right person to be General Secretary. ... The focus of the UL and PULS was the reports [into the Birmingham project]. As their expected release and prominence grew, so too did the narrative of opposition against them and her."

The report concludes with a section entitled "Never Again: Time to Clean Up the Union".

Suggested measures to achieve this goal include "stopping the endemic of empty factionalism dominating the bureaucracy of Unite", "establishing a Democracy Commission" to create new rules of governance, and the possible creation of "additional oversight bodies elected by lot".

The report clearly shows that Unite was ripped off – very badly – in the construction of the Birmingham project. But it does not accuse McCluskey of outright corruption. Legally, it could not do so anyway. The report goes no further than referencing "potentiality criminality" and the fact that "incompetence is not a crime".

The report accurately highlights the role played by the UL in the scandal of the project. Out of loyalty to McCluskey, it failed to ask questions about the project. And when inquiries were launched into the project after Graham's election, the UL consistently attempted to block them.

But the report is weak on the question of "What Next?"

A Democracy Commission proposed by the report provides an opening. But it is not a mechanism for establishing rank-and-file control. And selecting (additional) committee memberships by lot is certainly no part of a programme for union democracy. □

Our record on Unite

By Ann Field

The “Interim Report into Allegations of Historical Corruption” published by Unite in late July 2025 exposes something rotten in the state of Unite.

The Report had a specific remit – investigation of Unite affiliated services, and investigation of the construction of the Birmingham project – subsequently narrowed down even further by the threat of an injunction if the union were to publish anything about its affiliated services.

But looking at the bigger picture of conflicts within Unite in recent years allows for a better understanding of the strengths – and weaknesses – of the Report, and also an assessment of our own role as the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty in Unite during that time.

When McCluskey first stood for election as Unite General Secretary, in 2010, we advocated a critical vote for him: “Despite our criticisms of his record as Unite Assistant General Secretary, and despite the limitations of his election manifesto, the AWL is calling for a vote for McCluskey.”

Although the United Left (UL) in 2010 was an infinitely healthier organisation than it is now, we were also critical of its limitations: “The United Left varies from region to region but it tends towards being an old-style Broad Left which focuses disproportionately (but not exclusively) on union-internal elections.”

In 2014, over a decade before the publication of the Interim Report, we were sharply critical of the role which the UL had come to play after McCluskey’s election in 2010, and the ‘quality’ of applicants for jobs with Unite:

“The UL is doggedly loyal to McCluskey and the ‘left’ leadership and officials of the union. Much of what passes for discussion at UL meetings centres on getting ‘their’ people elected to committees and appointed to positions. A tradition of political appointments in Unite results in the raising of some spectacularly incompetent and lazy individuals to positions of authority within the union.”

The same article flagged up the issue of international junkets (mentioned in passing in last week’s Interim Report: “Those committee positions provided opportunities for overseas travel”):

“Internationally, Unite seems to have failed to notice the role of trade unions or their need for support in countries like Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, Indonesia or Turkey. Instead, it spends a phenomenal amount of attention on Cuba, sending officials on junkets to Havana.”

In the 2017 Unite General Secretary election we again called for a critical vote for McCluskey:

“McCluskey’s slick campaign con-

ceals a number of problems, including the gap which separates his election rhetoric from reality, and the gap between his policies and the policies which Unite should be championing. Nothing in his election material makes any linkage between his re-election and a greater degree of real rank-and-file control.”

Other criticisms included “the scandal of the equity share deal whereby Unite paid £400,000 towards the cost of McCluskey’s £700,000 central-London flat” and the grovelling statement issued by (some) McCluskey supporters in response to an internal report on misogynistic bullying in the union:

“Through Len McCluskey’s leadership we (women) are building our leadership in workplace activism. We are appalled that this report has been misrepresented and used as a political football by candidates in the election for the post of Unite General Secretary.”

A subsequent article highlighted McCluskey’s reliance on the UL and union full-timers – 60 of the 64 EC members and an overwhelming majority of Unite full-timers signed a statement backing McCluskey – to secure his re-election:

“McCluskey is relying first and foremost on the Unite apparatus and the United Left election machine, rather than on political argument and membership engagement, to turn out the vote for him.”

By the time of the 2017 election, a major split had opened up in the UL.

In 2016 Scottish full-timers, with behind-the-scenes support from McCluskey, had launched the Progressive United Left Scotland (PULS) – mentioned in passing in the Interim Report, but with no further explanation – as an alternative to the existing UL Scotland (ULS).

A majority of the latter had committed the cardinal sin of criticising McCluskey and the Unite bureaucracy. Alone on the left, we did not hold back in our attacks on the creation of PULS and its political agenda. For example:

“No-one committed to rank-and-file control of Unite should have any truck with the charlatans who were prepared to lie, lie and lie again in organising last Saturday’s [founding meeting of PULS]. ...”

“Only in the fevered imagination of a latter-day Baron Munchausen could the meeting [last Saturday] be regarded as anything other than a sham, organised by charlatans for the purpose of wrecking the ULS. ...”

“Longstanding ULS members have been subjected to personalised abuse, the ULS has been dismissed as an ‘oppressive and undemocratic body’, and critics of PULS scorned as ‘a few self-interested individuals.’”

We were equally forthright, seven years ago, in exposing and attacking the fact that membership of PULS was a ticket to getting a full-time job with Unite (i.e. membership of PULS fulfilled the same role as membership of the UL, as described in the Interim Report):

“Are you interested in being a Unite full-timer? If you are – join PULS today! ... Just listen to what some of our satisfied customers have had to say: ‘When I attended my first team meeting in my new job with Unite, I was overjoyed to be working alongside of 35 fellow members of PULS!’ ...”

“Do you think you have what it takes to be a Unite full-timer? If you do, PULS wants to hear from you! PULS is an equal opportunities recruitment agency. We welcome applications from white males over the age of 50.”

Again alone on the left, we covered, in detail, the Sally Nailard case, summed up by the Employment Tribunal which upheld her claim for constructive unfair dismissal:

“We find that Unite did fail to support the claimant (Nailard) with respect to the behaviour of these elected officials. The claimant has shown that no findings were delivered to her, that no effective resolution or effective protection was provided, and that Unite failed to take disciplinary action under the Rulebook against those responsible for the harassment.”

McCluskey even sent an e-mail to the 2019 UL AGM denouncing, and calling for a vote against, a motion which we had submitted about the need for Unite to learn lessons from the case:

“This AGM notes with concern the outcome of the Nailard v Unite legal proceedings, especially the findings concerning gender-related harassment by male lay reps of a female union employee and the failure by Unite as an employer to discharge its duty of care. ...”

UL against democracy

In an article on the 2019 Unite Rules Revision Conference we attacked the UL for its role in preventing even a single step being taken towards democratisation of the union:

“While paying lip-service to the idea of a lay-member-led trade union, the UL backed the motions which strengthened the grip of the bureaucracy on the union. In fact, it was the UL which drew up and circulated such motions as model motions.”

The same article unearthed a quote from UL chair Jimmy Kelly which explained the reasons for the UL’s subservience to the Unite bureaucracy. Two years earlier he had written:

“While the UL can advise and criticise the bureaucracy, it cannot replace it nor

hold it to account in the manner put forward [by critics of the UL], as the UL already runs the bureaucracy and large numbers of UL members are part of the bureaucracy, including, of course, the General Secretary.”

By the summer of 2020 the opening shots were being fired in preparation for the 2021 Unite General Secretary election. Two candidates – Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner and Howard Beckett – were bidding for the UL nomination.

We condemned McCluskey for – in the event, unsuccessfully – backing Beckett:

“Beckett is a millionaire. In 2011 he and his partners sold their law firm for £2.6 million. As Head of the Unite Legal Department, he has squandered millions of members’ money on no-hope legal proceedings. In public, McCluskey has maintained a stance of neutrality between Turner and Beckett. In reality, he has ‘groomed’ Beckett to be his successor.”

In another article, we succinctly described McCluskey-backed Beckett as “a character for whom the term ‘fake left’ could have been designed.” Equally succinctly, a further article summed up the record of Unite’s Legal Department under Beckett:

“The Legal Department has become dysfunctional. It has squandered millions of pounds on no-hope cases (Sally Nailard, Anna Turley, etc.) which would not have been of any benefit to anyone (apart from some Unite full-timers) even if Unite had won them.”

Following Graham’s election as General Secretary in 2021, we summed up the record of McCluskey and the UL as:

“Although the now departed Len McCluskey was elected in 2010 as the candidate committed to lay membership democracy, Unite became increasingly full-timer-driven under his regime, with full-timers undermining the most basic elements of lay democracy. ... The fate of the left in Unite in recent years – in the form of the UL – was to function as an appendage of the General Secretary.”

In a later article we likewise wrote:

“The UL has been the “traditional” left in Unite since the union’s creation. According to its website, ‘we are socialists ... we campaign for socialist candidates in Unite elections to ensure our union is led by socialists.’

But the UL’s socialism has always been mostly of the *Morning Star* variety. Despite a sizeable opposition within its ranks, it ended up functioning as a kind of praetorian guard for Len McCluskey during his terms of office as Unite General Secretary.”

And in another article we wrote: “The UL has always postured as left, but its

democracy

track record has been one of subservience to former General Secretary Len McCluskey and promoting the politics of the Stalinist *Morning Star*."

On the specific issue of the Birmingham project, we have consistently called for the facts to be made known to the membership, right through from April and December of 2022 to April and early July of this year.

Since Graham's election as General Secretary we have, despite our criticisms of her record, been clear in condemning the role played by UL members on the EC:

"There is plenty for which Graham should be criticised: ...But rather than open up a debate about such issues, the UL uses its EC majority as a base from which to conduct ongoing trench warfare against Graham – motivated in the main by its belief that the General Secretary's post should be in the gift of the UL.

"Nothing could be more hypocritical than a body which claims to be in favour of a lay-membership-led union running to the High Court for a ruling on union-internal issues [as the UL did in the spring of this year]. This gambit may well backfire very badly on the UL 'EC majority'. And hopefully it will."

We have also reported in some detail on Howard Beckett's unsuccessful Employment Tribunal claim for constructive unfair dismissal, humiliatingly thrown out on all counts.

The Interim Report published by Unite last week had a very limited remit. It therefore cannot be faulted for its narrow focus on recent events. But placing those events in their broader historical background does help rectify some imbalances in the report.

Perhaps it will also help jog the memories of some Unite members and employees about the roles which they have played in recent years.

The Interim Report's broadbrush portrayal of the UL and its servility towards McCluskey is not a revelation. Some of us – not just the Alliance for Workers Liberty – have been saying it for years.

But the AWL has certainly been saying it louder and more frequently than others. And we have not waited for one of our number to be elected General Secretary – an admittedly rather unlikely scenario – before doing so. We campaigned at the time, rather than publish a report after the event.

(The drafting of the section in the Interim Report on the UL could usefully have been put out to tender. We would have done a better job. Our services also come a lot cheaper than those of a KC.)

The Interim Report refers to the discussion about the Birmingham project at the specially convened EC meeting

in January 2021. The (barebones) minutes of the meeting are still available online.

A glance at the attendance record of the meeting reveals a number of names who happily voted to endorse the report presented by McCluskey and Beckett to the meeting – but who, more recently, have self-righteously declared themselves "shocked" by the failure of the EC to hold McCluskey to account.

The Interim Report makes passing reference to PULS. It is no criticism of the Report's authors to point out that they omit to mention that the founding meeting of PULS in 2016 was enthusiastically attended by some Unite staff who, once the wind changed direction, became equally enthusiastic supporters of Graham.

The Report promises to "stop the endemic of empty factionalism dominating the bureaucracy of Unite". Pro-Graham factionalism, one therefore has to assume, counts as a different, positive, kind of factionalism, specific examples of which are:

The role played by members of Graham's Organising Department in campaigning for PULS candidates in the 2020 EC elections; campaigning for Graham's election as General Secretary in 2021; and, more recently, phoning delegates to this year's Policy Conference in order to warn them against the UL.

The Report also promises the creation of a Democracy Commission. But this was promised by Graham over four years ago, in her 2021 election manifesto. And what is likely to be a top-down Democracy Commission, with meetings probably 'facilitated' by Unite full-timers, is a world away from an actual rank-and-file movement for democratisation of Unite.

The possibility of "additional oversight bodies elected by lot" – which presumably means selected, not elected, by lot – is even less attractive. Slave-owning Athenian democracy of the sixth century BC is not an inspiration for a twenty-first century trade union.

We have outlined what a genuinely democratic Unite would look like. What we wrote in the aftermath of Graham's election in 2021 is equally applicable now, in the aftermath of the Interim Report's publication:

"The potential a Graham victory represents is less to do with whether the person of Sharon Graham, through the genius of her leadership or force of will, can transform Unite into a more militant and effective union. We want rank-and-file reps and activists to use the openings created to carry forward a project of democratic reform, driven from below." □



UNITE Hotel and Conference Centre

The dogs that didn't bark

By Dale Street

Published on 22 July, the Unite the Union report "Interim Report into Allegations of Historical Corruption" paints a damning picture of the massive overspend on the union's Birmingham conference centre and hotel, built by the Flanagan Group when Len McCluskey was the union's General Secretary.

The report also highlights McCluskey's close relationship with Flanagan Group bosses. One of the latter "consistently organised and paid for" McCluskey's tickets for Liverpool football games, as well as arranging flights for McCluskey, "including at least one private jet flight".

The private jet flight, for McCluskey and his partner Karie Murphy, was for the 2019 UEFA Champions League Final in Madrid. A return trip to Madrid by private jet costs around £45,000.

Surely an exposé worthy of coverage by the socialist left – trade union bureaucrat who headed Britain's biggest union (if you count the retired members) lived life of luxury thanks to building bosses while members' living standards slumped?

Coverage could have been neatly coupled with the earlier exposé of STUC General Secretary Roz Foyer as the owner of five homes, plus a recently purchased plot of land in the north of Glasgow to the value of £100,000.

Instead, there has been silence.

As *Jewish News* political editor Lee Harpin – certainly not a left-wing journalist, and someone whose hostility to McCluskey dates back to when the latter was a cheerleader for Corbyn in his role as Labour Party leader – tweeted:

"Media blackout on Len McCluskey story from: Zarah Sultana, Jeremy Corbyn, Skwawkbox, Novara Media, Peace and Justice Project, Collective, Unite United Left, Aaron Bastani, Stats for Lefties, Crispin Flintoff Show, Red Labour, Ordinary Left, The Canary, and the *Morning Star*."

A day later Harpin again tweeted: "Len McCluskey Unite story media blackout extends: Momentum, Andrew Fisher, Owen Jones, Open Labour, Michael Walker, Ash Sarkar, Tory Fibs, Stop the War Coalition, Labour Hub, Rachael Swindon, The Left Bible."

A glance at some of the sites referenced by Harpin – Skwawkbox, Unite United Left, *Morning Star*, Stop the War, Ash Sarkar, Novara Media – confirms that, over a fortnight later, they still have not given this prime-time story any coverage.

A subsequent tweet by Harpin pointed to the likely reason for this curious silence: "Exactly what role will Len play in your new party, @jeremycorbyn, @zarahsultana? Do the leaders of Your Party still believe that the enemies of the working-class travel by private jet?"

Harpin was shit-stirring. But who can be surprised that he took the opportunity of an open goal? The silence he highlighted was dictated by the role being played by McCluskey – and Karie Murphy – in the Corbyn-Sultana project.

As *Socialist Worker* – another left-wing paper, along with *The Socialist*, that has failed to cover the Unite Interim Report – had reported just a month earlier in an article about a rally held in Liverpool:

"Len McCluskey, the former Unite union general secretary, went slightly further than promising a 'left wing voice'. 'In a very short time there will be a credible, left, radical party,' he said. 'We know who should lead it, and he's here,' he said, pointing to Corbyn. And after that the crowd burst into chants of 'Oh Jeremy Corbyn'."

Criticising McCluskey, and Murphy, would undermine their respective roles as the godfatherly patron and key organiser (a recipe for disaster; but their problem, not ours) of the Corbyn-Sultana project.

continued on page IV →



→ from page III

The sole voice on the left, or what presents itself as the left, to have attempted to defend McCluskey in response to publication of the Interim Report is Reunite the Union (RTU), a new grouping in Unite set up in preparation for this year's Executive Council election and next year's General Secretary election.

Unsurprisingly, it does not do a very good job.

The Interim Report, says RTU, is "a gift to the right-wing media and brings our union into disrepute". Its release has

been "a disgraceful act of political theatre". It is "irresponsible trial by media", and "narcissistic and Trumpian" in both form and content.

But such hyperbole fails to cover up the RTU statement's lack of substance.

While denying that there was any wrongdoing under McCluskey, the RTU statement simultaneously argues that things are still as bad as they were under McCluskey: "The problems of governance, lack of accountability over the union's finances, and culture have all continued under Sharon Graham to this day."

The RTU statement condemns the

Interim Report for "alleging a link between membership of internal factions and officer appointments", which at least has the virtue of lending the statement a certain otherworldliness.

The statement criticises Graham for spending "hundreds of thousands of Unite members' money on expensive lawyers favoured by the Royal Family to defend Andy Green's position (as chair of the Unite Executive Council (EC)). As a result, he is now only in office at the behest of a High Court judge's ruling."

This omits to mention: a) it was the United Left faction on the EC which initiated legal proceedings and which

then billed Unite after it lost its no-hope case; b) Green remains chair because Unite EC standing orders require a two-thirds majority, not a simple majority, to remove the chair.

In their different ways – one by silence, and one by misrepresentation – the champions of the Corbyn-Sultana project and the RTU are both refusing to face reality.

And there are even bigger problems heading down the railway track: Once the South Wales police investigation has concluded, the redacted section of the Interim Report on Unite's affiliated services will be published. □

Reunite Unite?

By Ann Field

Reunite the Union is a new platform for members, reps, officers, organisers and staff who see the need to end the divisions in our union and set a new direction for our future", proclaimed a leaflet ("It's Time to Reunite the Union") distributed at last week's Unite the Union national policy conference.

"Our union has been divided by its leadership, we have had a series of disastrous industrial defeats and major site closures," the leaflet continued, "politically, our voice is missing. They (the leadership) have alienated us from the wider trade union movement and abandoned internationalism. This cannot continue. We urgently need to reunite."

Although it describes itself as "a new platform", Reunite the Union (RtU) has had a low-key social media presence since November of last year. But now the time is ripe for RtU to raise its profile: Executive Council elections are being held this year, and a General Secretary election next year.

Despite nobly proclaiming itself to be for unity over division, light over darkness, and good over evil, RtU is very much in the factionally driven anti-Sharon-Graham camp in Unite. The highlights of the RtU chargesheet against General Secretary Graham read:

- Unite staff are bullied, har-

assed and spied upon on a daily basis. Staff in the Organising Department are used as a rent-a-mob. Industrial disputes are exploited by Graham in order to raise her personal profile.

- Graham holds the union's Executive Council in contempt. She has created a toxic culture in Unite in which reps, staff and officers are smeared as the enemy within. Unite members fighting to save their jobs have been abandoned.

- The union lacks a political strategy. Lay-member control is ignored and attacked. Reps who step out of line are harassed and threatened. "Graham's stance in the face of genocide in Palestine – two years of forced silence and division – is a betrayal of who we are."

Serious activists in Unite could have a meaningful argument about most of these allegations. That is one aspect of what lay-membership democracy is all about. In the hands of the RtU, by contrast, the denunciations serve only as a demagogic prop for the RtU demand: "Sharon has to go for the sake of unity!"

The RtU chargesheet against Graham manages to be more hysterical than the one compiled by the United Left (the 'traditional' Broad Left grouping in Unite) but falls well short of the foaming-at-the-mouth allegations churned out by Skwawkbox and InsideSha-

ron'sUnite ("part of the resistance inside the Sharon Dictatorship, fighting to save Unite").

To be fair to the anti-Graham contras, they do not have a monopoly on demagoguery and character assassination.

Demagoguery

In the pro-Graham camp The Real Unite ("the truth of what's going on at Unite") and the hilariously named Officers-4MembersNotFactions ("officers in Unite fed up with members of old-school factions who put reps & members last; being a Unite officer is a privilege") display a servility to Graham well beyond anything the United Left ever displayed towards McCluskey.

(The "privilege" of being a Unite officer presumably includes their current practice of phoning lay reps and activists in order to mobilise them against the United Left. That's what being for members but not factions means?)

Despite differences of tone and language, RtU may turn out to be no more than an electoral revamp of the long-standing United Left faction.

The substance of its criticisms of Graham are identical to those of the United Left. So too is its vocal support for "the Executive Council 31" (i.e. the 31 EC members who took Unite to the High Court in an attempt to oust the EC chairperson, and then sent

the £500,000 legal bill to Holborn after they had lost on all counts).

Material on the RtU Twitter account also suggests a lash-up between RtU and the United Left, roping in the veteran Unite Alliance as well.

(Unlike the United Left, Unite Alliance was prepared to criticise McCluskey and did so frequently. In terms of specific policies, it was more 'moderate' than the United Left. It disappeared off the scene in 2023, but its website suddenly came back to life in March of this year.)

From their own point of view, a United Left makeover in the form of RtU makes sense.

It would allow the United Left to distance itself from its past role in matters such as the awarding of contracts for members' affiliated services and the explosion in costs of the Birmingham project: Nothing to do with us! We're a brand new organisation!

It would also allow the United Left to distance itself from its past (and present) role in creating the toxic atmosphere within Unite for which it seeks to scapegoat Graham alone: Nothing to do with us! We're for unity, not division!

RtU has already announced that "the Executive Council 31" will be the core of its slate for the EC elections taking place later this year, and that Simon Dubbins, head of the union's International and Research De-

partment, will be its candidate in next year's General Secretary election.

RtU does not represent a new beginning for Unite, nor a potential revival of lay democracy. It stands very much in the tradition of the United Left (and, on closer inspection, may soon turn out to be no more than the United Left in a different guise).

The pro-Graham faction is certainly different, but arguably not better.

The core of the pro-Graham faction in Unite is the staff of the union's Organising Department (which Graham headed up prior to her election as General Secretary) plus a layer of largely uncritical activists who are united primarily by their hostility to the United Left rather than by a positive programme for trade union democracy.

And on certain specific policies – such as increased defence spending, airport expansion, and North Sea oil-drilling licences – neither faction offers a real alternative.

The transformation of Unite into a genuinely lay-membered trade union is a matter for the union's membership, not the Unite bureaucracy. Democratisation of Unite means mobilisation of the membership, not a palace coup by competing factions of courtesans. □

• Sources and links for all four articles at bit.ly/4-unite

Trump, Epstein, and the crimes of the powerful

By Tom Harrison

The producers of the 1997 film *Wag the Dog* starring Hoffman and De Niro never dreamt life would imitate art. The movie's premise had a US president caught in a compromising situation with a 14-year-old girl guide. His spin doctors frantically ran around trying to deflect the media via numerous diversions, including war with Albania.

There was a lot of deflection and distraction in July from the Trump White House in efforts to bury the so-called Epstein files. It varied from a Trump demand the Washington Conquerors re-adopt their old racist name "Redskins", through Coca-Cola putting cane sugar into their drinks, to accusations Barack Obama plotted to overturn the 2016 election results. Thankfully there's been no new war. So far, none of these ploys have succeeded in making the Epstein controversy go away.

A key tenet among QAnon conspiracy believers in the MAGA movement had been that Trump would expose an elite paedophile ring supposedly running America.

It's finally dawning on some of these deluded souls that maybe the president whose many other heinous acts they have either excused or denied is actually guilty of crimes which they might not readily excuse were the truth to come out.

The whole business stinks to high heaven and a desperate cover up is underway. The abrupt turnaround by leading regime figures, AG Pam Bondi and FBI chiefs Patel and Bongino, from bigging up the release of the files as a set of bombshell revelations to now saying they contain nothing of consequence, strains the bounds of credulity.

Trump doesn't want the files released

because his name is littered across many Epstein-related documents. A thousand FBI operatives were placed on 24 hour shift to trawl through them seeking out any mention of Trump. He is up to his neck as far as friendship with Epstein is concerned. The relationship only ended when Epstein discovered Trump was "a crook"! Trump's telling of it is that the break was down to Epstein "poaching" his staff.

Trump has enlisted Epstein's partner in crime Ghislaine Maxwell to help out. Maxwell, currently serving 20 years in jail for sex trafficking, is another of the entitled rich who believed that position allowed her to do anything she likes. She inherits the attitude from her father Robert, the press baron who defrauded workers at the Mirror Group of their pensions.

Conditions

Maxwell has been complaining about the conditions in her low-security Florida prison she's serving time in. They might not be great, but they are a darn sight better than the notorious Alcatraz cages in that state where immigrants caught in the ICE net are penned up. Really Maxwell thinks people of her type shouldn't go to prison.

When journalists have asked Trump about Maxwell they have been baffled by his response of "I wish her well." You'd be hard put to find him saying that about anyone else. You don't mix in the kind of circles Trump did in New York, though, without knowing about Omertà.

Wishing someone well is mafia code for keep your trap shut or else. That Epstein died in what many have seen as suspicious circumstances is not lost on Maxwell. Yet now she is no longer apparently required to maintain her si-

lence. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche spent two days down in Florida interviewing her allegedly to gain new information regarding Epstein. Maxwell is hoping for a Presidential pardon or at least a reduction of sentence for "cooperating".

Prior to his appointment to government Blanche was Trump's personal criminal lawyer. A greater conflict of interest is difficult to imagine! It's hard to believe that any testimony coming from Maxwell would be harmful to Trump. Twice charged with perjury, and guilty of assisting abuse of minors, she can be cut some slack as long as she comes up with the goods to exonerate Trump.

In dictatorships when rumours get out concerning the depraved behaviour of the dear leader, they are spread by word of mouth in whispers to avoid the attention of the secret police. Things haven't reached that stage yet in the USA, but several media outlets have come under attack.

Bernie Sanders has called out Trump's war on the media as the authoritarian attack on democracy it is, denouncing two corporations for caving in to Trump's frivolous lawsuits. Disney – owners of ABC News – paid out \$16 million for the sin of "falsely describing" the type of sexual assault Trump inflicted on E Jean Carroll. Then Paramount caved in over supposed bias in the editing of a Kamala Harris interview on the CBS news magazine show 60 Minutes.

The cases would probably have been thrown out when they went to court, but fear Trump would get revenge in other ways by blocking profitable takeovers and sell-offs made the media companies capitulate.

Satire has been another victim with Paramount cancelling The Late Show

"for financial reasons" as another sacrificial offering to Trump. Its host Stephen Colbert, whose show tops the ratings in late night TV, led the audience chant of "Go Fuck Yourselves" in protest against corporations who bend the knee to the wannabe king.

Revenge

The creators of South Park lent Colbert a bit of revenge though. They'd just signed a \$1.5 billion deal for their show to be streamed on Paramount+. Little did Paramount know that the first episode would be an FU vicious skewering of Trump with scenes including him in bed with Satan cold-shouldering his advances!

Now the unlikely champion of the free press is... *Wall Street Journal* owner Rupert Murdoch! The WSJ published a "bawdy letter" Trump sent to Epstein to "celebrate" his fiftieth birthday. True to form, Trump denounced this as a "hoax" and issued a \$10 billion lawsuit.

Murdoch looks unlikely to cave in. That will keep the whole Epstein issue at the forefront of media attention in the coming months, despite the Murdoch-owned Fox News's low-key reporting of all things Epstein recently.

It may seem that Trump is "on a roll". But employment figures are starting to go down. With higher tariffs, hefty price rises are on the way, and they will be paid for by working people.

The Epstein issue isn't going away. It is symptomatic of how the privileged ruling class operates in the US. Its attempted cover-up is reminiscent of Nixon over Watergate.

Such scandals can bring down the whole house of cards, if the left and the labour movement have the energy and confidence to use the openings to increase mobilisation. □

Against tariffs, unite workers across borders

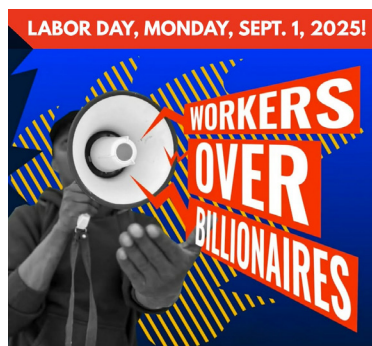
By Martin Thomas

Donald Trump has imposed huge new tariffs without the bond-market kickback he got in April. Back then, he said his ultra-extravagant rates were a bargaining ploy.

Now Trump has got few and sketchy deals, and even under those deals the tariff rates are very high compared to recent decades, as with the 15% for EU and 50% for steel and aluminium.

The rates for other countries are higher still, high enough to be catastrophic for several small countries dependent on exporting to the USA and which have nothing to "offer" the USA for a deal.

The big picture is a sudden



The 14 June anti-Trump events were the biggest one-day protest in US history. The next big protest is 1 Sep, "Labor Day" in USA

shift from the relatively all-embracing and free-flowing world market evolving since 1945, not to a "trade blocs" world like the 1930s, but a patchwork of individual bilateral trade deals.

Today's world is very trade-dependent. Worldwide exports plus imports are, since 2008, 60% of world output, compared to 20% in 1968, despite more "output" being of items difficult to trade internationally like health care and education. Many production processes rely on specialised inputs from diverse sources. Parts, equipment, and processed inputs for industry are now 50-odd % of trade, more than raw materials (maybe 13%) or final-consumer goods (30-odd %).

Escalate

It is still probable that few other countries will escalate tariffs seriously. But the blow to world trade will be serious.



The USA will probably suffer (more than China, or so I argued in *Solidarity* 748).

A full-scale world slump? That may well come from some filtering-through of the trade disturbances into financial-asset markets. We can't know how or at what pace.

The United Auto Workers,

one of the strongest unions in the USA, has opposed Trump but generally supported his tariffs. Now it is "deeply angered by the Trump administration's announced trade deal with Japan". Let's hope that is a step towards seeing worker unity across borders, not tariffs, as the answer to world-market pains.

The UK's "special deal" is no triumph. The labour movement should look to reducing barriers with neighbouring countries in Europe, and building workers' unity across those barriers. Reverse Brexit!

Join the protest against Trump's state visit, 2pm 17 September, Embankment, London. □

Epping, SUTR, and the police

By Caroline Jeffries

After far-right anti-migrant protests outside the Bell Hotel in Epping made national news, thousands of anti-racist counter-protesters assembled in the area on 27 July in a demonstration called by Stand Up to Racism, a group mainly organised by SWP.

The protest started outside of Epping tube station, about a mile away from the hotel. Bizarrely, SUTR had hired security guards. I am unsure if this is what Trotsky meant by working-class mass self-defence militias.

It was unclear at first if the demonstration would be static in a station car-park, as a litany of speeches were made there, many by SWP regulars. The general message of the speeches: racism is bad in our multicultural society and we can beat the far right. There was no mention of a wider class dimension to the rise of the far right, and the sentiments, while positive, do little to present an actual road to defeating Reform.

The demonstration finally set off towards the hotel with a heavy police presence. Around many corners lurked right wingers heckling and filming. Within about five minutes of marching one attacked a Black steward and the police were ready to arrest the victim, until enough pressure was put on the police to let the steward go (who would have thought the police would have been harsher on the Black left wing protester than the white, violent far-right protester with a Harvard Uni-

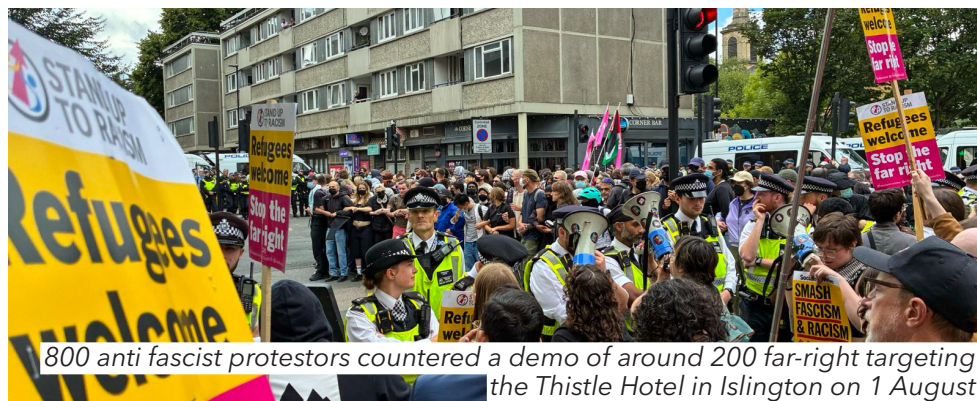
versity shirt?).

Instead of marching through urbanised areas, we were marching through leafy suburbs, sometimes completely in wooded areas and farmland. The response from residents was mixed. Some were waving and clapping, others gawking, others screaming anti-migrant hate (one resident yelled at an anti-racist protester for blackberry picking, ending the exchange with "I hope you choke").

March

The march was eventually led into a large field that had tall fences and police vans in between the anti-racists and the far right. The whole situation was akin to dogs who aggressively bark at each other through a closed window, knowing there's no way they can get to each other. Shortly after arriving, we were told to march back to the station (without going past the hotel in question) by the SUTR stewards after they declared "victory", like when parents of a young child have to tell them they won a game of Connect Four, despite the child not fully understanding how to count to four. There was a frenzy amongst the stewards in getting the march back to the station.

I often hear criticisms of the SWP-dominated Stand Up to Racism's anti-fascist work being showy and vapid, but I left feeling that despite not getting to the hotel, this had been a pretty good day out. At least until someone on our side was arrested.



There was some commotion at the back of the demo and a few people started to walk back to see what was going on. At that point multiple stewards who I know to be SWP members told us it was nothing and not to walk back. In fact, in a scuffle with a far-right protester, an anti-racist comrade had been arrested. Unsurprising from the police, but the stewards were demanding that we all leave the comrade to be arrested.

There were many objections, mostly from younger people asking why not try to de-arrest them. A few stewards became angry, yelling at us, one saying "oh who cares they've been arrested, I've been arrested before, it's not that big a deal". One steward ended up trying to drag a protester away and yelled at someone else objecting to his behaviour "I've been doing this longer than you've been alive". Protesters wouldn't move, so the police van couldn't leave. At some point the stewards made a

wall between the protesters and the police and marched forward to help the van carry the person away. In all the fury, one comrade held up a hastily made sign: "SUTR work with the cops to police us and help cops arrest comrades".

This certainly doesn't feel like a victory. What is the role of performative anti-fascism that is on board with a bourgeois state that is hurting the migrant working class, that has a nice point A to point B march and no more? What about the working class's ability to defend itself? Well, why not just hire largely Black and Asian security guards and sack off anyone to the police who doesn't follow the demo's respectability rules?

A hi-vis gives people unmerited and boundless authority that exists only in their minds. Perhaps I will pack my own hi-vis next time and tell people to go back to the police van. □

Why I joined Workers' Fight



How I became a socialist

By Bruce Robinson

I was encouraged by the recent supplement in *Solidarity* on Workers' Fight 1971-5 and the series of articles by younger comrades saying why they had become socialists or joined the AWL to tell the story of how I came to its predecessor Workers' Fight.

I joined Workers' Fight in mid-1973. I was not new to the Left. I had been a member of the International Socialists (IS, forerunner of the SWP) for over three years before resigning as part of a group of ten in Oxford in December 1972. Despite being in IS I saw myself as more of an "orthodox Trotskyist" than a Cliffite who

swore allegiance to the theories of state capitalism and the permanent arms economy. However I did not join the Trotskyist Tendency (the group around Workers' Fight after it had fused with IS in 1968) at the time.

One of the things that has attracted me to IS was its relative openness, and a sense that the openness was coming to an end was one of the reasons I left. The Oxford branch split 50-50 over whether to expel the Trotskyist Tendency at a Special Conference in December 1971. Subsequently the atmosphere in the branch became toxic, particularly aimed at one opposition comrade. More generally, it became clear that the leadership preferred an uncritical and homogeneous membership – a process that ended with the loss of much of IS's trade

union base in 1975. However the main reason for leaving IS was political.

We wrote two documents which were critical of IS, one after we left. The main issues were Ireland, Europe (IS had just changed its line to oppose British entry to the EU), IS's organisational concept of party building and, related to that, its belief or pretence that the growth of the shop stewards' movement and industrial militancy would enable the bypassing of Labour and the then-sizeable Communist Party as obstacles, so that the role of IS became one of "linking up the fragments". We also challenged the official history of IS.

Once outside, our group gradually fragmented, with four of us joining Workers' Fight. I did so because on most issues the positions cor-

responded to those we had developed within IS and I felt the need to give them an organisational expression.

I had initially been sceptical of Workers' Fight's position on the general strike and was influenced by the so-called Right Opposition in IS (the main remnant of which today, much mutated politically, is the RCG), who opposed its use and instead focused narrowly on demands on the Labour leaders. I came to reject the opposition to the general strike slogan as a result of the events of 1972 (the miners' strike, the jailing of the Pentonville Five, which nearly did lead to a general strike, the use of flying pickets and factory occupations). Workers' Fight, in contrast to the Right Opposition, drew on negative aspects of the experience of May 1968 in France (demobilisation by

means of elections) and on writings of Rosa Luxemburg not previously known in English to propose an open ended use of the General Strike slogan that corresponded to the dynamics of the struggle.

Leading members of the group came to Oxford to discuss with us, so we could discuss the group's position on any issues where there were lingering doubts before joining. Having signed up, I was plunged into discussions about Workers' Fight's shift to an orientation to the Labour Party and about [locating ourselves](#) in terms of the history of the Fourth International. A document entitled [41 Theses](#) was discussed at a conference but only 25 or so were ever written, that being enough to resolve the outstanding issues. But that's another story... □

Who will shape the “new party”?



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

More than 600,000 people have signed up to “keep informed” on the Corbyn-Sultana new party – an extraordinary figure, twice the number who voted for Corbyn in Labour’s 2016 leadership contest. With only a portion converting to paying members, the new organisation could overtake Labour’s February 2025 membership figure of 309,000.

Yet there are many unanswered questions with the opacity of the party’s formation. As far as we know, the initiative is in the hands of two competing groups: the original Organising Committee of “Collective”, which began before the 2024 election, and a separate faction of Corbyn supporters using their own WhatsApp group. We don’t know, and the people who have signed up don’t know, what the tensions between the two factions are. We also know little about the politics proposed, beyond “anti-austerity” and “anti-genocide”. The first step towards democracy must be open debate.

For now, Corbyn’s stated preference for a loose federation of grassroots and community groups seems to have lost out to Sultana and her allies wanting a centralised, membership-based party with defined policy and leadership structures. Corbyn has been interviewed by Owen Jones on YouTube about the plans, and Sultana by Novara Media: neither explicitly outlines the dispute, but a divergence is clear.

Corbyn emphasises the project being based on “lots of independent groups around the country”, councillors, activists, the People’s Assembly, suggesting an umbrella structure. Whether this could include organisations like the Socialist Party or RCP is unclear. The SWP remains cautious.

Corbyn has spoken against “turf wars” over influence in cities like Birmingham or Liverpool, calling instead for a federal set-up: his previous record suggests that means, based around groups of ex-Labour councillors. His exclusion of the Greens from the umbrella as “not socialist” appears arbitrary, given that the strongest councillor group allied with him, the Pendle Community Independents, has continued the coalition with the Lib Dems it had as Labour, and entered into an electoral pact with the Lib Dems against Labour. The Peace and Justice Project’s councillors’ statement, signed by one Pendle councillor, avoids any criticism of such deals. It opposes austerity, but it says nothing about how a rebel council could defeat or avoid cuts.

Both Corbyn and Sultana propose an electoralist focus, initially on the May 2026 local elections. But that raises further questions. Winning a few seats on anti-cuts rhetoric is not enough. To defeat cuts, councils must mobilise council workers, trade unionists, and communities. That is the real force for change – not electoralism alone.

Sultana talks of “networks” in tenants’ groups, trade unions, women’s refuges and food banks, but with no plan for collective struggle. Her focus is explicitly on the 2029 general election, and May 2026 council elections as a lead-in.

In her Novara interview, Sultana

framed the new party as a bottom-up membership organisation, with candidate selection driven by supporters. She also floated the idea of a “progressive alliance,” citing France’s New Popular Front as a model. That would presumably include Greens and independents, but not Labour.

Sultana, and a “Your Party” email of 1 August, promise a hybrid conference in the autumn, stating it will decide “everything” – leadership, structure, policy. How this will work is unclear. With even a fraction of 600,000 members, a delegate system will be necessary, but that is impossible without structured local branches.

Precedents

The precedents are not encouraging. Corbyn’s Labour loosened up the structures a bit, but continued the Blair-era domination of a “Leader’s Office” and Shadow Cabinet. The pro-Corbyn group Momentum, which had up to 60,000 supporters, had its structures shut down by an office coup. Thus the Corbyn legacy in Labour included neither structures democratised more than incrementally, nor a democratic infrastructure for the left. That facilitated Starmer’s easy shift to the right. Had even a fraction of those now signed up been properly active and organised inside Labour and affiliated unions since 2020, we’d be in a very different place today.

This new party is unlikely to become a “better Labour Party”. The Socialist Party is pushing Unite to disaffiliate from Labour, but if such moves succeed, the result will probably be less working-class political voice, not more. Without affiliation, unions lose much of their political

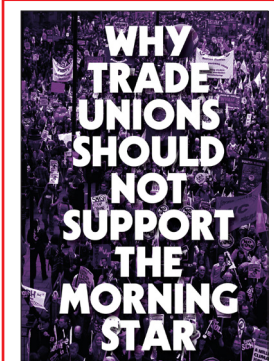
voice. Better to assert the unions’ voice in Labour and directly than to bail out as the Bakers and the RMT have done.

Another hard question: a strong electoral showing by the new party may well help Reform to victory in 2026 and 2029. Sultana’s answer, that her new venture will be the government after 2029 (maybe in coalition), is facile. Corbyn avoids the issue entirely, although his record suggests a more cautious approach. But the Reform risk isn’t just a Labour attack line – it’s a real strategic problem.

We will engage with this new project, but not just to cheer it on. We will argue for it to build democratic structures and activity outside electioneering. We will argue for positive working-class socialist politics, and for accountability for the councillors and MPs, rather than them being the decreed-in-advance leaders. We will argue for working with – not against – the Labour left.

Without being based on working-class struggle, and activity wider than the council chamber or Westminster, electioneering will not bring us forward. □

• See also online: Sultana-Corbyn – what the left groups say, bit.ly/s-c-left



£3 (inc. post) □
bit.ly/shop-wl

The Peggie-Upton-NHS Fife case



Debate

Our policy is generally to allow broad debate, especially of points of view we disagree with. The original version of this debate piece contained a paragraph misgendering someone, which we oppose. We apologise that it wasn’t corrected before being printed.

By Dale Street

Does a woman going through a menstrual flood have the right to get changed in private, without the presence of a biological male? That is the first of the two core questions raised by the Employment Tribunal proceed-

ings in Peggie v Upton and NHS Fife.

On Christmas Eve 2023 Peggie, an NHS Fife hospital nurse, went to her workplace’s female changing room because of a menstrual flood. Upton, a male-to-female trans, walked into the room. Peggie objected. There was an argument. Peggie was suspended and disciplinary proceedings initiated.

The second round of Tribunal proceedings concluded last week, with each day’s proceedings making the front pages of the Scottish press, as well as receiving some national coverage.

The (or my) answer to the first core question is: Yes.

There is a simple “common sense” argument: Of course

a woman having a menstrual flood should not be forced to get changed in the presence of a biological male (i.e. a man). But there are also various legal arguments in play.

Peggie’s right to privacy is covered by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to a private life). Because NHS Fife is a public body, the ECHR has direct application.

To argue that Peggie cannot invoke Article 8 would be to argue for a drastic and damaging shift in the bar to be met to invoke Article 8 rights. It would also run counter to existing ECHR caselaw, such as Valasinas v Lithuania and Yunosova v Azerbaijan.

Upton also has Article 8 rights. But not in this instance.

A male-to-female trans person who enters and uses a changing room has abandoned their Article 8 right to privacy.

In any case, the interference in Upton’s Article 8 rights (being barred from using a female changing room) is a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim, i.e. the upholding of Peggie’s Article 8 rights.

At the time of the incident Upton was not only a biological male, and still is, but also had the legal status of a male. Dr Upton did not have a Gender Recognition Certificate. If Upton had a legal ‘right’ to enter the female changing room, then any man did.

April’s Supreme Court judgment clarified that “sex” and “woman” mean biological sex/woman. A female single-sex

changing room is therefore for the use of women only. This is what the Equality Act has meant since 2010. It therefore applies to the 2023 Christmas Eve incident.

The second core question raised by the Tribunal proceedings is whether Peggie subsequently suffered harassment after challenging Upton’s presence.

Indisputably, the answer is: Yes. In fact, management’s conduct after the 2023 Christmas Eve incident is a case study of the low-life morals of the lanyard class and their aiders and abettors in the professional managerial class. □

• More online: bit.ly/pg-up
• See also our main coverage, on the fight for trans rights, p.5

The Labour left, one year on

By Kayden Jones

The Labour in Government: One Year On conference, organised by John McDonnell's Claim the Future on 19 July, gathered around 200 people despite heavy rain.

McDonnell opened with the McDonnell-Fisher report, which estimated £80bn in extra revenue would be needed annually to restore 2010 social-spending levels. Labour's mild 2024 manifesto and rigid fiscal rules would, he said, lead to public disappointment and, ultimately, electoral collapse.

At The World Transformed in 2023 McDonnell said that we are living in the "residue of Corbynism" and the next leftward shift would come through the economic crisis. He advised left MPs to "bite your tongue" and wait to strike at the right moment, citing *The Art of War*.

Now McDonnell says Labour's popularity has fallen faster than expected, even without an economic crisis, creating an "incredibly dangerous moment" with the rise of Reform (a "proto-fascist movement", he said, though he didn't elaborate).

He listed major betrayals of the past year: winter fuel payment cuts, disability cuts, and retention of the two-child benefit cap. Labour responded with partial concessions and harsh discipli-

nary measures for MPs who dissented.

McDonnell called for a "shared understanding" on the left to develop a shared programme to pressure the government, warning against sectarianism. He proposed a broad alignment, including Greens and members of the new party, to resist the far right. He also mentioned the war in Gaza and the proscription of Palestine Action, calling for the UK to become a "force for peace and justice". (What he meant remains unclear).

There were no opportunities to speak from the floor in this or the following sessions. Most of the conference was top-table speeches, with no input from striking workers or grassroots trade unionists.

Andrew Fisher, Corbyn's former policy chief, now a PCS official, described the 2024 manifesto as "part embedded austerity, part fiction." He cited worsening poverty and rising unemployment, but blamed most damage on Labour's own decisions.

Fisher highlighted that cuts in access to Personal Independence Payments were especially damaging politically, as they weren't in the manifesto. He debunked ministerial scare stories about "runs on the pound" and called for social investment over military spending hikes. He proposed wealth taxes, closing loopholes, rent caps, and windfall

taxes on banks to fund growth. Fisher criticised Starmer for offering no real solutions, only blaming the Tories, and warned of Labour echoing Reform's rhetoric ("Blue Labour").

Fisher argued that the left's biggest failure was its inability to organise and communicate, and that backing Labour's leadership amounted to a "unity of the graveyard." His session stood out for its focus on strategy and critique of Blue Labour.

Later sessions featured Lords, NGO reps, and MPs chairing, but no rank-and-file workers – mostly stats-heavy presentations and shopping lists of demands, rather than plans to win them.

Kate Pickett praised New Labour and Andy Burnham, calling for more conversation about basic income. Richard Burgon warned of the far right but ended vaguely, saying "we'll see" if Labour refuses to change.

On climate, Clive Lewis stood out for framing Labour's agenda as pro-capital and warning that even Reform now calls for public ownership. A speaker from GND Rising called for an "Attlee government" but overstated the movement's current strength.

Lord John Hendy's session on employment rights was the only discussion to mention strikes. There were a few floor contributions here, but most speakers weren't challenged.

McDonnell closed the day by arguing that Labour is failing to offer radical change, creating space for the far right. He suggested focusing on scrapping the two-child benefit cap as a campaign for the next six months. He pointed to recent partial victories on disability cuts and environmental legislation amendments.

The next conference of this group, in my view, should centre on campaigning to end child poverty (but not exclude other battles) and include reports from activists. It must involve rank-and-file unionists and provide real space for discussion.

We should take seriously the idea of uniting the left around campaigning. In CLPs where there has been fightback against benefit cuts, members could reach out to trade union branches and form local committees.

A campaign to abolish the cap could serve not only as a stand-alone fight but also as a model for collaboration between the Labour left, the Sultana-Corbyn party, and other forces. Now is the time for the left to relearn how to win. □

Left prepares for Labour conference

By Colin Foster

Labour Left Internationalists, Labour Campaign for Council Housing, and other groups are planning now for the Labour Party conference in Liverpool from 28 September.

The 2024 conference voted for restoration of the Winter Fuel Allowance, and forced the platform to withdraw a "Border Security" motion, but mostly it was right-wing-dominated. Partly that was down to lack of energy and coordination on the left. For example, even a tiny bit more focus by the left would have got demands for much more council house-building through the "priorities ballot" and onto conference floor.

2024 conference also, and unusually, had a lot of CLPs sending delegates but not sending motions. That was partly because CLPs had not got up to speed on the reintroduced "contemporary motions" procedure (removed 2018-23, though previously

in force ever since "motions" were reintroduced after being abolished by Gordon Brown in 2007), but partly, again, from lack of energy on the left.

This year LLI is pushing a template motion on green conversion, and there will surely be template motions circulated on benefit cuts, housing, trans rights, Gaza, and other issues. LLI tells us that it hopes to work with Labour Campaign for Council Housing, Chartist, and other groups at conference.

The u-turns made by Labour's leaders under pressure on winter fuel payments and PIP access show that there is a real battle still inside the Labour Party, and it would be feeble to bail out.

But the battle is still very uphill. Also under pressure, Labour looks like levying some more taxes on the well-off in late October, and talks of scrapping the two-child benefit cap. But that is all very limited, very minimal. Rather than respond to the ranks further, the Labour leaders want

to clamp down and fend off further pressure.

They still keep John McDonnell and Apsana Begum suspended from the Labour whip. On 16 July they removed the whip from four MPs out of the dozens who rebelled on disability benefit cuts. On 17 July they suspended Diane Abbott after she reaffirmed comments she made last year (and then disavowed) about prejudice against Travellers and Jews being of a different order from racism against Black and Asian people. The reaffirmation was unhelpful, but, as Shami Chakrabarti put it: "People who are writing 'island of strangers' speeches should be a bit slow to sit in judgment on Diane Abbott".

On 22 July, after trade-union opposition, the Labour National Executive (NEC) "deferred" two proposed rule changes to go to the conference. One would dilute the trade-union majority on the Conference Arrangements Committee by adding an MP to it. Another would have the

local Labour Party representatives on the "National Policy Forum" elected by delegates at the conference rather than by one-member-one-vote.

The NEC approved some other rule changes to go to conference, including abolishing "observers" to council Labour groups and tightening conditions to register Young Labour groups (the main problem about which, however, is that there are so few of them even with more liberal rules).

Most of the Labour Party is still sleep-walking in the hope that (capitalist) "growth" will save the government from its impasses by enlarging the economic options. It is high time to wake it up, by convincing the very large range of Labour members and trade unionists angry about the disability benefit cuts is that the only answer is organising for comprehensive policies aimed at seizing the wealth grabbed by the profiteers and redirecting it to social provision. □

More online

Ukraine reconstruction

Workers' plan or a "European" plan?
bit.ly/u-plan

Workers' rights in Ukraine

New Labour Code is regressive: bit.ly/w-ukr

AWL erases others' role?

Polemic on Ukraine and the Unite union: bit.ly/e-ukr

Reply on Ukraine

The issues are sanctions, plans, real union solidarity vs contracting-out
bit.ly/r-ukr

Suggestions for Unison left

Turn to more pro-active campaigning
bit.ly/unis-turn

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

80 years since 6-9 August 1945
bit.ly/hiro-nag

Pat Longman 1950-2010

15 years since her death
bit.ly/pat-mem; bit.ly/pat-obit

“What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

Creeping towards our goal

With three weeks to go we are very nearly at our target. If we keep pushing, and have a successful collection at our Summer Camp over the August Bank Holiday weekend, we will beat our total of £20,000.

A comrade has given us an additional boost of £3,000 in the last few weeks, taking our total to £18,840.

In September we will have two new publications to sell and distribute alongside our already existing roster of 50+ books and pamphlets. If you are yet to pick a summer read, why not pick one of ours? □

• Donate: workersliberty.org/fund

What we do when the air-con fails



Diary of a Tube driver

By Jay Dawkey

The hot weather brings its challenges. While the temperature of the clay surrounding the tunnels has risen from 14°C to 26°C since the Tube was constructed, the air can reach higher than 40°C on a day in the mid-30s.

For us drivers, the most noticeable issue is when there's a problem on the train and we have to go back and check it. Coming from our air-conditioned (sometimes poorly, but air-conditioned) cabs, the sudden blast of heat as you step back through a carriage can be overpowering. Imagine sitting in it for even 30 minutes. It is no surprise that

during hot weather, the tube is often less crowded at commuter time.

And heat does generate issues. Track fires have caused several delays in recent weeks. Whether it is overheating pots or rubbish that triggers them, the delays caused are worse in the heat. Trains stuck in tunnels, at 40°C, are uncomfortable places to be. People are much more likely to fall ill. They pull a Passenger Emergency Alarm (PEA) that has to be dealt with at the next station. That causes more delays and increases the potential for more people to fall ill.

Unlike the buses, it seems, and with stronger union organisation, we have a workable system if the air-con is failing. If you get a train and the air-con doesn't work and you can't be met by a train technician who can fix it while you are outside the tunnel, then most of us take that train out of service. A minority of

trains on specific lines can be driven outside with the window or offside driver's door open; most are sealed units while in motion.

If your air con fails while "on the road", then you'd be tipping out at the next station and taking the train out of service to the nearest sidings or depot. The last thing you need is to be overheating when you are responsible not just for the driving of the train but for the safety of a train full of passengers.

Sometimes a controller might try to play some silly games, asking you to swap a train with another driver. Anyone asked to "stock and crew" with a train in front or behind has the same question as we walk past each other: "What's wrong with this one?" The sooner they realise they can't mess drivers about, the sooner trains will get the fixes they need. □

Introducing the Kino Eye Guest Spot



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

I often get comments such as "Why don't you write about such-and-such a film"? Well, I can't write about them all, and I never write about films I haven't seen. However, now is an opportunity for interested readers to submit their own film recommendations for the Kino Eye Guest Spot.

Select your film, explain what is important about it and any other salient points you can squeeze in. No documentaries (unless you think it is really important). Don't write a conventional film review. Kino Eye recommends films, or TV dramas, of social, cultural and political importance and interest.

The word limit is 200, so get straight to the point and avoid waffle. There is a story that when George Simenon, the writer of the Maigret series of detective novels, was finishing his final drafts, his son would stick his head round the door and ask: "Are you murdering the adjectives, Papa?" Good advice!

Send your contribution to solidarity@workersliberty.org, and the editors will then forward it to me. To kick us off, Jim Denham recommends his favourite Jazz film. Barrie Hardy will follow up with his favourite Western (issue 751).



Jazz on film: All Night Long By Jim Denham

Given that both jazz and cinema emerged around the same time, with jazz influencing various cinematic trends (like film noir) and often providing memorable sound tracks, there have been very few good films (as opposed to documentaries) in which jazz plays a central role.

Bertrand Tavernier's *Round Midnight* (1986) is a powerful, if depressing, account of jazz life with the protagonist played by tenor sax giant Dexter Gordon. *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955), starring Jack Webb, is much lighter, with a good band and a cameo appearance by Ella Fitzgerald. My personal favourite is a 1962 British neo noir entitled *All Night*

Long, directed by Basil Dearden, starring Richard Attenborough, Patrick McGoochan and Betsy Blair.

The story is based on *Othello*, with McGoochan (who learned to play the drums for the role) as the lingo character, plotting against a black bandleader. Screenwriter Paul Jarrico had been blacklisted in the US, so was named "Peter Achilles" in the film's credits. While it was being filmed Dave Brubeck and Charles Mingus were in the country and were recruited to the cast. The British musicians involved include Tubby Hayes, John Dankworth, Keith Christie, Colin Purbrook and Allan Ganley. □

Join Workers' Liberty!

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

New offer to Nottm HCSWs

By Rob Hudd

After 31 days of strikes since April, Nottingham University Hospitals Trust has made an offer of £2.5 million for the back pay of hundreds of Health Care Support Workers for doing work above their pay grade since Covid times.

In June the offer was only one measly day extra leave.

The HCSWs were due to start four solid weeks of strikes on 4 August. That has been suspended to ballot the workers on the offer.

The huge Unison branch of 3,000 members has rarely struck in decades, but this action has got low paid workers determined to use union power to fight back against constant overwork, real-wage erosion, and understaffing. Left-wing MPs like Nadia Whittome have been supportive and visible from day one, and many others in the Labour Party have been drawn into support at a time when Wes Streeting is taking a hard line with the Resident Doctors.

The branch took a delegation to parliament in June. It has marched and addressed the Executive Board. It has linked with the Unison members ballot-



ing at Nottingham University.

Unison health section has been run by the right wing for decades, mostly on the business model of insurance and fringe benefits.

The challenge in recent years from the Unison left organised in Time for Real Change has forced the right to

be seen to back this strike with strike pay. General secretary Christina McAnea has been on the Nottingham picket lines.

A new left-wing leadership of the branch plus dozens of low paid workers learning how to be organised shows the way for other workers in the NHS. □

Contact us



020 7394 8923



solidarity@workersliberty.org



Write to: 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG



Production team: Martin Thomas (editor), Kayden Jones, Dan Katz, Simon Nelson, Will Roberts, Zack Muddle □

Get Solidarity every week

Trial sub (6 issues) £7; Six months (22 issues) £29 waged, £15 unwaged, €33 European rate.

Visit workersliberty.org/sub

Or, email awl@workersliberty.org with your name and address, or phone 020 7394 8923. Standing order from £5 a month: more to support our work. Forms online. □

Turbine-base workers vote to strike

By Neil Laker

Workers at SeAH, producing monopiles for offshore wind turbines, have voted to strike in a dispute over pay. The plant at the former Teesworks steel site in Middlesbrough has been in operation since the start of this year, employing around 700 people to produce foundations for Ørsted wind projects in the North Sea.

While the employer announced that it was recognis-

ing GMB a couple of months previously, it has since gone against the basics of the recognition terms by imposing a 3.1% pay deal. The GMB now has around 85% density at the factory.

Worker organising in the offshore wind industry has been quite dynamic. By its nature the industry tends to concentrate workers in intense work spaces, like huge dockside manufacturing plants, with SeAH in Boro and the Siemens-Gamesa blade factory in Hull. Such investments are however on the periphery of the turbine manufacturing industry, which is dominated by China and secondarily manufacturers from Denmark and Germany that have undergone spatial reorganisation and centralisation during the industry's highly chaotic growth across the last 15 years. SeAH itself is a Korean fabrication company.

In the servicing side of the industry, there is an increasing use of hotel ships (SOVs) to maintain the turbines at sea on a two-week-on / two-week-off working pattern. These tendencies lend themselves to potentially strong worker or-

ganisation in what is emerging as a critical sector in the energy transition. Workers at the Hull factory won an improved pay deal after threatening to strike last summer.

While the growth of the wind turbine industry in China is

positioned as a "threat" to the European market, there is an urgent need for workers in the industry to organise on an internationalist basis, rather than a national-corporatist one as is emerging in the German labour movement. Independent

workers' organisations need to struggle on the basis of understanding their direct interests as well as those of workers across the chaotic and internationally fragmented wind supply chain. □

Jobs fight at University of Nottingham

By Vicki Morris, Unison branch secretary (pc)

The University and College Union (UCU) branch at University of Nottingham struck on Thursday 24 July against support-staff job cuts. Under the cost-cutting "Future Nottingham" programme more than 200 staff are leaving through voluntary redundancy and 266 remain at risk of redundancy. Most should be redeployed into other roles, but the University has refused to rule out compulsory redundancies.

This is just Phase 1 of the programme, focusing on support staff in central teams; Phase 2, taking shape in the background, will examine academic staff and academic-supporting roles. Courses are likely to shut, and perhaps even departments. Phase 3 will look at reducing the estate and could involve outsourcing of accommodation, catering, and cleaning.

UCU will probably strike again in September. The Unison branch is currently balloting

for strikes, closing on 29 August.

Closing arts courses, worsening the student experience, sacking staff, and increasing the workload of those who remain – these are not the answers we need to unis' financial crisis! We need HE run as a public service and financed through progressive taxation. HE courses should be free for all who can benefit.

So far, very few Unison branches have sought to fight job cuts through industrial action. Some UCU branches have won "no compulsory redundancies". As well as industrial battles in individual institutions, a more concerted national, political campaign by the HE unions together is needed.

HE staff are getting a measly 1.4% pay rise imposed on us this month. All the unions are consulting. There is a possibility that anger over job cuts and disappointment over pay could coincide in joint action across the sector in the new academic year, a hot autumn in HE. □

THE VESTAS JOBS BATTLE

HOW WIND TURBINE WORKERS BECAME A POWER



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



Events and campaigns: workersliberty.org/events



youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK



workersliberty.org/audio

How to fight the far-right protests

By Dan Katz

This is a dangerous moment. A right-wing Labour government has attacked benefit claimants, done little to help the working class and the poor, and failed to rebuild public services and the NHS.

Workers who want action on poverty and housing won't find answers from the Labour leader Keir Starmer.

Worse, Starmer has echoed the unpleasant, racist rhetoric of right-wing politicians and media against migrants and asylum seekers. Most notoriously Starmer referred to the UK becoming an "Island of Strangers," reminding us of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech from 1968.

The populist, authoritarian right has been encouraged by the election of Trump in the US. Reform is gaining ground in the UK. The anti-migrant mobilisations could spread rapidly. Within the broad right-wing "street" movements, fascist groups are recruiting.

The racist right incited anti-refugee riots outside hotels housing migrants in August 2024 following the terrible attack and murder of three girls attending a dance class in Southport. Those riots were fuelled by social media lies that the attack was perpetrated by a Muslim asylum seeker.

Immediately prior to last summer's violence, Tommy Robinson, the far-right hooligan, rallied over 20,000 in Trafalgar Square, London, with 500,000 watching the livestream. On 26 October 2024 a similar number marched on the "Uniting the Kingdom" demonstration, also in London.

Although large numbers of – especially young – protesters came out onto the streets in parts of north London and helped to end the August riots what the far-right protests showed was the weakness of the left and labour movement in many traditional working-class areas.

The main reason the riots were stopped last year was not working-class action, but police repression and the prompt jailing of large numbers of rioters.

And the counter-mobilisations, often led by the

Socialist Worker front Stand Up To Racism, have been entirely inadequate: often small numbers, passive, badly or maliciously stewarded, designed as photo-ops rather than real attempts to disrupt far-right protests. And some of them must come across as relatively posh outsiders arriving to berate conservative-minded but not fascist local working-class people as "Nazis", rather than trying to convince them.

The unions, which have contracted-out the fight against the racist far-right by affiliating to SUTR need to take back the initiative and put their members onto the streets in big numbers, under their own banners, stewarded by competent working-class trade union activists.

We need to organise for united working-class physical self-defence against the far-right.

Fight for the unions to act, and for Labour to change course.

We demand:

- Free movement. Solidarity with migrants and refugees
- Decent, affordable housing and well-paid work for all workers
- Generous benefits and free education for all
- Rebuild the NHS and public services by taxing the rich. □

- See page 11 for Epping report.

Trump's tariffs and clampdowns threaten the world

Trade war brings a threat to jobs and real wages everywhere; Trump's anti-immigrant thugs continue their drive in Los Angeles (White House adviser Stephen Miller has declared an aim of 3,000 arrests a day). and prepare to assault other cities; but Trump's rule is still unstable. See inside, page 10. □



IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

22-23 Nov 2025

A festival of **socialist** ideas and debate

Tickets: workersliberty.org/iff25

SOCIALIST SUMMER CAMP 2025

22-25 August
Haslemere,
Surrey



Join Workers' Liberty for our annual Socialist Summer Camp.

Come along for a weekend of fires, partying, nature, good food and socialist education.

Who will shape the "new party"?

By Gerry Bates

Six hundred thousand people have signed up to "keep informed" on the Sultana-Corbyn "new party" plan.

We do not know who they are. Some will be people who were in the Corbyn "movement" and left the Labour Party in disgust at Starmer. Some will be younger people seeking a better politics than those offered by Labour.

If "Corbynites" are coming back into activity, that is good. If the signers-up have never been active in real-life campaigns or meetings, we want

them to be.

We want everyone to learn what self-organisation and democracy means. The Labour Party offers very little of that. The Corbyn movement so far has offered actually less.

Democracy means being able to shape the direction of a political organisation, with regular meetings, ability to put motions, votes, accountability of committees and organisers and elected representatives. And it is the only way to shape positive working-class politics, beyond "anti-austerity" generalities. □

- See inside, page 12 and page 4.

"Mega picket" boost for bin strikers

By Jim Denham

The Birmingham bin strikers, fighting a pay cut of up to £8,000 and compulsory redundancies, received a welcome boost on Friday 25 July when hundreds of supporters from across the UK shut down the Perry Barr, Pershore Street and Atlas depots.

Picketing at the three depots had been planned to start at 6am, but the council told scabs to get to Perry Barr and Pershore Street at 4am to beat the pickets. Despite this, the "mega picket" organisers ensured people turned up for

4am at very short notice.

Meanwhile, the Ryton site in Coventry that has been sending scab teams to Birmingham, was also shut down for the day.

All this was good for morale, and in direct defiance of a court injunction (which is why the initiative was called by Strike Map and not Unite itself).

However, what is lacking is a strategy to win the dispute. There is a sense that leadership from Unite, at both national and local levels, is lacking.

Birmingham Council has withdrawn from negotiations

with Unite and threatened to impose compulsory redundancies upon up to 130 workers if they don't agree to accept new terms and conditions.

Pressure must be brought to bear upon the Council to re-open negotiations without preconditions.

An elected strike committee would provide a forum for the discussion of tactics and what the "red lines" should be in negotiations. Regular mass meetings would involve the rank and file in decision making and keep the workforce united in the face of the council's attacks. □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

**MOBILISE
LABOUR
MOVEMENT**

**AGAINST
FAR
RIGHT**

