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SOLIDARITY

& WORKERS' LIBERTY



USA: Trump pursues his takeover

18 October protests say: No king in USA

Page 18, inside-outside pages

France: RN sees power within reach

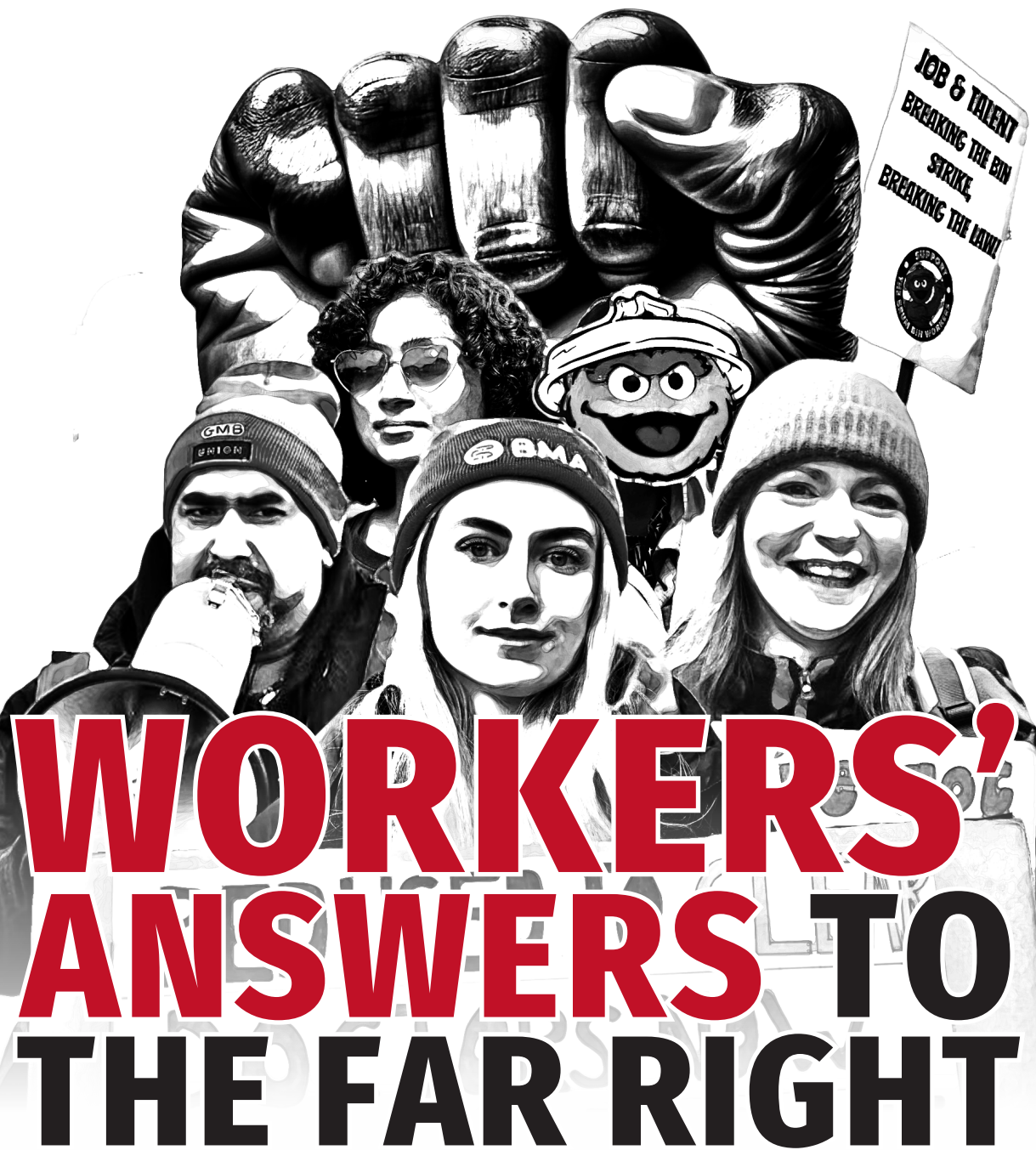
Unions scale back action while political crisis is still acute

Pages 12-13

Britain: need for union-based campaigns

Fighting the far right must not be hived off as a "single issue"

Pages 2, 19



Workers' answers to far right

The estimated 110-150,000-strong Unite the Kingdom march on 13 September has further boosted the far right in the UK.

Anti-migrant protests outside hotels have continued, although with less intensity.

Some anti-migrant actions have been under the banner of the so-called "Pink Ladies" group, led by women whose message is "protect our women" and "keep our streets safe". Yet migrant men are no more likely to be sexual predators than any other group of men. Women are on average less safe at home, locked in with sometimes-abusive partners, than on the streets.

Reform UK has also been boosted by the summer's events. That Farage felt able to shift away from opposing mass deportations to promoting mass deportations is very significant.

"Operation Raise the Colours", the hoisting of thousands of Union Jacks, St George Crosses and Saltaires, on lamp-posts, continues. It was initiated and financed by the extreme far right, and fueled by sections of the press.

Keir Starmer, ridiculously, responded that patriotism and "flying the flag" was great except where it was divisive. Sowing division was the whole point of the campaign.

The flag campaign has taken an even nastier turn. Local authorities have had good reasons to take down flags. For example, York City Council removed hundreds of St George and Union Flags in September after a rise in racist incidents. Elsewhere local residents have taken down flags.

But in some areas workers hired by councils to remove flags have been abused.

While not every flag-flyer is part of the organised far right, attachments to flags are viciously tribal. For example flag-flying demonstrators in Wakefield on 18 October were heard to sing knee-jerk anti-leftism — "You can stick your Gaza up your arse". And Lee Anderson and Farage denounced football pundit Gary Neville for criticising flag flying and calling out "angry middle-aged white men who know exactly what they're doing."

The 4 October arson attack on a mosque in Peacehaven was undoubtedly linked to an increase in hatred and racism. In the year to March 2025 recorded hate crimes in England and Wales rose by 2%, the first rise since 2021-22, and further increase must be likely.

Adjacent to the growth of the far right is a new upsurge of conspiracy-theory protest. On 18 October thousands marched in London against "digital ID". There are good reasons to oppose "digital ID" — if only the risk of its use by a future Reform or Reform-Tory government



— but the 18 October organisers, Mass Non-Compliance, see the policy as a final step towards the dystopia brought about by "globalism".

Meanwhile the far right cements its international links. On Saturday 18 October Tommy Robinson spoke at a rally in Tel Aviv. The thuggish grifter had been invited by Amichai Chikli, Minister for the Diaspora and Combating Antisemitism. Raoul Wootliff, a protester who was violently attacked there, explained:

"[Tommy Robinson] is an antisemite — the modern kind who disguises his hatred behind selective 'support' for Israel while peddling conspiracies about Jews... Just two weeks ago, in the immediate aftermath of the Manchester synagogue attack ... he railed against 'elitist' and 'woke liberal' Jews, accusing Britain's Jewish leaders of causing Islamist extremism and mass immigration... This is the antisemitism of our time. It's cleansed of swastikas, dressed in pseudo-solidarity with Israel and deployed as a weapon against 'globalists' liberals and Muslims".

Legal

Meanwhile Robinson has cemented his friendship with the global billionaire class. He claims Elon Musk is paying his legal costs.

Since 13 September, Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) have been organising more local protests — a mix of counter-demonstrations or general "unity" marches against the racists. We should build these actions but we need an urgent discussion on where the campaign is going.

Some recent SUTR street mobilisations have been big — a recent protest in Leeds was over 1,000 — but there are continued failures in the democracy, effectiveness and politics of the organisation. For example, in Leeds stewards told the demonstrators to ignore far-right counter-demonstrators, consistent with their usual line of avoiding necessary physical confrontations with the far right.

SUTR tends to rely on the police, rather than stewarding democratically organised by trade unions. On 13 September, when there was next to no stewarding, people could have been hurt had the police not stepped in. But it was a close call, and more importantly, relying on the police is politically wrong. The police exist to protect the establishment. We cannot trust the police!

SUTR efforts to tightly control events disorganise and alienate good activists. For example in September, following an anti-migrant protest in West Drayton, the West London SWP/SUTR planned a counter-protest. But after a joint union and SUTR demo had been agreed and much leafleting had been done, the protest was unilaterally cancelled by SUTR on the grounds that there weren't sufficient numbers. A valid reason, but implemented over the heads of the people involved.

Without

Similarly in East London SUTR organised an anti-fascist "assembly" on 16 October without involving the local branch of Unison — which had recently organised a counter-protest against the Pink Ladies!

The control freakery and political idiocies of SUTR are the smaller part of the problem.

Millions of working-class people are now open to scapegoating migrants and minority communities as a response to economic hardship. We need, but do not have, a mass labour-movement campaign to match the scale of the problem. A relaunch of Stand Up To Racism (its AGM is 8 November) just to make it "bigger and better" would miss the point. Only the labour movement, in the first place our trade unions, allied to the communities at the sharp end of these attacks, have anything like the strength to beat back the far-right. Such a campaign would support self-organisation and self-defence by Muslim, Jewish, migrant and other marginalised communities against far-right attacks and also

against the police.

We must win the unions to a coherent political response. The unions' strategy of contracting-out their campaigning in this area to SUTR has weakened their responsibility to do more, to reach working-class people in thousands of workplaces and communities in every area of the UK and to stop them from being misled by the far right and conspiracy theorists. To provide political answers based on working-class solidarity — for unity with migrant workers and for a fight against the cuts.

How do we get there? By many more small steps such as these:

- A motion has been passed by RMT members on London Underground which calls on their union to "produce literature making the political case against Reform and the far right."
- In Nottingham the local trades council has called a conference at the end of November to combat Reform and its racism. They are building the conference in workplaces around the city.
- The Scottish TUC Disabled Workers Conference will discuss a motion on tackling far-right narratives in schools.
- In Sheffield the Trades Council sponsored anti-far right committee will be producing a leaflet aimed at workplaces in the city.
- Newcastle City Council Unison, on our (Workers' Liberty) initiative, has agreed to support the counter-demonstrations against the far right, and we've been building for them at our student meetings in the city. Here there have been opportunities to have a debate about how to organise counter protests, at a SUTR-organised meeting, but decision-making has been shut down.

The left needs to wake up. Fighting the far right today in the UK is too big a job to be left to a single-issue campaign. We need open, democratic anti-fascist and anti-racist committees in every town and city involving trade unions, Labour Party members, socialists, and community groups. □

Green shoots in autumn

By Paul Abbott

Across the country there has been an uptick in our own public-facing Workers' Liberty activity — we have been met with a greater interest in what we have to say, and we are carrying out that work with greater confidence.

In large part we think the uptick is due to the times we live in. People are angry both at the growth of the far right across the world, and at the inadequacy of the

left-wing forces which seek to challenge it.

We are a small organisation that does not have ready-made factory-sealed solutions to the crisis, but we can play a part in improving the situation. We have something important to offer with the activity we carry out, the ideas we formulate, and the tradition we preserve.

But we are only able to respond to this demand thanks to the steady and consistent work we have carried out over recent years, building new branches up from the ground and turning existing branches outward and growing them. This includes getting involved in struggles around us and convincing people to help us with our work, but it also includes the week-to-week activity which can seem mundane at times, like holding a regular street paper sale even if the weather is bad, or putting on regular and consistent local meetings which start off small.

Across the country our activists are involved in mobilisations against the far right. This is particularly so for comrades in PCS, RMT, and Unison, who are pushing their unions (locally and nationally) to set up permanent and self-run campaigns which mobilise their members to fight the far right, challenging the dominant model where trade unions outsource that work to the organisation Stand Up To Racism.

We are also involved in the various local manifestations of Your Party, taking part in the struggle to shape them into a movement with socialist liberatory politics and healthy democratic norms. This means convincing people in our areas of these ideas, but also helping organise efforts to fight back against the oafish stitch-ups from the self-appointed na-



tional leadership.

Our public-facing activity as AWL includes holding reading groups, public meetings, and setting up student societies on campus. Our newspaper *Solidarity* is key to this. Anyone who buys the latest copy can immediately find out what we have to say on the issues that are shaping our era, and how we are putting those ideas into practice. It serves to educate us and the people we want to convince to join us in the tradition we are a part of: human solidarity, international working-class struggle, and democratic self-organisation of our class.

The people around us want to understand the world and change it. We want to understand the world and change it. Our task is the same as our forebears almost 200 years ago, to articulate “the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement”.

Read the rest of this newspaper, get a subscription, email office@workersliberty.org to get in touch with us about our activity, and consider selling the paper, even if only to start with a few copies to friends or workmates! □

New release!

RAIL WORKERS 200: two centuries of railworkers and their struggles

Janine Booth

This book records two hundred years of railway workers and their struggles. It educates the reader about the work they did (and do), the conditions that they did (and do) it in, and their struggles to improve their conditions of work. 94 pages £5 □

workersliberty.org/rail200

Our new fortnightly formula

By Cathy Nugent

From this issue *Solidarity* will be fortnightly, rather than weekly, with what we hope is a sharper and more accessible design. *Solidarity* will be expanded to 24 pages and the cover price will increase to £2 with a £1 concessionary rate, from £1/50p.

The change follows a decision by our last conference (April this year) to rebalance our staff resources towards more political organising.

All other things being equal, we would prefer to keep a weekly newspaper and crank

up our organising, but a fortnightly paper, expanded in size, has the advantage of allowing a focus on history, education and background articles. This is a good fit for new activists who want to understand how the left can be more effective against the far right. Moreover our longer-perspective activities of education and political advocacy will be the staple of what we need to say in the near future.

Agitation

Times for more day-by-day agitation will come, but probably, for now, only exceptionally and

locally. We will produce supplements to cover specific campaigns in the labour movement.

Our own experience in the past, when we've had a fortnightly routine for our main publication, has shown us that it can underpin a vigorous weekly tempo of activity: weekly street stalls, weekly door-to-door sales and selling to workmates, friends and other activists.

We note that the NPA-R in France, Socialist Alternative in Australia, or even the RCP in Britain, all manage reasonably fast-paced routines with a fortnightly paper.

We plan to increase our ca-

capacity in our office. New people have joined our small team in the last year, another will join us next year. But building up capacity will take time. We aspire to be a revolutionary socialist organisation which can make interventions and initiatives, convincing, inspiring, and arguing for our politics in all sorts of more ambitious ways. It will include more educational activities, speaking tours, better interventions on big demonstrations, etc., running campaigns.

Going fortnightly will free some capacity for us to do more of this work in 2026. □

THE VESTAS JOBS BATTLE HOW WIND TURBINE WORKERS BECAME A POWER



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workersliberty.org/audio

Peace: two states, equal rights!

By Ira Berkovic

Writing in the Guardian, left-wing Israeli politician Ofer Cassif said: “If the UK government acknowledges the reality of settler violence and its grave implications on Palestinian life, why does it still allow settlement produce to be sold in markets and shops in Britain? If Starmer is serious about recognition of Palestine as a state, how come it allows the Israeli government to violate its sovereignty with such violent means? [...]”

“A just peace must respect the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people for self-recognition, sovereignty and liberty from military occupation and siege. Only when every human being’s dignity between the river and sea is respected can we truly say peace has been achieved.”

“True peace requires an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel: this is the sole formula that enjoys consensus among the international community, the Palestinian national movement and the Israeli peace camp.”

Along with Ayman Odeh, a Palestinian

member of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) and fellow member of left-wing party Hadash, Cassif protested Trump’s recent address to the Knesset, holding up placards reading “Recognise Palestine”. Cassif and Odeh were both removed by parliamentary security.

Within Gaza, Hamas has sought to publicly reassert political and military control, with grim spectacles including public summary executions of members of criminal clans. Whatever those people have done, mass shootings of bound men in public squares is an indication of the violent authoritarianism at the heart of Hamas’s politics.

Chaos

As a Gazan lawyer interviewed by the BBC put it, “Why are people cheering for chaos? A masked man kills another masked man without any proof, without investigation, without a court, without even a waiting period for appeal. What do we call this? Resistance? No, this is lawlessness.”

Even prior to the recent genocide, the possibility for healthy democratic politics

to develop in Gaza was largely strangled by a combination of Israeli (and Egyptian) blockade, and violent clerical-fascist rule by Hamas. The Democracy and Workers’ Rights Centre, a labour-movement NGO primarily based in Ramallah, had an office in Gaza City, which was destroyed by Israeli bombing. Another civil society organisation is the Gaza Youth Committee (GYC), which, like Standing Together in Israel, is affiliated to the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP).

GYC activists were jailed by Hamas police in 2019 for participating in a Zoom call with Israelis. More recently, GYC activists held a [vigil](#) amongst the bombed-out ruins of buildings, holding up pictures of Israeli children killed on 7 October, a direct response to Standing Together and other Israeli peace groups displaying pictures of Palestinian children on anti-war protests in Israel. All indications are that GYC represents only very small numbers. Nevertheless, such people are deeply courageous and their voices must be amplified.

There is no clarity as to how the subsequent stages of the so-called Trump

“peace” plan can be implemented, even on its own terms. The scale of destruction in Gaza is such that substantial international coordination, and billions of dollars, will be required to meaningfully rebuild. Whilst Hamas’s military capacities have undoubtedly been substantially degraded by Israeli assault, the organisation and its command structure clearly survive, with no indication that they are prepared to comply with demands to disarm. Given this, there is little prospect for the establishment of the technocratic government the Trump plan stipulates. Even if it were installed in name, it is difficult to see how it could function.

Forward

There are no easy ways forward, but a combination of effective international and domestic pressure — and, crucially, international solidarity with that domestic opposition — stands the best chance of shaping the situation.

Diplomatic pressure on Israel is vital to ensure the ceasefire agreement is honoured. Arms embargoes and sanctions on West Bank settlement produce, as well as stronger measures against individuals and institutions involved in the settlement project, are necessary. Sanctions must be targeted to be effective; the calls, common across some sections of the left, for a total severing of all links of any kind, economic, cultural, sporting, and academic, with Israel are both unviable and counterproductive. They are a gift to the ultra-nationalist right, which benefits from the inculcation of an “us against the world” siege mentality amongst Israeli Jews. Indicting the maintenance of any ties, of any sort, with Israel as a moral crime will also inevitably feed antisemitism, as over 70% of British Jews have family in Israel.

Inside Israel, a renewed push against the occupation is needed. Standing Together’s “protective presence” efforts in the West Bank are part of that. A delegation of peace activists from Israel, including both Palestinians and Jews, recently met Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas and other PA officials in Ramallah. Although the PA as an institution, and Abbas himself, have been legitimately criticised as sclerotic and corrupt, the meeting had a symbolic significance. With no meaningful opposition to the Jewish-supremacist project of the government from within the mainstream of Israeli politics, anti-occupation and peace activists are right to seek to position themselves as the “partner for peace” within Israel, and emphasise the need for a political settlement that guarantees an equal right to self-determination for both peoples. □

Free Marwan Barghouti!

By Ira Berkovic

As part of the first stages of the ceasefire plan, Israel has released almost 2,000 Palestinian detainees and prisoners from its jails. Around 1,700 were people held without charge, under the “administrative detention” scheme. Almost 4,000 more are still held under the scheme, including 400 children.

Standing Together has written: “Israel’s use of administrative detention is part of the two legal systems that exist across this land — one for Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, and one for Israelis. Millions of people in the occupied territories can be arrested without any reason, detained without charge indefinitely, and abused in prison without accountability.”

One of the most prominent prisoners still held in an Israeli prison is Marwan Barghouti, a Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader who is a rival to Pal-

estinian Authority president Abbas within the Fatah party. Barghouti was jailed in 2002, for alleged involvement in attacks that resulted in the deaths of five people. During his more than 20 years in jail, there have been multiple credible allegations of torture against Barghouti, including within the past fortnight.

Barghouti is a staunch advocate of a two-state settlement, an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, an approach which has been the policy of the PLO since the late 1980s. Opinion polling has consistently shown that, were Barghouti to run against Abbas and Hamas in elections across the Palestinian territories, he would win.

A politically sane Israeli government, one that genuinely wanted lasting peace, would release Barghouti and negotiate a peace settlement, based on ending the occupation and recognising a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, with



the PLO. The PLO is the acknowledged “government” of the State of Palestine, the diplomatic entity now recognised by 157 of the 193 member states of the United Nations.

A government prepared to negotiate towards real

peace and equality is a long way off in Israel. But those within Israel-Palestine, and internationally, who want to work towards such a future must campaign for Barghouti’s release as part of efforts to bring that horizon closer. □

A path to peace and equality

By Jasr Kawkby

Jasr Kawkby is a doctor based in London, originally from Gaza. He spoke at the London Friends of Standing Together rally on 5 October 2025.

Thank you to the UK Friends of Standing Together for organising this vigil and for inviting me to speak. And thank you all for being here — for standing together in solidarity and humanity.

On a black October day two years ago, Hamas carried out an atrocious massacre against Israeli citizens, killing 1,200, mostly innocent civilians, including women and children. Including peace activists.

This triggered a vindictive war of annihilation, that over two years, has evolved into a genocide — one that has reduced Gaza to rubble, erased entire families, and turned hospitals, schools, and refugee shelters into mass graves.

There is now a possible truce on the horizon, which we all desperately hope will materialise and last. But we must ensure that the memory of the victims — of the lives and families destroyed is honoured and — does not fade with the ceasefire.

We Palestinians have a reckoning and soul-searching to do.

We must hold Hamas, and the rigid ideology it represents, responsible for triggering this devastating war, and for helping to sustain and justify it through its stubborn and reckless militarism, disguised as resistance.

Israeli society also has a reckoning and soul-searching to undertake.

It must examine how it came to be ruled by such a fanatical and bloodthirsty war machine, and it must hold its leaders, the leaders of the mightiest military



Friends of Standing Together rally, 5 October 2025

force in the Middle East accountable, for their war crimes against a defenceless people.

The international community — and British society too — must act according to conscience and uphold their moral and legal responsibility, using all forms of economic and diplomatic pressure, including boycotts and sanctions, against any Israeli institution involved in war crimes, settlement expansion, or apartheid.

It must also support the work of the International Court of Justice so that all members of Israel's ruling establishment implicated in the genocide are held accountable and face justice.

Only through true accountability and a honest commitment to truth and justice can Palestinians and Israelis begin to rebuild a shared future founded on dignity and equality.

There is a depressing rise in antisemitism, here in Britain and across Europe. The recent attack on Jewish worshippers in a synagogue in Manchester is the latest example. I extend my sympathy and condolences to the victims' families.

Some say this rise of antisemitism is a natural response to Israel's atrocities. We Palestinians reject any conflation between Israel's actions and Jewish communities here.

For precisely this reason, I find the comments made by Starmer and the Home Secretary regarding pro-Palestinian protests in the wake of Manchester massacre both misguided and irresponsible. By implying that holding protests now would be insensitive toward the Jewish community, they reinforce a dangerous confusion between Israel's actions and Jewishness — a false link that fuels antisemitism and bigotry.

This is the mirror image of the distortion made by antisemites who extend blame and responsibility for Israel's actions to Jews everywhere in the world.

I trust that most Jews in Britain and Europe, guided by their sense of humanity, are appalled by the destruction of Gaza. In my mind, the spirit of our protests against this war also embraces the grief of Jewish families in Manchester, because at its heart it is a protest against the killing of innocent people — whatever their ethnicity or faith.

Not every action carried out in the name of Palestine represents us. There is no monopoly on the name Palestine. Some actions range from needlessly provocative gestures to expressions of outright anti-Jewish hatred.

My appeal to all pro-Palestine protestors is to stay vigilant, to distance themselves from provocateurs who harm our cause, and to weed out those driven by hatred of Jews.

And my appeal to the Jewish commu-

nity is not to let the actions of a hateful few colour their perception of the peaceful majority, or cloud the core purpose of these protests.

I'm grateful to be speaking here as a friend of Standing Together.

The model of Standing Together, rooted in shared humanity and based on joint Israeli-Palestinian effort, is indispensable. It is the only viable path that can lead to lasting and just peace, and to true equality.

The recent renewed calls by [the BDS movement] to boycott Standing Together — accusing it of being an agent of normalisation — are not only purist and deeply mistaken; they are irresponsible and self-defeating. Such calls isolate precisely those Israelis who campaign tirelessly for our rights and against the destruction of our lives and livelihoods.

Let us continue to join forces — to work together now to stop the genocide, and to end the settler-colonial expansion in the West Bank, and to abolish the apartheid system against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Let us keep building a shared future rooted in justice, equality, and self-determination for all Palestinians and Israelis. □

Activist Agenda

Meetings

Wed 22 Oct: Labour, Your Party, and working-class political representation. Sheffield AWL. 6pm, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

Thu 23 Oct: The rise of Mussolini. Lewisham AWL. 7pm, The Shirker's Rest, 9 Lewisham Way SE14 6PP

Sun 26 Oct: Aviation and emissions. AWL ecology reading group. 8pm, Zoomlink bit.ly/eco-rg

At work or on campus

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

workersliberty.org, and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

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

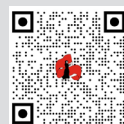
Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs

Sheffield: Mon 3 Nov. Radical Intimacy. 6pm, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

Campaigns

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Ofer Cassif and campaigning inside Israel

By Jim Denham

Ofer Cassif is a brave and principled man. He is a member of the Communist Party of Israel and part of Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) in the Israeli parliament, the Knesset.

The *Morning Star* carried an interview with him on 7 October, which must count as one of the few articles on Israel-Palestine published by that paper that is worth reading.

Under the headline “I don’t accept that Israeli society is lost”, Cassif says (amongst much else) that Israelis who oppose the “ongoing massacre” in Gaza “must use every tool of democratic and non-violent struggle” to forge “a union of various forces that oppose the genocide and fascism that is rampant within Israel even when there is disagreements among them on other issues.”

He points out that “The working class is being harmed economically [by settlements and the war, and] also being harmed by the persistence of hostility between Palestinians and Israelis. This hostility prevents the exploited people of both nations from uniting against the exploiters.”

Asked about anti-war campaigning within Israel, he responds as follows: “Many believe that there is no chance of change coming from within Israeli soci-



ety and that only international pressure will help. I disagree with this statement. It is clear that international pressure on Israel is necessary. But I do not accept the claim that Israeli society is lost and there is nothing to fight for within it.

“Those who claim this base their view on the assumption that Israeli society is a monolith. But as a Marxist I see every society as a whole composed of contradictions. In the current Israeli reality, one of the main contradictions is between the followers of theocratic-fascism who are involved in the genocide in Gaza and their opponents on the other side. Our historical role is to sharpen this contradiction while struggling alongside the opponents of the murderous forces.”

What makes Cassif’s words important (and worth quoting at some length) is that they cut across most of the opinions

usually carried, approvingly, in the MS. In particular, they cut across the claim from prominent figures with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement to the effect that Israel is a uniquely illegitimate state (some won’t even use its name, calling it “the Zionist entity”) and that any attempt to campaign for peace and progressive change from within that society is to be condemned as an act of “normalisation.”

This viewpoint reached its grotesque extreme when the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) published an article in January 2024 saying Standing Together, the binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement based in Israel, should be boycotted. The BDS campaign posted that article on its website.

This has given rise to the notion that any and all organisations that have ever expressed support, in any form, for BDS are now morally obliged to boycott and no-platform Standing Together — and that actually happened at the recent Green Party conference.

Given the closeness of the MS and its political masters at the Communist Party of Britain to the PSC and the BDS movement, one wonders what they really think about the claim that Standing Together “normalises” Israel and should

therefore be no-platformed. The MS did, in fact, publish two articles last year by Standing Together’s organiser Uri Weltmann, but has never commented on the “normalisation” claim or the boycott.

Under the guise of “listening to Palestinian voices”, the anti-Standing Together crowd are saying that one Palestinian voice should have a monopoly, to the exclusion of all others. They are also, in effect, saying that anyone inside Israel who campaigns for peace and progress is “normalising” that society — a charge which, given his refusal to accept that “Israeli society is lost”, must surely also apply to Ofer Cassif. If he, or anyone else from the Israeli Communist Party or Hadash ever comes to Britain, presumably the PACBI will demand a boycott?

At that point, presumably, the *Morning Star* might just feel obliged to make a comment. □

• Cassif and another Hadash MP, Ayman Odeh, made a [protest](#) in the Knesset when Trump spoke. They waved a placard demanding “recognise Palestine!”. Cassif declared: “Recognise Palestine! This is the banner I waved in front of Trump at the Knesset... A true just peace that will save both people of this land from agony can only materialise by a complete end of the occupation and universal recognition of a Palestinian State alongside Israel”. □

Eric Lee

Who are Israel’s new best friends?

It may sound hard to believe today, but there was a time when a lot of people really liked Israel. Large groups of young Europeans, mostly from the Nordic countries, would come over to the Jewish state as volunteers, working on kibbutzim. Tourists would visit the country in their hundreds of thousands, the vast majority of them not Jewish.

All that completely changed in the decades following the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the rise of an increasingly right-wing and authoritarian Benjamin Netanyahu.

One cannot visit European capitals without noticing anti-Israel graffiti everywhere. And by “anti-Israel” I don’t mean slogans denouncing the policies of the current Israeli government. I saw the slogans like “Fuck Israel” and “Fuck Zionism” spray painted all over Brussels on a recent visit.

Israel seems more friendless now than at any time in its nearly 80 year history.

That’s why it makes sense for Israelis to welcome foreign politicians who don’t hate them, such as the current U.S. administration. Israel is utterly dependent on Donald Trump for its security and the current “Trump-mania,” which not all Israelis share, is understandable.

Leaders

But there are other political leaders who show up at Ben Gurion Airport and who are greeted as honoured guests, despite not having much to offer. Sometimes these leaders, who come from the far Right, pose as great friends of the Jewish state. But just under the surface, it’s clear that these are no friends of the Jewish people.

In mid-October, Tommy Robinson was one such guest. In a column in *Ha’aretz*, a journalist

wrote how on Saturday night he was attacked by Robinson’s thugs, “punched in the head, spat on, knocked to the ground and kicked, doused with beer and called a kapo — all for daring to stand up and shout that racists are not welcome in Israel.”

Robinson’s violently anti-immigrant demonstrations have sometimes included displays of Israeli flags. But this conceals an undercurrent of antisemitism among his supporters. While Robinson was in Israel, some of his own far-right comrades were being sentenced to years in prison for planning attacks both mosques and synagogues.

At the same time as Robinson was in Israel another guest was welcomed on a grander scale. This was Geka Geladze, a man most of you will never have come across. Geladze is the Georgian Minister of the Interior, part of the authoritar-

ian “Georgian Dream” government. Geladze was in Israel as the guest of Itamar Ben-Gvir, one of the most extreme members of Netanyahu’s governing coalition. As the Georgian government described it, “the Georgian delegation will further visit various police units and learn on the ground about the specifics of their work.”

Conspiracy

Lest anyone think that “Georgian Dream” is a party made up of friends of the Jewish people, one needs to be reminded of three words: “Global War Party”. In Georgian politics, the phrase has become notorious, used by the country’s current leadership to describe a secretive, all-powerful conspiracy that rules the world. That’s almost a textbook definition of modern antisemitism.

There are other examples. But with Tommy Robinson’s thugs beating up Israeli journalists,

or Georgian ministers learning from Ben-Gvir about dealing with civil unrest, it’s clear what’s going on.

The Netanyahu government has isolated Israel as never before. It’s not in a position to turn away new friends, even if those friends have racist and neo-Nazi supporters, or are spreading claims of a global conspiracy that reeks of Nazi propaganda.

There are rumours in Israel of new elections. They cannot come a moment too soon. And while any new government headed by the centre and left parties will have a very long to-do list, surely one item should be to tell Robinson and Geladze that they, and what they represent, are not welcome guests in a democratic Jewish state. □

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

Who will shape “Your Party”?

By Matt Cooper

To contribute positively, Jeremy Corbyn’s “Your Party” has to offer better than the Greens, who already exist and have a form of democratic structures, i.e. it has to offer working-class socialist politics, class-struggle activity beyond elections, democratic structures and accountability of representatives. The proto-party has to be open to united-front activity with Labour Party members against the far right and against cuts. A thought-through anti-cuts strategy is essential for the May 2026 council elections.

How does it look?

On Thursday 16 October, the project published its long-promised conference papers: Political Statement, Constitution, Standing Orders, and Organisational Strategy. All four are uninspiring and poorly drafted. The constitution and standing orders offer “options” to be voted on, through scheduled assemblies (by some unknown mechanism), online submissions (again by an unknown mechanism), and the November conference maybe adding further amendments for online voting.

The political statement, at 250 words, is bland. However, it does move forward from previous self-definitions (for peace, against austerity) by defining the party as socialist, with “the working class at its heart”, and demanding that “wealth and power democratically controlled by the overwhelming majority.” How that will be achieved is left unsaid.

Models

The draft constitution has two competing models running through it. The preferable one resembles a cleaned-up Labour-style delegate system: branches sending accountable delegates to a sovereign conference, with a Central Executive Committee and leaders elected by all members. The weaker model is closer to the Greens, with individual members proposing motions and attending conferences directly. Either may be supplemented by the worst option, online OMOV voting. Both allow for a “clickocracy” of digital ballots on major decisions rather than real deliberation.

Earlier drafts gave a formal role to local “assemblies” including non-members. Those have vanished. References to assemblies now appear inconsistently, and only in the Standing Orders as a synonym for all-member meetings.

The draft does, however, retain “Community Organising Units” (an idea taken from Labour, where it was pushed by David Miliband in 2010), with the option of national, regional, or (better) local control. It would be better if funds were directed to local parties to develop local voluntary campaigning.

Positively, the constitution expects the ex-Labour “independent” councillor groups which have made up a large part of the “Corbyn base” in recent years to integrate within two years.

Membership rules remain vague. The wording could permit proscription of all organised groups. It would be better to allow tendencies and debate while barring only candidates who oppose the party’s own ones. Internal factions are normal even in undemocratic parties; a democratic party should be more, not less, accepting of this than the norm.

On “Standing Orders”, over forty options are proposed, far too many to debate meaningfully in short assembly sessions. Even experienced activists struggle with the technicalities, and most members will not grasp their implications. Key issues include whether conference should be delegate-based (best), open to all (problematic), or selected by sortition (disastrous). Other proposals are unworkable, such as requiring 40% of all members to petition for a no-confidence vote in a local office or offering proportional list voting for single positions. The risk is a confused rulebook open to manipulation.

Weakness

“Organisational Strategy” is the weakest document of all. It would concentrate power in the CEC and leader from March 2026, even while they will be as yet unelected, allowing them to appoint senior staff, General Secretary and Directors of Finance, Organising, Strategy and Communications, before members have any say. This must be amended so that the party’s direction is determined democratically.

The paper also sketches the May 2026 local election plans. Since the national party will not yet exist, local groups may endorse “independent socialists” or run candidates chosen by OMOV. Yet there is no shared policy framework. Almost all endorsed independents offer no coherent anti-cuts strategy, and many are not really to the left of Labour. In Pendle, the jewel in the “Corbynite” local-government crown, the Independents ally with the Lib-Dems. There is no plan for coordinated campaigning, no stance against “soft cuts” coalitions with Greens or Lib-Dems.

A socialist intervention, as united as possible, is urgently needed to shape the founding process of the Sultana-Corbyn “Your Party”. Several initiatives have appeared. Few are yet real campaigns.

The Democratic Bloc (dembloc.com) is the most “insider” effort, dominated by figures from Momentum in the later Corbyn period (bureaucratic and undemocratic) and The World Transformed. Includes James Giles, former organiser for Galloway’s Workers Party and now aide to MP Ayoub Khan. They back OMOV for most posts, which would entrench existing personalities. One their leading figures, Mish Rahman, has been reporting as arguing that dual membership should be allowed for Greens but not socialist organisations, which he views as entrists.



The Democratic Socialists (dsyp.org) are centred on younger rs21 activists and Max Shanly. Some toy with sortition but they are otherwise sound on structure and accountability.

Dignitaries

Organising for Popular Power is essentially Josh Virasami’s project and successor to “Our Party,” which demanded the initiative be handed to independent left dignitaries. No website and little activity.

A meeting at The World Transformed (Manchester, 9-12 October) brought together about 350 people from the above networks. It produced a lowest-common-denominator statement, calling for a sovereign conference (while fudging sortition), mandatory reselection, and MPs on a worker’s wage.

Your Party Connections is run by activists from Transform (a previous “new party” effort), linking around 50 local groups. More a networking hub than a faction, but likely the source of the broadest set of recommendations and amendments.

With assemblies already under way and conference five weeks off, there is little time to correct and develop a clear set of recommendations. The new party needs a left intervention to present clear amendments.

Late on the evening of Tuesday 14 Oc-

tober, the party website published the long-delayed list of regional deliberative assemblies. Far from the “huge” gatherings promised, these are modest events. The list covers 22 assemblies across Great Britain, but with patchy coverage — none in the East Midlands and only two in Scotland. Of the ten with confirmed details, most have advertised capacities far larger than the venues claim themselves. Average actual capacity is close to 300, or fewer with “deliberative” layouts.

Confusion

Accounts from activists reveal confusion and poor organisation. A Bristol activist described being asked to find a venue for 2,000 people, and then given an unrealistic budget of £2,000, before facing bullying messages and eventual silence. A smaller venue was later booked without consulting locals. All typical of Karie Murphy’s management style. Later, the task of finding venues was reportedly given to Sean Halsall, a Southport Independents councillor. Halsall is personally blameless, but this suggests the London office lacks both capacity and trust in local initiative.

It has been reported that one reason for this downscaling are the divisions within Your Party, with the funds being trapped in the MoU Operation Ltd bank account controlled by Andrew Feinstein, Jamie Driscoll and Beth Winter. Some reports suggest the money has not been handed over because of the report made to the Information Commissioner made implicating MoU in a data breach around Zarah Sultana’s membership portal. However, this is not Feinstein’s explanation. He suggested at the end of September that delay was only due to the lack of a clear legal entity accountable to would-be members to transfer the funds to. It is unclear whether this has happened: Your Party registered with the Electoral Commission and Corbyn relinquished his controlling interest in the corporate entity, Your Party UK Ltd, which is now controlled jointly by all the Independent Alliance MPs. The Electoral Commission now shows Your Party holding £855,000 in assets, but it is unclear whether MoU funds are now under the control of Your Party.

As of Sunday 19 October, only three assemblies were fully booked. Rumour puts paid-up membership via the Corbyn portal at around 40,000, a fraction of the 800,000 sign-ups to “keep informed”. This suggests disillusion or passivity among supporters. Meanwhile, the Green Party now claims 123,000 members, more than the Conservatives and up 60,000 in seven weeks. One poll on 19 October put the Greens level with Labour on 15 per cent. □



The fiascos of green capitalism

By Stuart Jordan

A drienne Buller's 2022 book *The Value of a Whale* on the illusions of green capitalism seems somewhat outdated now in a world dominated by the "drill, baby, drill" policies of the Trump presidency. But Buller's book explains why the green capitalism of Biden, the EU, and UN offers no answers to the crisis and no alternative to the climate nihilism of the far-right.

While whales and the natural world in general are valuable in many different ways, what is valued in capitalist society above all else is the value that is expressed in money. Monetary value in capitalist society is created by hours and minutes of human labour, not the physical properties inherent in a given object. Whales and all the other natural resources do not enter our production processes with price tags attached. As Marx observed, they are, from the capitalists perspective, "free gifts".

The product of our labour, such as the whale oil that illuminated the ships and rapidly growing cities of the early capitalist Britain, has a value equal to the amount of socially necessary labour power that went into its production. It is the hours and days that it takes to capture, transport and process the whale that gives the product monetary value.

There are many reasons to value whales: these extraordinary creatures inspired awe and appear in our most ancient literature, they are sentinel species in marine ecosystems and natural sequesters of atmospheric carbon. Capitalist society has no way of valuing these properties and hence is driving whales to extinction.

Green capitalists recognise this problem and argue that the climate and ecological emergencies are "the greatest market failure ever seen" driven by the failure to price the "externalities" of economic activity ie the ecological costs of capitalist production. The green capitalist solution to this problem is to establish institutions that can affix prices to these so-called "externalities".

The IMF, after significant investment in earnest research, declared the value of a

wild whale swimming in the open ocean at \$2 million. Green capitalists hope that once whales and all the other "externalities" are appropriately priced, market actors will be incentivised to both "effectively" and "efficiently" shift activity from ecologically damaging activity. The first section of Buller's work explains the absurdity of these green capitalist schemes.

The cornerstone of green capitalism is carbon markets and the effort to set an "effective" and "efficient" carbon price. For green capitalists, an effective and efficient carbon price is one that allows the maximum economic benefit for the minimum ecological cost. Such thinking has generated models that attempt to set the effective and efficient price of carbon. One of the most famous and celebrated is William Nordhaus's Dynamic Integrated Climate-Economy (DICE) model. But the assumptions are (like the capitalist value system) astonishingly detached from material reality.

Nordhaus's starting point is that 90% of economic activity will be unaffected by climate change because most work either takes place indoors, under the earth's surface or inside vehicles. Nordhaus concedes that agriculture will take a hit but apparently overlooks the fact that the world's workers need food in their bellies and that droughts, floods, heatwaves, storms, pandemics and wildfires tend to have an impact on all workers' ability to go about our daily work. From these sketchy starting points, the DICE model concludes 3.5°C warming as "economically optimal".

Buller defers to climate scientists who tell us 3°C warming could inflict droughts 'persistent enough to cripple the world's food supply'; 3°C is likely "incompatible with an organised global community".

Yet from such models, policy makers generate the "Social Cost of Carbon" which is supposed to reflect the value of damages avoided by mitigating CO2 emissions. No capitalist state has ever set the SCC at an effective rate and in 2017, Trump issued an executive order that reduced the SCC in the USA by 90%, thus rolling back the limited fuel regula-



tion of the previous administration.

The EU's Emissions Trading Scheme is the world's most established and celebrated carbon market and is almost entirely ineffective. The generous allocation of free permits has meant that many large high-emitting firms have extracted an estimated €50 billion windfall profits from the mechanism since it began in 2008. Over this same period ETS contributed just 3.8% emissions reductions. Most of the EU's emissions reductions have come from offshoring manufacturing to China.

Ideally a functioning carbon market would price the unit price of emissions at the cost of carbon drawdown and long term storage. The current offsetting industry makes no such attempt. Buller gives the example of fossil fuel giant Total which claimed "carbon-neutrality" on a \$17 million shipment of liquified natural gas. Total's claim was based on purchasing a \$600,000 offset which involved a project to clear undergrowth from Zimbabwean forests and investing in some Chinese wind turbines that had been operational for over a decade.

Buller also documents how the offsetting industry is involved in land grabs and violent dispossession for often ineffective green projects dreamt up in corporate boardrooms.

Buller has an interesting analysis of the gilets jaunes protests and the tendency of green capitalism to drive people towards the denialist right. She also describes green capitalism's attempts at adaptation. She details how the first priority of capitalist states during the Covid-19 crisis and the Covid-19 crisis and in response to escalating floods, wildfires, droughts and storms, is to prop up asset prices.

As the first planetary scale impact of the Anthropocene, the Covid-19 pandemic provoked a peculiarly uniform response from capitalist governments. Faced with the necessity of shutting down large numbers of workplaces, governments reached for the 2007-9 financial crash playbook and loaded up on debt in order to inflate asset prices and bail out the rich, even as the real economy was contracting. As countries went into lockdown and many working-class people were impoverished and making extraordinary sacrifices, governments

instituted the biggest "socialism of the rich" handouts in history.

The Federal Reserve bought up \$120 billion per month in Treasury bills, mortgage-backed securities and corporate bonds in order to protect the fortunes of the capitalist class. Many of these transactions were organised by BlackRock which became known in the financial press as "the fourth branch of government". In the aftermaths of this feeding frenzy, governments impose austerity on the working-class and poor in order to pay off the debt accrued from corporate bailouts during the crisis. Government debt is held by the same class of financial speculators who were bailed out during the pandemic.

The pandemic was not simply exploited by private capital to plunder the state for cash. It also prompted investors to shift to so-called Environmental Social Governance funds. The real aim of such funds is to minimise exposure to "systemic risks" like environmental collapse or "stranded assets" as government regulation bans ecologically destructive activity. Most ESG funds simply exclude the fossil fuel sector and instead tilt the investment portfolio towards Big Tech and similar.

Buller works for a left-wing think tank, Commonwealth, and her work has the usual shortcomings of left-wing academia. Despite interesting analysis, Buller's conclusions are short on solutions. The book makes no reference to the ongoing struggles in the working-class movement and completely overlooks the latent power of organised labour as the only viable anti-capitalist force.

The revolutionary Gyorgy Lukacs once said "the dialectical materialist knowledge of reality, can arise only from the point of view of a class, from the point of view of the struggle of the proletariat. To abandon this point of view is to move away from historical materialism, just as to adopt it leads directly into the thick of the struggle for the proletariat. Historical materialism grows out of the 'immediate, natural' life-principle of the proletariat; it means the acquisition of total knowledge of reality from this one point of view".

In the increasingly weird and unprecedented times of the Anthropocene, various intellectuals are describing aspects of our new reality that are worth paying attention to, although none manage to articulate that knowledge from the "point of view of the proletariat". It is the task of revolutionary workers organisations, like Workers' Liberty, to engage critically with this literature and orient to the radically new realities we face. *The Value of the Whale* helps in that task and should be on your reading list. □

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Trans people and consent

By Natalia Cassidy

Durham Crown Court has sentenced Ciara Watkin (CW), a transgender woman, to 21 months in a men's prison, imposed a lifelong restraining order, and required her to sign the sex offenders register for 10 years.

She was found guilty of sexual assault in a consensual encounter, in 2021, between her and a man she had met on Snapchat, when they were both 17. According to Sarah Vine KC, who attended the trial during the judge's summation of the evidence, the pair met twice. Once CW claimed that she was menstruating and so did not want the man to touch her. The second time, the man's friends arrived and mocked him for his claimed girlfriend CW "being a boy". Later on, CW told the man she was trans.

But CW has been jailed on the grounds that "deception" made the encounter into sexual assault. The basis was a clarification made by the CPS on the case of



R v McNally (2013) where a (cisgender) girl was jailed for posing as a boy to engage in sexual activity with another girl. The clarification stated that the court in that case, which cited "deception as to gender", was "probably referring to deception as to sex". This clarification clearly has a knock-on effect on trans people.

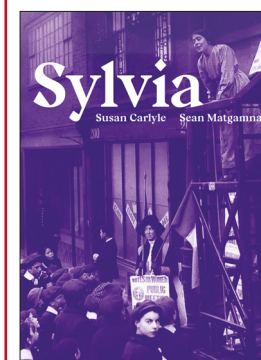
There are many reasons why a trans person may not choose to disclose their transgender status to everyone. In the vast majority of interpersonal situations there is no legal obligation to do so (including in things like dating).

The reality for trans women in engaging intimately with men is that there are many men who are interested in trans women and will go out of their way to try and engage with trans women, but who are also deeply insecure about this. This puts those women who engage with them in a vulnerable position if the man turns towards violence to reassert his masculinity and his heterosexuality because he thinks his relationship with a trans woman jeopardises those traits in the perception of others.

Whatever one's views are on the specifics of the CW case, it seems clear that, given the existing dynamics for transgender women engaging with heterosexual men, the court case only increases the precarity for women involved

in these relationships, with an added risk of men claiming that they were being deceived all along.

The risk that someone's sex at birth is incongruent with their gender presentation when you decide to sleep with them seems to be a price that has to be paid if we want to live in a world where the state does not interpose itself in consensual sex between two adults by requiring evidence of disclosure of one's sex at birth. □



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Syria

Democracy a long way off under Sharaa

By Simon Nelson

Syria is now electing its first Parliament since the fall of Assad. The electorate is 6,000 in regional subcommittees, overseen by an 11-person Supreme Committee, appointed by Ahmed al-Sharaa. Sharaa himself will select 70 members of the new Parliament, with the regional committees electing the other 140.

Voting was postponed in several districts, including the Druze-majority Sweida, where violence erupted over the summer, and in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Kurdish-controlled areas in the northeast. No rescheduled dates for these elections have been given. Results released show that women secured about 4% of seats so far. They were approximately 14% of the candidates. While the electoral college guaranteed quotas for women, the elections themselves did not. In some districts, no women were running.

The new MPs will serve for 30 months. Sharaa could use his appointments to bring in more women, members of minorities, but anyway is sure to appoint his own supporters, or those who will not prove to be any effective opposition. Political parties are still banned, and all candidates ran as individuals. Any legal political organisation for Syria's working class seems a long way off.

Sharaa, who has been busy making international trips and seeking to build



relationships with other leaders in the post-Assad Syria, has now met with Putin, who was one of Assad's strongest allies and has now given him asylum. Sharaa has issued an arrest warrant for Assad, but the talks did not publicly include any demand for his return to Syria.

Putin wants to preserve access to the Hmeimim airbase and Tartus port, allowing continued access to the Mediterranean and Africa. Syria is reliant on Russian energy expertise and wants investment. A deal may well materialise.

Following the sectarian tension that has flared since Sharaa took power, even tentative moves to democratic participation are, according to UN envoy Geir Pedersen, on a "knife-edge". Sharaa has endorsed UN-suggested investigations into the violence and pledged to deal with perpetrators. But the pledge may prove empty if some of the war crimes turn out to have committed by people close to Sharaa. And where Sharaa does not control, local strongmen and militias hold power.

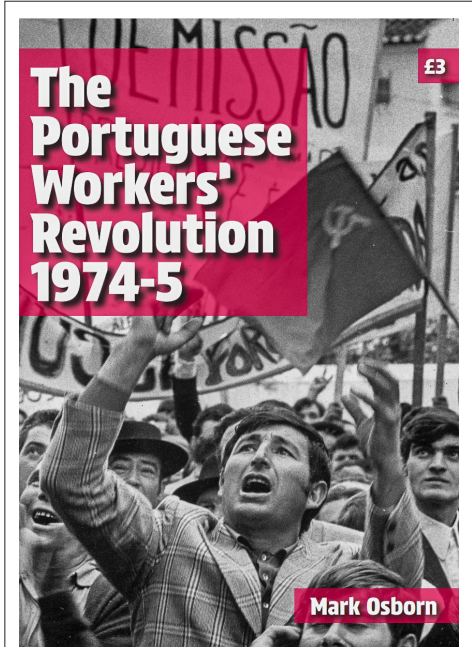
The Kurdish question remains unresolved. The US had brokered an understanding in March that would start the integration of the SDF into the national military by the end of 2025. Yet in Aleppo in September, SDF forces clashed with the Syrian army.

The US flew SDF commander Mazlum Kobane to Damascus for talks with Sharaa. Kurds want autonomy and constitutional guarantees, plus protection from both Turkish-backed and Sunni Islamist militias. Sharaa, who continues to rule out federalism and whose previous apparent concessions to the Kurds have been undone by the government's own actions, seems unwilling to budge.

Something like an official opposition to Sharaa now exists. A mix of civil-society figures, exiles and other anti-Assad forces, the Syrian Centenary Collective, has called for the government to work with it to bring Syria together. A Syri-

an-British billionaire, Ayman Asfari, and George Sabra, a Christian activist jailed by Assad, are key figures.

Continued but incomplete sanctions relief by Western governments and new Gulf state investment could start a process of economic reconstruction. But it will not be on the terms of the Syrian people. □



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What AI can do, and what it can't

By Will Roberts

What is AI?

A very effective marketing term. The phrase “artificial intelligence” has been used in computing since at least the 1950s. “AI” is now used as shorthand for “machine learning” and Large Language Models (LLMs).

The term “AI” is supposed to signify that these technologies involve machines learning to think. At their core, LLMs are basically a large-scale word guessing game. If I feed ChatGPT the sentence “the cat sat on the ___”, it would look through its enormous database of human communication that it has been trained on, and evaluate that humans are 56% likely to finish that sentence with the word “mat”.

Don't we also work out what to say based on things we've said before? Isn't that basically learning how to think?

Much of the training that AI bots use is based on human labour. I recently joined thousands of others doing freelance work on an AI industry website. Users are paid nominal sums of cash to evaluate how successful AI chatbot responses are, and write down what the chatbot should say instead. Websites like this are the engine for refining AI models, and they are driven entirely by the correction and evaluation of human brains.

LLMs are not “thinking”, they apply human-developed algorithms to enormous quantities of data. When ChatGPT “answers” a question, what it is actually doing is providing you with a very sophisticated average of what it estimates a human could respond. Notably, humans often lie, and because of that, so does AI.

Is that useful?

Computers have been able to outstrip human intelligence in many fields for a long time. For example, the 1976 Haken-Appel proof of the “four-colour theorem” in maths depends on computer analysis which no human can emulate or even check in detail (rather than outline).

There are enormously useful case studies for technologies that fall under the “AI” umbrella. Machine learning has revolutionised our ability to research how proteins are constructed; and for tasks like coding, which are based on formulaic constructs that can be very easily tested and falsified, AI enormously speeds up the process.

Such genuine uses will continue in everyday life too, like being able to give plain-English instructions to get results from databases. But this is a long way from AGI, and the technofuturist maniacs that fund it.

Hold on, what's AGI?

Another marketing term, this one less



effective. “Artificial General Intelligence” is defined differently by each AI company that uses it, but it's supposedly the point at which machine learning outstrips human intellectual efforts, and can take over vast swathes of the economy across multiple industries.

LLMs can't achieve AGI. A more accurate average of human conversation can't magically transform into original thought. The current period of AI-mania began when developers achieved a big step forward in “human-like” responses by training their models on enormous amounts of data. This made their propaganda around AGI and “thinking machines” seem somewhat plausible to investors.

A recent plateau in the quality of outputs and user base led to OpenAI, the developers of ChatGPT, delaying GPT4.0 for several months while they tried to find something to justify the enormous amounts spent on it. Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, switched from speaking non-stop of AGI to saying it “wasn't that useful a concept”. Last week, Altman announcement that, to drive up user engagement, adult users on ChatGPT would now be allowed to generate porn, a line that they previously promised not to cross.

Is AI going to take my job?

Given its limitations, the number of actual whole jobs that AI could take over is limited. Human labour power is a unique commodity, and one of the most unique things about it is the ability for humans to adapt to new environments and scenarios, and change the labour they do accordingly.

But I can't get a job right now. Isn't that AI?

If you're young or just out of education, there is definitely an employment crisis at the moment. But the data suggests that it's hitting blue collar, manual jobs more severely than white-collar office jobs and jobs to do with data handling. This is the opposite of what you would expect to see if AI were the cause.

The job market in multiple countries is still running “cold” due to after-effects

from the Covid pandemic, inflation being high for a multitude of reasons, and geopolitical uncertainty, most prominently Trump and his tariffs.

So why is everyone talking about AI and the economy?

There is currently a bubble forming around AI – one similar in size to the “dotcom bubble” at the turn of the millennium. The Chair of OpenAI recently acknowledged that company valuations were massively outgrowing their actual value, and former Google boss Eric Schmidt declared “Bubbles are great. May the bubbles continue”.

Much of this valuation is based on speculation about how valuable AI models could be in the future – if AGI is discovered. In the real world, this has all the trappings of a forthcoming crash. Now that user numbers have plateaued, and the companies are scrambling to prove profitability (some have started hiring advertising executives from Google and Facebook, indicating a shift towards new income sources), the clock is ticking.

This is especially the case for companies like Nvidia, a chip producer whose shares have skyrocketed in value since their GPUs have become integral to providing the computing power necessary for LLMs. Given the shelf life for a high-end piece of Nvidia equipment is about three years, investors will be seeking a return on investment much sooner than the promise of the ever-elusive AGI on the horizon.

My friend says AI is killing the planet. Can you tell me why in the style of Frank Sinatra?

I'm a Trotskyist activist, not a performing monkey. But the problems AI expansion pose to the environment are real and dangerous. LLMs require enormous amounts of computing power and data storage. To account for this, there has been an explosion in the building of data centres across the world. An estimated \$3 trillion (roughly the size of the French economy) will be spent on building new data centres over the next five years, and there are currently plans for around 100

new data centres in the UK.

These centres use unbelievable amounts of energy. In the US, these centres have been built on sites where electricity is currently cheapest, like Nevada or Utah.

That poses its own problem – those places are some of the driest in the US, and when thousands upon thousands of stacks of computers are run side by side, the heat generated is vast. Water is an essential resource for cooling down the data centres, and the water cost of the average centre is a terrifying prospect for our planet. A water cooling tower in a data centre uses around 19,000 litres of water per minute. Both the water and energy usage far outstrip human usage in the surrounding area — in 2023, indirect water consumption tied to energy use was equivalent to about two million US homes. That will now be higher.

I'd like to write something for Solidarity on AI. ChatGPT has given me some great ideas.

We welcome new contributors to Solidarity, but please, don't get chatbots to write your articles. The ability to read and collect articles, books and other information, politically evaluate them and produce a coherent, well-written text are all skills that socialists should want to develop themselves. A speech at a union conference will be better if you have put care and a human touch into it, and you will learn how to do that by writing articles yourself and talking to real people.

AI may provide you with options, or perhaps offer some kind of structure to get around writers' block (personally, I share writer David Simon's [view](#): “I'd rather put a gun in my mouth”). but the words on the page, and the argument they make, should be yours and yours alone. □

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Prison violence and trans people

By Riki Lane

Workers' Liberty supports trans and gender-diverse (TGD) people's rights. Some left feminists (sex based rights activists, SBRAs) see those as threatening women's rights. This series of articles attempts to thread a path for left-wing activists to reach more agreement. This article examines prisons. I use "assigned sex at birth" for biological sex, and "gender identity" for psychological and social identification. I am a university and gender-affirming health clinic researcher. I identify as a gender-non-conforming man (he/they). Nothing I write here represents my employers' stance.

Violence in prisons is a large problem, including sexual assault. Trans people are sometime perpetrators, but much more often are victims.

All women in prisons face a high likelihood of physical and sexual violence from staff or other residents. In England, violence in women's prisons runs as high as in male prisons, though many fewer women are jailed for violent crimes. A major international (but mostly US) meta analysis estimates that 25% of women in prisons have been physically assaulted, and 15% sexually assaulted. (Caravaca-Sánchez et al 2023). There is strong evidence that the majority of sexual assaults in prison are by staff (Polaschek, 2023).

Studies of trans women's experience in men's prisons show significantly higher rates of physical and sexual assault. For example, a Californian men's prisons study of 315 transgender women (Jenness et al 2019) found that 80.3% experienced physical victimisation and 58.5% had to undertake sexual activities against their will. This and other studies point to how trans women in men's prisons enter "consensual" sexual relationships, which reduce the sexual assaults they suffer, but still experience sexual victimisation in those relationships.

Yet trans women being in women's prisons has become a highly contested issue over the last decade, often highlighted by SBRAs who often argue that no trans women should be housed in women's prisons. In Melbourne Australia SBRAs and the right wing Liberal party are [currently](#) calling for "Hilary Maloney" to be transferred to a men's prison to serve their term for abusing her five-year-old daughter and sending videos to an overseas paedophile. This case highlights problems with the argument made by the SBRAs who demonstrated at the Dame Phyllis Frost prison with slogans of "no men in women's prisons".

"Maloney" has been in solitary confinement in a maximum security prison, as one of seven trans women out of 538

residents. They would certainly face grave dangers if they were transferred to a men's prison. A forensic psychiatrist found that "Maloney" "was highly unlikely to commit further sexual offences". There is no evidence they represent a threat to other (adult women) residents.

Trans women prisoners are often isolated, supposedly for their safety. But a recent study of 280 trans people in prisons across 31 US states found 90% had been in solitary confinement, 31% were harassed, threatened or attacked by other incarcerated people, and 53% experienced non-consensual sexual encounters (Chesnut et al 2024). It is clear that solitary confinement has major psychological health impacts.

There are, of course, a few documented, but widely cited, instances of sexual assault in women's prisons by trans women (around ten globally). Two key cases changed the dynamic of discussion in the UK and Scotland, Karen White was found guilty of rape in 2018 and Isla Bryson in 2023. Much comment was as if the problem were not their history of sexual assault, but their gender transitions. Whilst on remand awaiting trial (initially for assault on a man), White was placed in a women's prison, sexually assaulted two other residents (through sexually-related touching) and was relocated to a men's prison. Bryson was in a women's prison whilst on remand for rape charges, but isolated from other residents. After conviction they were moved to a men's prison.

Danger

These cases certainly point to the danger posed in women's prisons by perpetrators of sexual assault. But trans women represent a very small part of the problem of sexual violence in prisons: the vast majority is perpetrated by prison guards and cis women prisoners. (Fewer than 3/1,000 prisoners in England and Wales are trans people).

Lambie (2023) argues that in debates around White: "women's prisons were routinely constructed as otherwise 'safe spaces' until the entrance of trans women obscuring the acute and ongoing institutional dangers and harms that all prisoners face. In fact, a few months after Karen White was sentenced ... a male prison officer, Iain Cocks, who was working in the same women's prison that White had been initially housed in, was convicted of sexual offences against two women prisoners. Yet the Cocks case attracted far less media attention and controversy."

The focus on trans women as a danger diverts attention from the realities. Firstly there need to be effective measures to stop assaults by prison guards. However, official attempts to do that, such as the US Prison Rape Elimination



Act of 2003, have been markedly ineffective due to lack of compliance by prison authorities. (Daly et al 2023 "Women's Dignity, Women's Prisons: Combatting Sexual Abuse".)

Secondly, there needs to be recognition that trans women face enormous danger when placed in men's prisons. Even when male prison authorities recognise these issues, a common response is to place trans women in solitary confinement, or in "special wards" that also include rapists etc. where they are at great risk of assault.

So what are the possible ways forward between the competing arguments set out below?

1. Some right wingers argue that trans people be assigned based on their birth sex, regardless of gender affirming treatments.

2. Others (including many SBRAs) argue that only trans women who have had gender affirming surgery (and some include trans men), and have no history of assaulting women should be allowed into women's prisons.

3. Many trans advocates argue that all trans people should be held where they select.

4. A few countries have opened transgender facilities, or wings in some women's prisons. That is perhaps better than putting trans women in male prisons where they are almost certain to be harassed, or trans men in female prisons where they may elicit fear and hostility. Trans prisoners' views are mixed — some trans women prefer to be in male prisons, and many oppose "segregated" wings for trans people.

Some recommendations? The first demand should be one not specific to trans people: vastly fewer people, and very few people whose conviction is not

for violence, should be in prison. In England, 70-odd% of women prisoners are there for non-violent offences. England jails about three times as many people, in proportion to population, as the Netherlands.

Further: one clear principle in women's prisons should be that any resident (cis or trans) with a history of sexual assault evidently needs to be housed separately from potential victims — other residents. A second clear principle is that all inmates should have some choice over whom they share a cell with, or whether they are in a single person cell.

Such texts as the Winter 2023 "Correctional policies for the management of trans people in Australian prisons" give guidelines, summarised below.

Placement: Decisions "consider the individual's housing preference, gender identity and expression, and safety considerations rather than solely their anatomy or sex assignment at birth". Allow for incarcerated trans people to have access to private shower and toilet facilities.

Classification: That all staff address incarcerated trans people by their correct names and pronouns.

Solitary: That policies "ensure the safety of [trans people] without segregating or isolating these individuals."

Healthcare: needs to be delivered without undue delay, for gender affirming hormones and surgical treatments, general health care, and particular issues around mental health, wellbeing, and violence, and Sexual Health and Infectious Disease

Belongings: That incarcerated trans people have access to clothing and grooming options "concordant with their gender expression." □



The French left and

By Martin Thomas

Emmanuel Macron's new prime minister, Sebastian Lecornu, has won a reprieve in his second attempt to form a government. The Socialist Party abstained to allow him to survive a no-confidence vote, in return for a delay in raising the pension age.

Now Lecornu is trying to get a budget through parliament, but his chances of success are thin. He has promised not to use the clause in the constitution which would allow him and Macron to impose it without a vote.

He plans to reduce France's budget deficit by about 30 billion euros, from 5.4% to 4.7% of GDP, by tax rises and social cuts. He has rejected the "Zucman tax" on wealth favoured by the parliamentary left. Some say that could raise up to 20 billion euros.

Social-media networks which initiated the 10 September day of action (demonstrations, roadblocks, some strikes) and pushed the union confederations into

further actions on 18 September and 2 October are proposing another day of action on 15 November. As of now, the union confederations have only small new protests planned.

There is much agitation for Macron to resign, or parliament to be dissolved, i.e. for new presidential or parliamentary elections.

However, the far-right RN is the leading party in opinion polls, and becoming more so. A splinter of the mainstream right (UDR) is now allied with it, and Bruno Retailleau, leader of the rump mainstream right, signals increased openness to an alliance with the RN. RN candidate Jordan Bardella leads in presidential opinion polls.

The RN distances itself from Trump, and poses as a competent, managerial alternative. Yet it remains far-right, vehemently anti-immigrant and anti-union.

There is vast discontent, but much of it so unformed that it can be annexed by the far right. In a recent survey, 87% said

all politicians act primarily for personal gain.

In fact, even the most corrupt bourgeois politicians have policies shaped by the ruling class around them, or sections of that ruling class. Those policies are bad, but they are more than devices to enrich individual politicians.

The "vulgar economic-reductionist" story can easily feed right-wing conclusions such as the desire (85% of respondents) for "a real boss to restore order in France", who may be personally frugal or at least leave public policy with only one individual's greed to sate, or the thought that political democracy is pointless. 70% say trade-union action can't improve conditions.

41% classify themselves as on the right, 28% as on the left, and for many "neither right nor left" means far-right. 38% see the RN as presenting the most desirable social model, 33% the Socialist Party, tiny numbers for other parties, and many more see the RN as likely to

be effective for its model than see the SP that way.

It is a difficult situation for revolutionary socialists. We are not qualified to offer political answers from a distance. However, it does seem to us that some comrades in France are side-stepping questions rather than answering them.

A "two-level" answer of urging lots of strikes and demonstrations now, including strikes for immediate and specific demands, then socialist revolution as their immediate result, cannot be adequate. We cannot win politically without politics, i.e. without convincing workers of democratic and socialist answers and organising them around those. We cannot win a majority without a whole series of linked struggles for transitional demands such as taxing the rich or taking high finance into public ownership. We cannot do politics without democratic responses to the rule-by-decree regime of France's Fifth Republic and to the desire for a "boss to restore order". □

NPA-Révolutionnaires, 20 October

On 17 October, Standard & Poor's downgraded France because of "high uncertainty" about its public finances. Financial circles are reminding [president] Macron and [prime minister] Lecornu that their mission is to attack workers ever harder.

The message has been heard! In education, the government is preparing to cut 4,000 teaching posts and to slow down the recruitment of support staff for pupils with disabilities.

The increase in the hospital budget is limited to 1.6%, whereas demographic needs alone would require an increase of at least 5%.

Civil service salaries will not increase any time soon, nor will family allowances, student grants or retirement pensions, which will be under-indexed in relation to inflation by 0.4% from 2027. Apprentices will even see their take-home pay drop!

Foreign students from outside the European Union who do not have grants

will lose their housing benefit (APL), and foreign nationals will have to pay more for residence permits.

Even luncheon vouchers and holiday vouchers will be taxed at 8%!

The Social Security Financing Bill provides for savings of over €7 billion on healthcare, with the doubling of medical deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses on drugs, medical transport, medical consultations, and now medical devices such as prostheses. People with long-term conditions (disabling stroke, multiple sclerosis, etc.) will lose the tax exemption on their daily allowances.

All these attacks will add to our already numerous daily difficulties.

Yet some dare to claim that this budget is a step forward, because it would suspend the 2023 pension reform. In fact, it is simply a matter of slowing down the increase in the statutory retirement age from 62 to 64, because the number of quarterly contributions required to obtain a full pension is continuing to rise,

but the increase is just being slowed down. What's more, for this so-called concession to be adopted, the entire Lecornu budget would have to be voted through!

This was enough for the Socialist MPs to give up on voting to censure the government. Their New Popular Front partners are crying betrayal... but you can only be betrayed by those you trust! The betrayal was rather to put the Socialist Party back in the saddle for the 2022 and 2024 general elections.

However, it's no coincidence that Lecornu's manoeuvre to push through his attacks concerns pensions: that's where there have been the biggest national struggles in recent years, proof that our struggles always leave their mark.

It's up to us to thwart this pitiful attempt at hijacking, by going on strike, all of us together, to ensure that not a single wage or benefit is less than 2,000 euros, for massive recruitment in the public ser-

vices, for a ban on redundancies...

While the trade union leaders do not seem to be in any hurry to prepare a counter-attack, with the CFDT even rejoicing at Lecornu's trickery, some people are not waiting to defend their working conditions, wages or rights, such as the postal workers in the 17th arrondissement of Paris, the railway workers at Saint-Lazare station, the logistics and transport workers at Geodis, the employees at Auchan, the students at Nanterre university who can't get on courses for this year...

Governments change, politicians come and go, but the policies remain and will remain as long as the bosses, shareholders and bankers, who are not dependent on elections, retain their power. So let's unite to overthrow it. We are the ones who work, it's up to us to decide!

Arguments pour la lutte sociale, 16 October

With 271 votes, the motion of no confidence [against Lecornu] tabled by La France Insoumise was defeated, 18 short of the 289 needed. Seven out of 69 Socialists did not follow their party's instructions to abstain, but, on the other hand, three Ecologists and two Communists did not vote for no-confidence, whereas a LIOT [catch-all minor parlia-

mentary group] and even a LR [mainstream-right] MP did.

The no-confidence motion from the RN and its ally the UDR [a splinter from the mainstream right] received only the votes of their respective groups, to which must be added those of three LR members, for a total of 144.

We thus have a continuation of the

precarious lease of life granted to the Lecornu 2 government, which will make it possible to open the discussion on the State and Social Security budgets where the promise to suspend the pension reform must not be the tree that hides... a forest of regressions!

It should be noted that only the MPs voting no-confidence were present in

the Chamber, so the presence of the central bloc, which supports the government like a rope supports a hanged man, was minimal.

The blackmail around dissolving parliament and having new elections now recedes somewhat as the political crisis will now crystallise around the adoption or otherwise of the budgets, if the

the political crisis

government does not meanwhile fall to a no-confidence vote because the situation remains so unstable (remember that Barnier's budget fell last year on the finance provisions for Social Security [distinct in France from the general

budget]).

While the unions are still savouring the victory — or rather the retreat — on the pension reform, it's time for the labour movement, young people and pensioners, all targeted by these budgets which

will attack meal vouchers, apprentices' salaries and pensions in one fell swoop, to take their affairs into their own hands.

And it's just the thing: the general assemblies that organised around the day of action on 10 September, which has

already brought down one government, are calling for a 15 November day of action, in the middle of the budget debate, to be a new stage in the struggle, with a national rally in Paris. So we have 30 days to turn the tables!

Démocratie Révolutionnaire, 19 October

So, Lecornu was saved from a no-confidence vote by the Socialist Party. "There is an absolute majority in the Assembly which does not want it dissolved and new elections", he announced.

A majority petrified by the discredit, the collapse of "parliamentary democracy" and the parties which, together or in turn, have led the government's offensive against the workers. The farce of the Macron government, which claimed to transcend divisions and provide the stability needed by the ruling classes to lead the offensive to maintain their profits and their system, has come to nothing.

Lecornu's "rescue", far from being a break in the crisis, is on the contrary a new stage in it as the far right prepares itself. The "republican" posturing [i.e. cross-class unity against the far right] in the Assembly and elsewhere is all the more derisory.

"We're taking a gamble, a risky gamble" pontificated Boris Vallaud, announcing that the Socialist Party was open to "parliamentary debate", while Olivier Faure presented the suspension of the pension reform as an "unprecedented victory for the social movement".

"No confidence today is an expression of our visceral attachment to democracy", declared Aurélie Trouvé for LFI, whose only horizon was the Republic and a return to the ballot box. Unsurprisingly, their motion of censure failed, receiving 271 votes (out of the 289 required), more than half of which came from RN and Ciottist MPs...

LFI immediately called for "popular and parliamentary resistance to continue fighting these cruel budgets", while Le Pen, whose motion received 144 votes, denounced the "pitiful coalition of system parties" promising a "counter-budget".

So the farce goes on, grimly for the workers, while an ever-growing section of the ruling classes see no other way out than the far right to ensure the "stability" of their domination.

The Socialist Party's surrender highlights the collapse of the Left as a whole, of the defunct NFP which was presented yesterday as a lifeline by all those who wanted to believe in or pretend to believe in a "left" and "united" Left. A New Popular Front in the name of which Mélen-

chon applied to be Macron's prime minister after the legislative elections [of 2024]. It is in the name of this "social and political left" that Olivier Besancenot [of the NPA-A], nostalgic for the NFP, is now calling for "unity and radicalism"!

Last week the NFP once again pretended to believe that Macron could entrust her with the formation of the government...

After ruling out... suspension of the pension reform and any new consultation on pensions, Lecornu put them in the basket offered to the SP and the CFDT [the less combative of the big union confederations]. [CFDT leader] Marylise Léon had the nerve to rejoice: "Since 2023, we've run a marathon and it's a collective victory... it's a long-term job and that's often what the trade union struggle is all about... I have in mind all those faces, during the demonstrations in 2023, who told us that we had to be able to continue to carry on our fight, and now it's going to become a reality".

Making the suspension conditional on further budget cuts of a brutality that has nothing to envy to that of the Bayrou budget, Lecornu therefore invited the "social partners", employers' and workers' organisations, to a "conference on pensions and work" whose task would be to work on proposals between now and the presidential elections... including that of the points-based pension which had been rejected by the massive mobilisations before Covid and which is defended by the CFDT...

"If it's to work on a solution to the problem of pensions and work, we need to be able to continue our fight, and now it's going to happen", said Marylise Léon. "If it's to work on a hypothesis of a points-based reform, it will be without us" replied [CGT leader] Sophie Binet for the time being. Lecornu went on to propose "going further" and "entrusting the management of our pension system to the social partners".

More than ever, parliamentary debate and social dialogue can only lead to brutal setbacks in the continuation of the deregulation and challenges made by all governments over the last 25 years, from the Aubry laws to the El Khomry labour law and the many reforms that have ex-



ported hundreds of billions from workers

and the general public in order to feed big business and finance...

It is this transfer of wealth from labour to capital that the budget presented by Lecornu organises, with 30 billion euros planned cuts in public spending.

The finance bill to be debated from Monday [20 October] in the Assembly, followed by the social security funding bill is a declaration of war against the working class.

Doubled

Existing deductibles [from the social-insurance repayments on health care] are being doubled, new ones are being created and their annual ceiling is being doubled, and health insurance spending is being attacked, with the national target for health insurance spending set to rise by 1.6% instead of 3.4% in 2025, when more than 5% is needed to maintain existing activity. Hospital managers themselves are denouncing the worst bout of austerity in 15 years, while since the summer regional health authorities have been imposing a raft of plans to bring public hospitals back into balance. Measures for the disabled and long-term ill are being called into question, and the plan calls for limiting sick leave, restricting long-term sick leave and stepping up checks, including by doctors paid by employers.

There will also be a freeze on retirement pensions in 2026, followed by under-indexation for three years at 0.4% less than inflation, and a freeze on social benefits... The 10% rebate on pensions would be replaced by a system that will increase tax for many pensioners. 3,000 cuts in civil service posts have been an-

nounced, to which must be added 4,600 cuts in teaching posts, according to the newspaper Les Echos...

"This budget is very dangerous. It absolutely must be radically changed" reacted Sophie Binet for the CGT, without discussing for a second how labour could "change" the policy... All she has done so far is to call on pensioners alone to take to the streets on 6 November...

The parliamentary and trade union lefts are bound hand and foot to the policies of the ruling classes, petrified in the face of the chaos caused by the violence of parasitism and the senility crisis of capitalism. But workers have nothing to fear from this chaos. They are not seeking the stability of a system that is spreading misery and leading humanity to disaster, but on the contrary need full lucidity and independence to weaken and destabilise it and challenge the domination of big business.

The movement that began on 10 September, based on social networks and grassroots activist teams, demonstrated the scale of social anger and the determination of a minority to take matters into their own hands. Bayrou preferred to resign, and the leaders of several central trade unions finally paid lip service to 10 Sep strike, after having distanced themselves from it... The intersyndicale then called for two more days of strikes, without giving them the slightest ongoing perspective.

But anger remains deep in the working class and among young people. The challenge now is to help those involved in the 10 September and beyond to take

continued on page 14 →



up a class policy that responds to their interests and those of the vast majority of the population, in order to prepare for what comes next.

A follow-up that will need a completely different orientation to that of La France Insoumise, which would like to take the anger to the ballot box and, like Aurélie Trouvé in the Assembly, calls for “the spirit of the Republic” and “the unity of the nation”...

We need a battle plan and a programme for our struggles, linking today's demands — the rejection of an austerity budget, the demand for public services in health and education, higher wages, minimum social benefits and pensions, the fight against redundancies, the question of how work should be shared between everyone — with revolutionary prospects.

The budget question, and all our demands, raise the question of power, and are inseparable from it in the sense that the interests of labour and capital are irreconcilable. They raise the question of what kind of economic and social organisation, what kind of planning of production and its distribution, who directs and decides.

This means expropriating big business and the multinationals, planning the economy according to needs, expropriating the banks and creating a public banking monopoly to centralise and control all financial resources.

These questions are at the heart of the mobilisations for all those who want to take action. How, through the crisis of domination of the bourgeoisie, through the upheavals underway, can we map out the path towards a different society and, to do this, raise the question of power. At a time when a number of major Western powers, like the world's leading power, are in the process of falling into far-right populist dictatorships, this question takes on a particular urgency for large sections of the population and young people, here as in many other countries.

We are entering a political moment of mobilisation, an opportunity for the revolutionary movement to give a current, concrete content to the question of the need for a revolutionary workers' party and a programme for the working class, not as distant objectives but already in germ at the heart of the struggles, in the collectives, general assemblies and embryos of democratic organisation.

The intensification of the social war waged by the ruling classes, the acceleration of the economic, commercial, democratic and political crisis, are leading many workers and young people to break with institutional illusions and organise themselves, to ask themselves more acute and concrete political questions, the ways and means of changing society. □

• Abridged. Démocratie Révolutionnaire is a minority grouping within the NPA-R.

TAXER L'HÉRITAGE DES ULTRA-RICHES

+5 milliards €

POUR FINANCER LE PROGRAMME DU NOUVEAU FRONT POPULAIRE

France Insoumise is one thing, NFP another

I am in complete agreement with the criticisms you are developing [*Solidarity* 751] against those who, through the “Your Party” project, want to implement some British version of “France Insoumise” organisational model.

But the populist and Bonapartist model promoted by Mélenchon since 2017 with the foundation of “France Insoumise” is not to be confused with the question of NFP — Nouveau Front Populaire.

The birth of NFP was a result from the mass pressure among left-wing people against the fascist danger. When Macron, after the success of Le Pen/Bardella's RN at the 2024 European elections, decided to openly offer the head of government to Jordan Bardella as Prime Minister by dissolving the Parliament and calling for new parliamentary elections, the threat of a RN parliamentary majority was real.

This provoked a surge in left-wing public opinion that generated strong pressure on the leaderships of left-wing parties for electoral unity. There were demonstrations for unity in Paris near the places where leaders were meeting. Considering the level of division and sectarianism by France Insoumise since 2017, the formation of such electoral unity was a good thing. And it was the sole reasonable expedient to counter the RN danger.

The title of the electoral alliance referred to the French historical tradition of the Popular Front created in 1935 after the fascist attempt to overthrow the Third Republic during the street clashes of 6 February 1934. On 12 February 1934, massive PC/CGTU and SFIO/CGT processions met and fell into

each other's arms to the cries of “Unity! Unity!” The day before, the Communist Party had still been on the line of combat “against social fascism”, that is to say, on a line of division of the workers' ranks like the KPD in 1933.

Trotsky wrote a lot about the period 1934-1936 in France and readers should discover or rediscover it: see *Whither France?*

Against the surge for a workers' united front against right-wing and fascist danger, the reformist and Stalinist leaders in 1935 promoted something else, differing from workers' unity. That was cross-class unity with the Radical Party, described as “the democratic party of French imperialism” by Trotsky. The Radicals were the pivotal party of the Third Republic; they died with the fall of that Republic in June 1940 and the military defeat of France by Hitler's invasion.

Deception

French Trotskyists have always fought and denounced the deception and betrayal of the Popular Front, opposing it with the united and independent action of the working class and its organisations. But, with the weight and success of the general strike of May-June 1936, the memory of the Popular Front period has always remained in the French left as a magical reference point in the face of any fascist or reactionary danger. So in June and July 2024, the reference was meaningful.

The mass pressure from working people and youth imposed unity of all the left parties: PS, PCF, LFI, Verts, and a lot of small groups. It was a victory of the masses over the left leaderships.

The reference to NFP by Owen Jones in promoting an “electoral pact between the new party [YP], Independents, and Greens” is wrong. First, because he forgets the Labour Party, which remains the party of the unions. Second, all the elements mentioned are either dubious as to their social and political nature or still remain at the stage of a hazy and inconsistent project (YP).

By not fighting Macron more resolutely and running for office, the NFP parties sabotaged the popular momentum of June-July 2024 and allowed the Bayrou government to last until September 9, 2025.

For the upcoming elections, municipal elections in 2026, presidential elections in 2027, and even early legislative elections if Macron dissolves the parliament again, the need for unity across the entire left is the only way to block the path to such formulas as “unite the rights” (RN plus LR) or a government of the “centre” (from Macron's party to the fringes of LR who would like to participate) with the benevolent neutrality of the RN. All those are candidates to make workers pay for the crisis.

The social mobilisation against the austerity budget has brought down Bayrou. Now it must bring down the entire regime of the Fifth Republic. □

Olivier Delbeke,
Paris

• The “Fifth Republic” is the constitution brought in by Charles De Gaulle after a “soft” military coup in 1958, which allows the president to appoint the prime minister, and to push through measures without a vote on them in Parliament.

The real politics of Yuri Levchenko

By Dale Street

The appearance of Ukrainian politician Yuri Levchenko, founder of Narodovladdia (People's Power), as a speaker at an international conference organised by the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine in March of this year provoked controversy. And rightly so.

From 2008 to 2019 Levchenko was a member of Svoboda, a far-right political party which included an overtly Nazi current. He was a prominent member of the party and held a variety of posts during his membership. These included:

Head of Svoboda's Kyiv organisation (2010-19); consultant on economic issues to Svoboda leader Tyahnybok (2012-14); "Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy" in the Svoboda "Government of National Alternative" (2013); Kyiv city councillor (2014); Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) deputy (2014-19).

Levchenko was a true believer in Svoboda's far-right nationalist and populist politics. As he once explained:

"We are defending family values and a Europe of nations against multiculturalism, which I regard as a policy aimed at merging different cultures — which is not possible. Look at your own country: immigration hasn't produced a new culture, only ghettos. It's not logical to make people of different cultures live in the same city. It can't work."

As a Svoboda deputy, Levchenko secured public prominence by using the one of the traditional methods of Ukrainian right-wing politics. He got involved in brawls and punch-ups:

In the Rada itself (2017), on television (2018, punch-up with Oleg Barna), and on the streets of Kyiv (2018, claimed assault by Klitschko thugs, which may or may not be true). This followed on from an incident during the Maidan protests, when he was accused of personal involvement in beating up a militia major taken prisoner in the Kyiv City Council building.

Levchenko remained a Svoboda member and Rada deputy even when the party formed electoral alliance with political forces still further to the right.

In 2018 Svoboda teamed up with the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (Melnykite faction), the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (Banderite faction), Right Sector and C14 to back a single candidate in the following year's presidential election.

In 2019, when Levchenko unsuccessfully stood for re-election to the Rada, he did so as a candidate of the single party list of Svoboda, Governmental Initiative of Yarosh, Right Sector and National Corps.

But Levchenko's decade-long record of activity in Svoboda is entirely absent from his officially sanctioned biography



on the Narodovladdia website.

Levchenko spent most of his childhood in Cyprus, where his father worked in shipping management. After studying at the LSE and Magdeburg University, Levchenko returned to Ukraine. According to his biography:

"Yuri had the opportunity to stay and work in London, earning hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. However, he decided to return to Ukraine immediately after graduating from his studies abroad in order to live and work in the interests of the Ukrainian people."

In fact, on his return to Ukraine Levchenko worked as a financial consultant for an investment company "working his way up from an analyst to a leading expert".

Levchenko's biography summarises his subsequent political activities — but without mentioning that he undertook them as a member of Svoboda.

Reference

The biography makes just one passing reference to Svoboda. The phrasing suggests that Levchenko was a transient employee taken on for his professional skills rather than a prominent member of the party. "From 2010 to 2014, according to his speciality, he was the head of the Analytical Service of the All-Ukrainian Union Svoboda."

The Levchenko portrayed by the biography was a fearless fighter against corruption (especially Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko), as if he had been an independent anti-corruption politician rather than a leading member of Svoboda:

"[Thanks to Levchenko], law enforcement agencies initiated more than 70 criminal proceedings regarding the violation of citizens' rights and corrupt acts of high-ranking officials of the Kyiv authorities."

Just as the biography is silent on Levchenko's membership of Svoboda, so too it is silent on the reasons for his departure from Svoboda. Suddenly, without any context or explanation, Levchenko simply seems to have decided that it was a time for a new beginning:

"In November 2019, Yuriy Levchenko announced plans to found, together with his associates, a fundamentally new truly people's political party for Ukraine. On June 9, 2020, after complex constituency work and overcoming artificial bureaucratic obstacles from the oligarchic

authorities, the launch of the People's Power party took place."

What seems to have happened is that Levchenko decided that Svoboda had declined into a spent force. In the 2019 elections Svoboda's representation in the Rada had been reduced to a single constituency deputy. And it was not Levchenko.

Levchenko therefore took the initiative to launch a new political party, Narodovladdia, with a number of his Svoboda allies, including Svyatoslav Kutnyak (Svoboda Kyiv councillor), Prokhor Antonenko (Svoboda Kyiv councillor), and Igor Tokovenko (trade union official and former Svoboda member).

Narodovladdia was officially founded in June 2020. But its origins as a registered political party date back to May of 2014, when Ihor Nikolenko registered "Sirius" as a political party. In reality, Sirius only ever existed as a name rather than a political force.

According to the Ukrainian equivalent of Companies House, "ownership" of Sirius transferred from Nikolenko to Ihor Truba in March 2020, with a name change from Sirius to People's Power.

Four months later, "ownership" transferred from Truba to Levchenko and the name was changed to Levchenko's Team People's Power, only to be subsequently changed again to People's Power.

As indicated by its name, Narodovladdia, which claims a membership of 200 plus, presents itself as a left-populist political party.

The main slogan on the party's website is: "A people's political party that works in the interests of millions, not billionaires." Narodovladdia's hostility to graft and fat cats — the newsfeed on its website is a litany of denunciations of corrupt oligarchs — also chimes in with western European left populism. (But in Ukraine everyone — whether of the left

or the right — denounces oligarchs. So did Svoboda.)

The Narodovladdia political programme is largely a collection of leftist and left-populist policies (except, for obvious reasons, its support for increased defence spending). And it loudly proclaims its enthusiasm for the Labour Party and the policies (supposedly) pursued by Starmer:

"[The 2024 election victory] is a truly well-deserved victory for the Labour Party, which has been defending the interests of the working people of the UK for many years and strives to develop the British economy in accordance with the principles of economic justice..."

There is no evidence that Levchenko has undergone a Damascene political conversion from right-wing nationalism to left populism. In fact, the evidence points in the opposite direction.

There is an established tradition in Ukrainian politics (and in other ex-Stalinist states) of individuals creating political parties as vehicles for their own personal advancement. There is also a market for buying and selling the names of registered political parties. Narodovladdia fits into that pattern.

Levchenko was a loyal, longstanding and leading member of Svoboda. He quit Svoboda because its downhill political trajectory meant that it was no longer a useful vehicle for his personal ambitions.

He has failed absolutely to account for his past in Svoboda and to distance himself from it. In fact, his official biography achieves the singular feat of completely glossing over his eleven years of membership of Svoboda.

Levchenko's allies in the creation of Narodovladdia were other Svoboda members who quit the party at the same time as Levchenko, or, according to some statements issued by Svoboda, were expelled. He did not reach out to anyone on the left.

It is reasonable to believe that Levchenko did not reach out to anyone on the left because his left populism, bizarrely coupled with support for the Starmer-led Labour Party, is purely for show — a matter of political calculation rather than anything approaching a newly discovered political principle.

There are plenty of left-wing organisations, trade union activists, feminist groups and grassroots campaigns in Ukraine to reach out to. Levchenko ignores them (and, reportedly, would receive a cold reception if he were to attempt to approach them).

But it is precisely those organisations, not Levchenko and his Narodovladdia, with which labour movement activists in Britain should be building solidarity — against Russian imperialism and for a real struggle against Ukraine's oligarchs.

□

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A spiteful polemic, not a postscript

By Paul Hampton

Martin Thomas's article against metabolism (*Solidarity* 753) is not a postscript to my critique of *Monthly Review* published in the previous paper, because I resoundingly reject almost everything he wrote. I did not invite Martin's "postscript" and he is not fit to compose the final word.

Rather, Martin's article is another badly-constructed and deliberately destructive polemic against the anti-Stalinist, third camp Marxist ecological theory I've tried to advance over two decades.

Earlier this year, the AWL published a fourth ecology discussion bulletin, eco-DB4, containing my extended evaluation of John Bellamy Foster, editor of *Monthly Review* magazine. I maintain that Stalinism lies at the heart of the *Monthly Review* tradition. I then critically assess Foster's extensive writings on ecology. I had to write this contribution because for the past five years, Martin Thomas has persistently conflated my views on ecology with those of Foster. This is a deliberate amalgam, designed to warn comrades off my perspective.

I argue that Marx's metabolic analysis in *Capital*, particularly his emphasis on the labour process as the nexus of nature-society relations, helps orientate Marxists to address contemporary ecological questions. Classical Marxists, such as Lukács, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky and others, also deployed metabolism as Marx did, applying it to their own time.

More recently, Alfred Schmidt and

Neil Smith further developed Marxist metabolism and applied it to modern ecology. Smith in particular made sharp criticisms of bourgeois and green approaches, developing original Marxist theory in the process. So when Martin claims that "neither drew any very special ecological-politics conclusions" he demonstrates only his own ignorance.

Martin constantly employs a polemical ruse, to smear me with the political conclusions drawn by other authors who use metabolism, such as Kohei Saito and Andreas Malm, along with Foster. This is particularly obtuse, since I've written more critical evaluations of these authors than anybody else in *Solidarity*. Martin nowhere proves that their erroneous political conclusions follow from metabolism.

Martin's methodological nihilism ultimately destroys authentic Marxism. Substitute other commonly used terms — such as "labour theory of value", or "imperialism", or the "united front". They were used by Trotsky, but also by Stalin. They are used by the AWL, but also by Cliff, Grant, the CPB, Maoists and worse. The job of Marxists is to define and extrapolate what is rational from these concepts, while discarding the excrescences added by opponents. Martin dumps the Marxist category of metabolism, simply because some leftists with bad politics refer to it.

Mangles

Martin mangles the origins of Marx's adoption of metabolism by reintroducing Moleschott, who was not the source. The real provenance has been well-documented, notably by Saito. Marx first referred to the German word "stoffwechsel" in his notebooks in 1851, after his comrade Roland Daniels sent him his physiology book draft. Daniels took stoffwechsel from Liebig, who had applied it scientifically since the early 1840s. This was before Moleschott's first use in 1852. Martin knows Marx was later critical of Moleschott. Inserting him adds nothing: it is just sand in our eyes against metabolism.

Martin indulges in word games, denying the translation of stoffwechsel as metabolism until the 1960s. In fact, both terms were in use by the mid-nineteenth century among scientists writing about the same phenomena. German-English dictionaries caught up by the late 1800s.

Marx took the term stoffwechsel from these scientists, but applied it metaphorically in other contexts. He employed it in his value theory. More importantly, Marx used metabolism to capture the interdependent, mutually-constitutive relationships between nature and society, adding the crucial insight that these relations were mediated by labour.

Since the late nineteenth century, the

translation of stoffwechsel as metabolism has been common among scientists. It can be found in Marxist books since the 1920s. Since the 1970s, the translation of stoffwechsel as metabolism has become ubiquitous. Modern translations of *Capital*, Volumes I and III, the Grundrisse first draft, and other writings all accept it. Martin can quibble all he likes, but metabolism is well-established as a legitimate starting point for Marxist ecology.

Summary

I have frequently summarised my interpretation of Marx's metabolic approach in three propositions:

- Labour as the principal mediator between class societies and the rest of nature
- The disturbance, break or rift in nature-society relations
- Socialism as the sustainable interaction of society within nature.

Martin wilfully misrepresents this again in *Solidarity* 753. He stated, "Paul Hampton credits Foster with developing a 'metabolic' approach into three propositions." Not true. I do not "credit" Foster with these propositions. This is purely Martin's invention.

All three meanings of metabolism were instigated by Marx. Many subsequent Marxists referred to most or all of them. Foster's work came long after these Marxists. Foster does not claim to originate metabolism — and provides many of the earlier references. Foster's main innovation is to take two words from Marx with regard to the crisis of nature-society relations and formulate the pithy appellation: "metabolic rift". I think this is consistent with Marx's use. It advances Marxist approaches to past and modern ecological questions.

I acknowledge Foster's contribution to elevating metabolism, while consistently criticising much of his theory and politics. Foster has authored many books about Marxism and ecology. Few activists will get far without coming across his writings. Readers of *Solidarity* are

sufficiently discerning to understand my critical evaluations of Foster's books, extracting what is useful while registering disagreements.

Martin offers no alternative reading of Marxist ecology. He does not engage with the debates between Lukács, Bukharin and others in the 1920s. He offers no interpretation of Schmidt or Smith. He never bothers to explain what is valuable and where they might have erred. He provides no serious review of Foster's work or anybody else. Instead he persistently distorts my views, garnished with condescension and faint praise. This is utterly ruinous.

Substantial

Martin has written nothing theoretically substantial on Marxist ecology. During recent debates within the AWL, he is the perennial sceptic, never elaborating his own distinctive theory. Martin disparages all efforts to develop Marxist theory on ecology. Instead he counterposes empirical questions, ignoring what I've written on concrete ecological issues — informed by Marxist metabolic theory. Martin's negativism leaves only scorched earth.

Martin eventually but grudgingly concedes my three propositions are acceptable. A frustrated reader might therefore wonder what was the point of his circuitous musing.

The editors of *Solidarity* asked me to provide an edited version of my eco-DB4 essay on Foster and *Monthly Review* for the paper. I removed my criticisms against Martin and others in the original for the paper version. Martin then took advantage of his position as editor to publish a spiteful polemic against me. This is a rotten culture for a socialist newspaper. It is no way to hold a serious debate. □

• Further discussion will be (and previous discussion can be) found in Workers' Liberty's eco Discussion Bulletins: bit.ly/eco-db

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IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

A festival of **socialist** ideas and debate



The Workers' Liberty weekend school **Ideas for Freedom 2025** starts on Friday 21 November, 7pm at the Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ. Ruth Cashman from Workers' Liberty will debate with Archie Woodrow (member of rs21's Marxist Unity Caucus and editorial board of Prometheus), Louise Lewis (Socialist Alternative), and others on "The Future of the Left".

The weekend **sessions**, from 11am Saturday 22 November to 4:30pm Sunday 23 November, will be in Islington, North London (for details, book a ticket at bit.ly/25iff). They include:

Workers' and democratic struggles in Israel-Palestine, with speakers including Israeli socialist Asaf Yakir and British-Palestinian activist Jasr Kawkby

This panel will discuss how socialists internationally can develop a politics of consistent solidarity that supports all struggles for democracy, equal rights, and workers' power.

With Ukraine against Russian conquest, with Ukrainian workers against their bosses

Hear directly from Ukrainian socialist activists about their struggles and the support they need.

Voices against Putin's war, with Reuben Woolley and Simon Pirani, editor of *Voices Against Putin's War: Protesters' Defiant Speeches in Russian Courts*

How have Russian activists defied Putin's regime? Simon Pirani, author of a new book collating speeches given in court by Russian dissidents, will present their perspectives, along with Reuben Woolley, who assisted with translation on the project.

What is left antisemitism?, with Daniel Randall, author of *Confronting Anti-semitism on the Left: Arguments for Socialists*

An overview of the history of antisemitism on and of the left.

Resisting the Trump regime, with Dan La Botz, co-editor of US-based socialist journal *New Politics*

Donald Trump's regime in the USA is undertaking a radical effort to reshape both American society and the world economy. The rights of migrants, women, LGBT+ people, and others are under acute threat. How are workers' and democratic movements in America organising to resist?

1949 and the legacy of Maoism, with Chan Ying

This session, will examine the history,

and discuss the legacy of Maoism on the contemporary left.

The original American hero?, with Clive Bradley

For "Columbus Day" — October 15 — this year, Donald Trump called for "reclaiming" Christopher Columbus, the "original American hero", from the "left-wing arsonists who have sought to destroy his name and dishonour his memory". What is the real legacy of 1492?

How to beat the racists: workers against the far right, with Mark Osborn, editor of *How to Beat the Racists*

Mark Osborn makes the case for an anti-racism and anti-fascism rooted in working-class unity.

Renewing socialist feminism

Iranian-American activist and writer Frieda Afary and CeCe Hyde, member of the editorial board of *Women's Fightback*, the socialist-feminist magazine published by Workers' Liberty, discuss perspectives.

Transforming our unions, with rank-and-file trade union activists

2022-3 saw the largest sustained increase in workers' action in Britain for a generation. Some workers made significant gains, but several major disputes ended in disappointing compromises. So far, it seems the strike wave has not led to a sustained revival in organisation and combativeness at workplace level. Why not, and how can we turn this around?

A short history of the arms industry and campaigns against it, with Professor Catherine Fletcher, author of the forthcoming book *The Firearm Revolution*

Arms manufacture and export is a major feature of the economies of many important capitalist powers. How did an "arms industry" develop, and how has it been opposed?

Justice for Grenfell, with Paul Hampton, author of *Culpable: Deregulation, Austerity and the Causes of the Grenfell Tower Fire*

The 2017 fire at Grenfell Tower, a residential high-rise in west London, killed 72 people, including 18 children. Paul Hampton, a researcher for the Fire Brigades Union and author of a new book about the fire, will discuss the political and economic choices that led up to the event.

Fighting for migrants' rights

With the far right setting the political agenda on immigration, and mainstream

parties, including Labour, tripping over themselves to pander to them, this session will discuss how the labour movement can fight back for migrants' rights.

Housing as a site of class struggle, with a tenants' rights activist

This session will look at a 1938 rent strike in Stepney, East London, as an introduction to a discussion of the contemporary housing crisis and how socialists can organise around the issue of housing.

Are Stalinist states an advance on capitalism? Workers' Liberty debates *Socialismo o Barbarie* (Socialism or Barbarism)

For most of the 20th century, states that called themselves "communist" or "socialist" were a major force in world politics. Today, the second-most powerful country in the world is ruled by a "Communist" party. What did these states represent in history, and what do they represent today? How does our attitude to them shape the kind of socialism we fight for?

Transitional demands for the climate, with activists from Heat Strike and Fare Free London

Heat Strike is a campaign to demand a legally-enforceable maximum workplace temperature; Fare Free London campaigns to make public transport in the capital free. Workers' Liberty fights for a programme of "transitional demands" that both represent material improvements in the immediate term, and point the way to a different kind of society, beyond the planet-devouring rule of profit.

Marxists and the national question: does "self-determination" matter? Workers' Liberty debates *Lotta Comunista* (Communist Struggle)

Workers' Liberty believes national self-determination remains an important democratic demand. *Lotta Comunista*, a left-wing current primarily active in Italy, sees demands for national self-determination as a distraction from class struggle.

Defending trans rights, with Natalia Cassidy and Kacey de Groot

The global far-right upsurge has made trans rights one of its wedge issues, seeking to push back the limited ideological and material gains for trans equality that have been made over the past several years.

The Sex Talk, with members of the Women's Fightback editorial board

The strapline for *Women's Fightback*, the socialist-feminist magazine published by Workers' Liberty, says we stand for "sex positive, trans-inclusive,

class-struggle feminism". Should we still stand for "sex-positive" feminism, despite a growing move away from it among many "fourth-wave" feminists?

Railworkers 200: two centuries of rail workers and their struggles, with Janine Booth

2025 is the 200th anniversary of the British railway network. Janine Booth's new book, *Railworkers 200*, records the history.

The Erdoğan regime in Turkey, with Pete Boggs, Workers' Liberty

Turkey has become an increasingly important regional-imperialist power under authoritarian president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. What does the Erdoğan regime represent? How does it fit into the global wave of right-wing, authoritarian nationalisms? And how have Turkish and Kurdish socialists and democrats organised against it?

The Milei regime in Argentina, with Daniela Lopez, *Socialismo o Barbarie*

Javier Milei's regime in Argentina is another component in the global far-right wave. How has Milei governed since coming to power? What resistance has his regime encountered? Argentinian socialist Daniela Lopez from *Socialismo o Barbarie* will lead the discussion.

Phyllis and Julius Jacobson and the Third Camp tradition

Phyllis and Julius Jacobson were leading writers and organisers within the tradition which was for "neither Washington nor Moscow" in the Cold War and for a working-class "Third Camp". Kent Worcester, the co-editor of a new anthology of their work, will discuss the legacy of the Jacobsons for socialists today.

What is "the left"?, with Patrick Murphy, Workers' Liberty

"Left" and "right" in politics derive from seating arrangements in the National Assembly of late-18th century France/Over 200 years on, what does it mean to be "left-wing"?

Different modes of capitalism, with Martin Thomas, editor of *Crisis and Sequels: Capitalism and the New Economic Turmoil since 2007*

After global neoliberalism, which had its heyday 1990-2009, is a new mode of capitalism emerging, more nationalist, protectionist, and state-interventionist? Marxists have discussed other "modes" — and many writers, periodically since the 1950s, have announced a new age of automation. Is Marx's basic theory of capital still sound, and how can we understand the different regimes? □



7 million on the street, but Trump still ho

By Claureen Ryan

Donald Trump loses all the polls, but President Trump has all the federal executive power. That is central.

The build-up of support for the anti-Trump demonstrations is impressive. One estimate is seven million protesting on 18 October. People marched under banners of “No Kings”. But Trump, in his dementia, rules like a king, and thinks of himself as a king.

This is the billionaires and millionaires on the offensive, with a vengeance.

The USA has two other centres of government, the Congress and the Supreme Court.

Trump has a slim majority in both Houses of Congress. Only by a majority of the House of Representatives and two-thirds of the Senate can he be impeached.

Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives twice in his first term. In both cases the impeachment failed in the Senate, and Trump could and did claim victory. He was the victor. He remained President.

There is a “conservative” majority in the third branch of government, the Supreme Court of nine members appointed for life by sitting Presidents.

No kings? Yes, but the Supreme Court with its life members has much of the principle of monarchy. In the current court, Thomas and Alito at least are corrupt.

This Supreme Court has already abolished “abortion on demand” as a US-wide right, after 50 years. And Biden did not legislate to sort out the Supreme Court ruling on abortion. Abortion is now a matter for each state: it is entirely illegal in 12 states, and extremely restricted in four more.

Trump’s power of initiative as President is immense. Congress can in theory stop him, but only by an unobtainable majority. The Republican majority in Congress has in fact ceded its power to “President Trump”. Congress decides on tariffs? Trump decides now, though he seems not to know even what the word tariff means.

He has already increased the power of the Presidency qualitatively. In fact this is more an insecure kingship than like the old presidency. Trump has put out pictures of himself as a king. He has behaved as a king. He has even called himself ruler of the world. Indeed, the near-50% of votes for him in November 2024 gave him immense power of the world economy.

The Democrat opposition to Trump looks to Congressional elections due in a year to curb Trump. But the signs are that the Trumpites may intend to not hold elections, and if they “go through the motions”, to rig the elections in many ways. The fascistic ICE militia plans to



stand at polling stations to intimidate voters, especially voters of colour. Trump has the executive power.

The Trumpites will not meekly surrender power to the Democrats.

Trump has said at much, when he told a friendly Republican audience that they would not have to bother themselves with elections after this one.

The level of corruption, both blatant and hidden, says the same thing.

Trump and his supporters will not voluntarily face the court cases they will probably face if they relinquish power. For, of course, it is not just Trump.

Enablers

He is surrounded by enablers whom he has appointed. All of them are pliant and obedient Trumpites, with no will but Trump’s will, all are incompetent to one degree or another. They are there to obey Trump’s orders.

The appointment as Health Secretary of Robert F Kennedy Jr, an anti-vaccine campaigner, is simply a crime against the American people.

All of the appointees act as if their assignment is to vandalise and wreck their department. The American overseas aid programme has been slashed, and many thousands have died because of that. Another very rich man, but more human, Bill Gates, put it well, with Trump’s ally Elon Musk in mind: “The richest man in the world starving some of the poorest people on Earth”. But they have starved. They have died. Trump gave the power to do that when he appointed Musk, and Musk did it.

Socialists will be the last people to mourn the old FBI, but it depends on what replaces it. Following the old FBI, in which there was some legal constraint and some objectivity, comes Trump’s FBI in which there is, essentially, no law, or existing law is used only against Trump’s critics.

The “man-child” has the power of the Presidency, which includes control over

the biggest nuclear arsenal in existence. He lies and misrepresents tremendously. (*The Washington Post* counted 30,000 untruths in his previous presidency).

Trump not only has the existing federal state power. He also has the deportation cops, ICE. ICE has been and is being greatly expanded. Its budget has been tripled. Licensed by Trump’s election as President on a 1.5% majority, ICE is Trump’s private fascistic militia. It can go anywhere. It targets brown people, including people born in the USA.

ICE is an armed, empowered, and newly financed mob of Trump supporters, operating as Trump’s private thug force outside the law when they please.

Trump’s “Border Tsar” Tom Homan, before he took office, was filmed by the FBI accepting \$50,000, selling influence he expected to get. He has, apparently, been allowed to keep it. People like him will not want to return to a pre-Trump regime.

The recent reports of a Trump supporter singing “I love Hitler” is one of the trappings, the organs, and the instruments of a fascist state gathering around Trump’s augmented power. There is nothing like Trump’s executive power on the other side.

The opposition to Trump argues for such things as “equality under the law”. That is surely better than the current Trump regime or any likely future Trump or Vance regime.

But it is simply one of the big conventional lies. The USA does not have equality even before the existing law. The law covers both rich and poor, but it is a system where the rich have a great and sometimes a decisive advantage.

The “traditional American values” have all dwindled or become conventional lies. Freedom of speech has become freedom for Rupert Murdoch and other billionaires to publish right-wing propaganda as news. Freedom of religion has become state tax subsidies for churches. Freedom of the person is freedom to rent your labour.

The majority for Trump in last November’s election was wafer-thin. Some people think Elon Musk’s last-minute donation of \$277 million made the difference between Trump and Kamala Harris. Whether or not it was decisive, it made a serious difference.

In the four years from the 2020 Presidential election, which Joe Biden won, to 2024’s, Trump used immense wealth to procrastinate, raise technical issues, to put off and put off court cases, hiring expensive lawyers for a long and successful campaign. How many equal-under-the law Americans could have afforded to do that? It is a strange, strange story, however you tell it.

In jeering-like contrast to the ability of Trump and other rich people to deflect



prosecutions, 98% of criminal cases in the US do not go to trial at all. They are [plea-bargained](#).

Trump as President caused the needless death of hundreds of thousands of Americans in the Covid epidemic, mainly through sheer wilful foolishness and the impulse to treat the whole thing as a public-relations exercise and lie about Covid. He knew what Covid was, but some of it was Trump foolishness, like the public speculation that people might try injecting disinfectant.

Trump lost the 2020 election. Then he organised an insurrection in which the seat of government was seized by an armed mob seeking to stop Joe Biden, who had won the election, becoming President and keep Trump in office.

Then this same man was allowed to stand for President in 2024!

There was extant law that could have been used to prevent an insurrectionist standing in 2024.

Party

Of course it was not only Trump. He has the support of the Republican party, the billionaires, and most of the media, as well as of many anti-establishment and ignorant poor people. He was “sane-washed” in the media, which rewrote “reports” of what he said, and edited TV footage to make the incoherence and rambling of Trump seem coherent and sensible.

The Democrats conduct themselves, as someone put it, as no more than a coalition of interest groups. At any rate, not as a fighting political party.

As a bourgeois-democratic President who could not get his main desired legislation through Congress, Joe Biden was quite good. At least, he did one thing for which we should remember him — for the first time in history, a President joined an active, embattled picket line.

But the Democrats have passively opened the door to an elected President, Trump, pledged to turning his office into an authoritarian system — someone who had pledged publicly to do what he is doing, backed by others who had spelled out in advance, in Project 2025,

lds power

what Trump as Chief Executive and Commander in Chief would try to do.

By now, the Presidential coup is not something that may happen in the future. It has already happened, and is happening now.

One of the things in play is the continued unity of the USA. This is also an attempt by one side of the marked “culture divide” in the USA to exert control over the other.

The US body politic is big and sprawling. It has many elements which are still reacting against what Trump is doing. The process is ongoing. The Presidential autocracy is in power, but not yet in secure control.

But the rich have rallied to Trump. He is the billionaires’ man. The labour movement could be a counter to Trump, but it has not yet mobilised to use its power against Trump and ICE. Some in the unions may think that Trump’s tariffs will in the long run benefit their industries.

The current crisis within MAGA may help derail what Trump and his friends want.

King Oedipus of the old legend is faced with a plague. A taboo has been flouted. Which? By whom? Oedipus as king seeks the culprit, and finds that it is himself.

He had unknowingly killed the old king, his father. He had gone on, unknowingly, to marry his mother.

Many MAGA people believe that a conspiratorial elite of paedophiles and criminals is subverting the USA. They pledged to root them out as soon as they gained access to “the files” — that Trump in power would make it all public.

Now they find that a lot of Republicans are involved in the Epstein scandal, maybe even Trump himself.

In the old tale, Oedipus puts out his own eyes. Trump tries to put out the eyes of the US people, and pointedly of his own supporters.

Trump lies and tries to use his prominent supporters to quell the revolt of the sincere MAGA political idiots. Before he headed the FBI, Kash Patel was a prominent conspiracy theorist calling for “full disclosure”. Now he keeps “the files” hidden.

The USA’s political dilemma is summed up in the fact that if Trump, who seems to be senile and getting worse, goes, then Vice President Vance takes over; and if they both go, then Mike Johnson, speaker of the House of Reps, steps in. Their “preferability” over Trump is that they are not escaped dementia patients.

The more demonstrations like 18 October can be built, the better. But the big question is whether the labour movement, as the labour movement, will come to the fore against Trump. It must!

No king in the USA! And: no king in Britain! □

Book review

Defeat the far right? Theory matters

By Dan Katz

I’ve read a lot of good books recently, but *How to Defeat the Far Right* by Nick Lowles isn’t one of them.

The book is only a history of Hope not Hate. And dull. Consider my reading (most of) this book as a service to the movement. Now you don’t have to.

Nick carelessly fails to answer the question in the title, how do we defeat the far right? Except, I suppose, implicitly, that Nick’s group, Hope not Hate, has the right strategy.

The case against Hope not Hate’s method is that in a period when a mass far-right street movement and political threat has emerged, they are very visibly way out of their depth. The concentration of their small resources on individual election campaigns and exposures of fascist leaders didn’t stop Tommy Robinson putting 110,000 people on London’s streets in September, nor prevent Farage’s Reform party from getting a big lead in national polling.

Answer

Whatever the answer to the alarming, very real, immediate far-right threat we have now in the UK, it is not more of the same from Hope not Hate and the miserable SWP-front Stand Up To Racism.

In a past period when the far-right was isolated and small, it was possible to quarantine them with a few posters and by scandalising their leaders as thugs and people with criminal convictions.

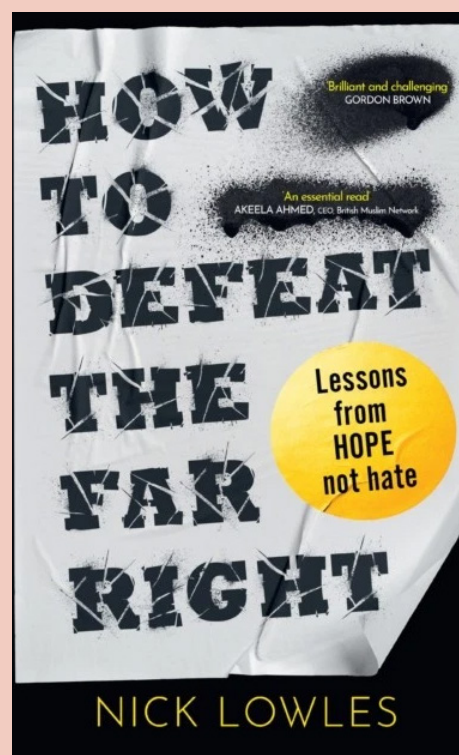
Most of those marching with Tommy Robinson know very well he is a hooligan and has done jail time. They don’t care. And for some Robinson’s record even appeals to them, in part, because he is (unlike Farage), allegedly, an “ordinary bloke”.

So what does Hope not Hate do? It takes funding, including from unions, and spends it producing reports, conducting research on the far right. It occasionally sends people into far-right groups. When an electoral fascist threat has emerged in the North West, or Bradford, or Essex, Hope not Hate has helped rally “the local community” led by “decent people” to oppose them.

Tiresome

Yesterday, from a seat on the 136 bus going through Lewisham, I picked up a Hope not Hate flyer. I initially mistook it for tiresome religious garbage. But no, it was a message from Nick: vapid, vague rhetoric urging us not to abandon hope, and to embrace community and decency against the right. It was in no way offering a strategy, let alone a left-wing, working-class anti-fascist policy.

If we want to defeat a mass far-right movement one thing that’s central is that we have to have an alternative pro-



gramme to the right, not just a critique. And Hope not Hate’s flyer didn’t even offer a critique of the far-right’s demonisation of refugees and migrant workers, their bigoted hatred of Muslims, their insistence that they are doing so to protect “British women and girls”.

Yes, some of the research Nick’s group publishes is useful. And if Nick discovers some deranged Nazi is about to kill someone, and he rings up the cops to stop it, good for him.

Interviewed

Nick Lowles was recently interviewed by the *Guardian* as part of the promotion for his book. During a conversation with the *Guardian*’s journalist he again admitted he had, for a short while, been part of a “Trot group”. He’s generally a bit coy about which “Trot group”, so let me help him by telling you it was Socialist Organiser, a forerunner of Workers’ Liberty.

I remember him, maybe in 1986, coming to our office, down an alley off a Peckham side-street. My impression was of a young man who was mainly impressed by the apparent conspiratorial secretiveness of it all. In fact we simply had little money, and Peckham was affordable.

Whatever. Nick tells the *Guardian* he left our organisation because “I didn’t give a shit about the theory”. Indeed, not thinking hard about stuff is definitely a barrier to membership of the AWL.

But there also lies a very big problem, revealed by the author with commendable honesty. If someone rejects the study of “theory” (aka “ideas”), it is not as if they then have no ideas at all. Oh no. What it does mean, however, is they are then obliged to pick up other people’s ideas, uncritically, which they find

washing around their immediate environment. For Nick that meant the ideas of the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* and liberal, please-don’t-be-nasty anti-fascism.

Biodegraded

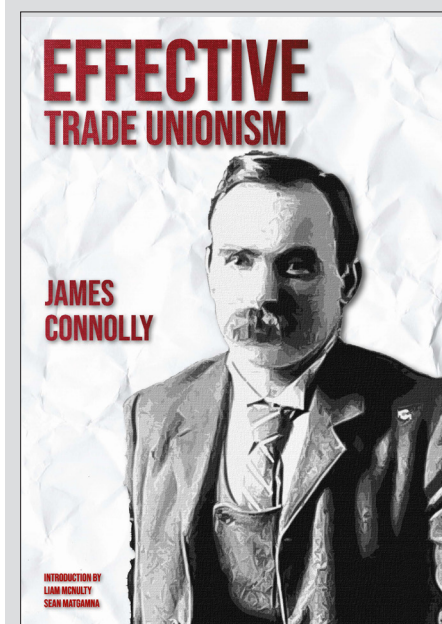
And it looks like those ideas have biodegraded over time to the extent that I can pick up a Hope not Hate leaflet and momentarily confuse it with an Evangelical invitation to run into the arms of Jesus.

And what about us, Workers’ Liberty, the people with theory, ideas? We maintain Trotsky was right about the rise of German fascism and that his writings on the matter are some of the most important texts in the history of Marxism.

Trotsky argued for working class mobilisation against a far-right movement and a workers’ united front, in the first instance for self-defence. Trotsky advocated the class struggle and socialist policies.

We argue for the unions to put their members on the streets against the far-right, and for the labour movement to force Starmer to change tack. We defend refugees and migrants and oppose the bigoted attacks on Muslims and trans people. We fight for decent homes and jobs for all workers; free education; taxing the rich to fund the NHS and welfare state.

That’s our message. If you agree with us, help us. The threat is real. □



Aiming to replace capitalism with socialism, James Connolly’s organising and ideas evolved considerably. One idea he clung to from the turn of the century to his death was industrial unionism, workers’ solidarity across grades and trades, and sympathetic strikes. That is how he saw his work in the Irish Transport Union. 64 pages £5 □

workersliberty.org/publications



GFM workers wait on new offer

By Todd Hamer

Outsourced domestics, porters, kitchen, maintenance and reception staff at Newham Centre for Mental Health spent 12 October, the last day of their 26 day strike, protesting outside the London offices of Alba Infra, the owner of the PFI contract that stands behind the workers employer Grosvenor Facilities Management. It is thought that Alba Infra, GFM and a third company, Infrastructure Management Limited, are extracting around £6 million a year in profit from the NHS, more than enough to settle the dispute several times over.

With each round of strikes GFM has offered small concessions while complaining that their hands are tied by complex PFI arrangements. These contractual arrangements are nothing but convoluted ways for the idle rich to extract multi-million pound profit from the NHS and the essential workers who keep our hospitals and clinics running.

Workers are now waiting to see the detail of a new offer and to consider their



options. Since the first strikes at the start of September, workers confidence in the power of strikes has grown. With over £2,000 in the strike fund, and promises of more trade union donations to come, the workers are in a strong position to announce a significant escalation.

Support from the wider hospital community and wider public also continues to grow. Each strike day brings increased attention to GFM and the PFI racket and reveals them for the social pariahs that they are. □

Leaflet yes, disrupt no

By Rhodri Evans

Before the FiLiA conference in Brighton (10-12 October) protesters smashed windows and splashed paint on the conference centre.

Other trans rights protesters came to the conference itself. Some mainstream media say that they were intimidating; other sources, that it was a few people leafletting a fairly large conference, sometimes argumentative, but no more. We weren't there.

FiLiA is a "radical-feminist" group, led by "gender-critical" activists for whom the cutting edge is against "gender identity" and "queer agendas". It is part of the pressure behind the new EHRC policy. The conference (like its others, back to 2008) also talked about other issues, and will have drawn other people. The FiLiA leaders are well-resourced and e.g. have played no role in recent campaigning on abortion law.

We are for trans rights. We oppose

the intimidatory anti-trans agitation of those like "Posie Parker", the sweeping measures against trans people by Trump in the USA, and the moves by the EHRC in Britain to exclude trans people from public changing rooms, toilets, etc. We seek to win by convincing a majority for trans rights. We are for argumentative leafletting; not for "no-platforming" or similar.

Policy

As we wrote in 2018: "We advocate that these issues [of gender recognition law, etc.] be discussed in a rational and empathetic way and are addressed through such debate rather than through bureaucratic moves, censorship, no-platforming and violence related to this issue... There have been incidents where pro-trans activists have sought to have meetings of those they consider anti-trans closed down, or to disrupt them. We oppose this". □

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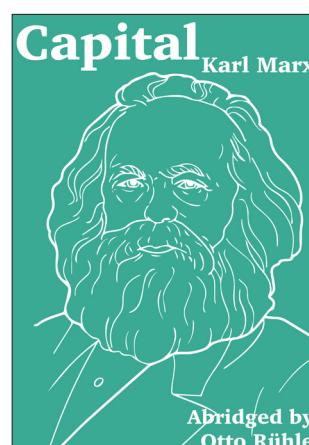
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Prices listed exclude postage and packaging: £1 for small items, £3 for larger items, free over £30. Every third publication is half-price and 15% off over £50. □

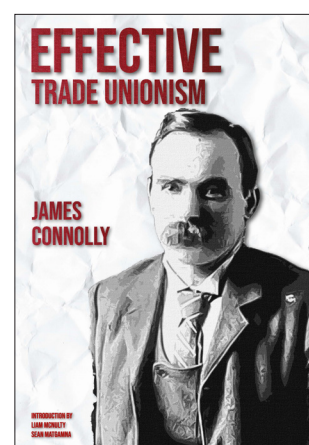
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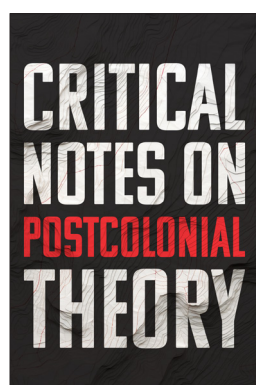
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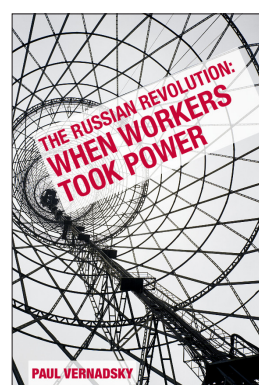
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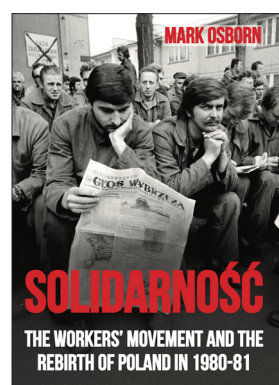
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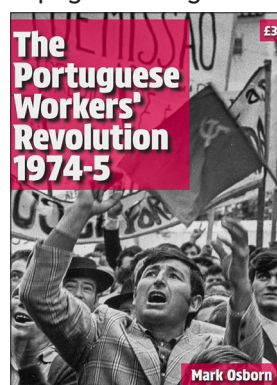
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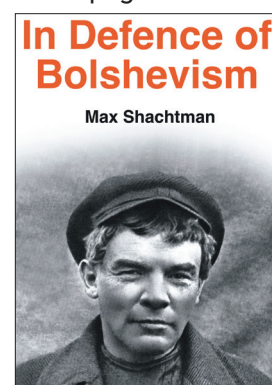
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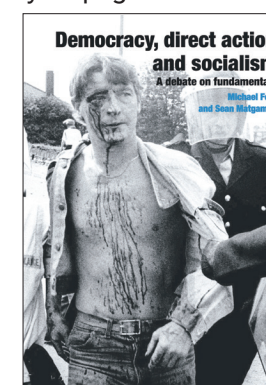
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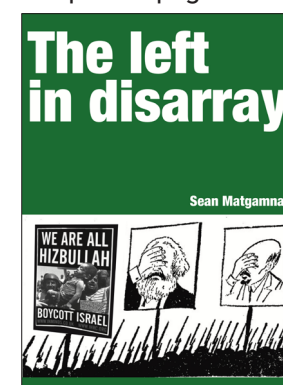
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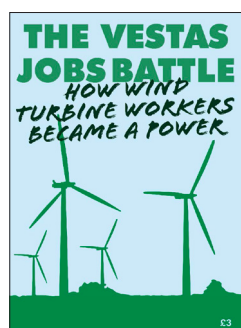
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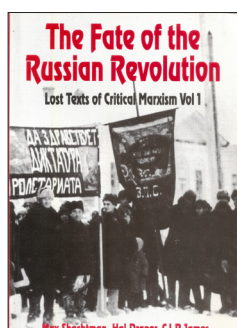
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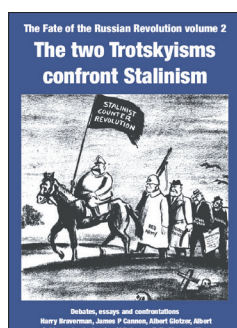
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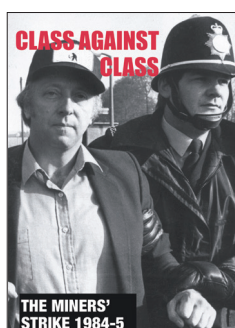
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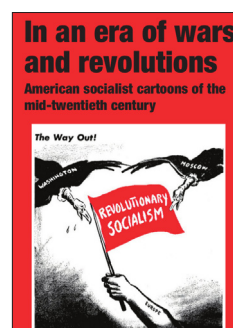
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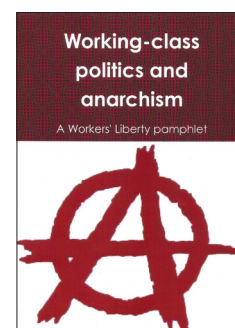
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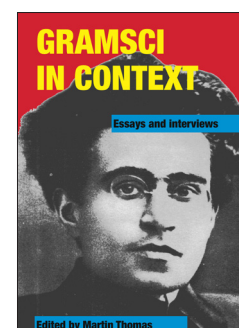
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Tubeworker

Tube pay: bosses budge, but we can win more

London Underground has made a new offer for 2025-6 pay and conditions. The differences from the previous offer are that there is now a percentage underpin in years two and three of the deal, of 3% and 2.5% respectively, meaning if RPI fell below these amounts, we'd get a guaranteed minimum increase.

Year two of the deal has also been increased to RPI+0.2%.

This represents a marginal improvement and would guarantee an above-inflation pay rise for 2026-7. It is something they've been forced into by our strikes.

However, you don't have to be a maths wiz to see that 0.2% is a small amount.

There is still no movement from the company on any other elements of our pay claims, including no concessions on reducing the working week. There are some vague platitudes about "setting up meetings" to discuss "fatigue management", but that's it.

The question we now have to ask ourselves is: could we win more by striking again?

Tubeworker thinks we could. The RMT reps' meeting on 8 October resulted in a very clear consensus that the offer on the table at that time wasn't good enough. Nothing said at that meeting indicated that a marginal increase of less than 1% would be enough to turn an unacceptable offer into a satisfactory one.

Multiyear deals should be treated with caution in any case, as even the best of them means we are guaranteeing the employer several years of peace over the fundamental, all-grades issues of pay and conditions. A multiyear deal that included significantly above-inflation pay

raises, or involved a phased reduction in the working week (e.g., 30 minutes off the contractual week in each year of the deal) might be worth considering. It is not worth tying our hands for the sake of a 0.2% pay rise next year.

There's also the outstanding question of the Aslef/LUL so-called "four-day-week" scheme, which would see drivers working longer days, with bosses given more flexibility over shifts, in exchange for an extra rest day. The company's current position is that participation will be voluntary, but we all know it won't be possible to operate the service with unpredictable numbers of drivers on two different sets of parameters. Any "voluntary" arrangement cannot last, if the scheme is imposed it will become mandatory eventually.

We need to stand firm to oppose imposition, by naming all-grades action using our "Jobs and Agreements" mandate. □

Buses: time to level up!

By David Axon

The bus strikes in Greater Manchester are off again for now, following improved pay won by drivers' strike action through their union Unite.

Drivers at First Bus in Rochdale settled first, then Stagecoach and Metrolink in Oldham, Stockport and Manchester, with an 80% majority to accept an offer made part way through their six days of action.

The Stagecoach and Metrolink companies initially demanded that drivers accept only 3.5%. This was rejected by drivers who ultimately won a 12% increase, described by Unite as a "fantastic deal".

This deal is phased, however, with the first half backdated now to

April 2025 but the second half not paid until April 2026.

Stagecoach and Metrolink will now be on £19 once First reach £18.

Reaching pay equity for the First drivers will now be harder than if they were still in dispute, meaning that they will have to pick back up their campaign in more difficult conditions. They are also the smallest group of workers involved in this dispute (only just over 100, compared to the 1,000 at each of Stagecoach and Metrolink). An opportunity was missed to link the pay fight more effectively across all companies involved.

Workers across all three companies may now be able to link

through their union to press for levelling up of conditions, for access to toilets, breaks, improved pension schemes and new starter rates. Unite should facilitate this at rank and file level.

Meanwhile staff directly employed by the "Bee Network" (Transport for Greater Manchester) have started action. Worse than any of the bus companies, TfGM had demanded that 200 workers in ticketing, passenger assistance and information services for the bus and tram network accept only 3.2% when RPI inflation August 2024 to Aug 2025 was 4.6 per cent.

Unite and Unison members are striking on 18, 20, 23, 24 and 25 October. □

New push to restore binsdeal

By Gerry Bates

Birmingham's Labour council, under the command of commissioners sent by central government after it went into "Section 114", has settled its outstanding equal pay claims.

According to the Unite union, the initial cost is in the region of £250 million, far less than the estimate of £650 million — £760 million given in June 2023. That led to the council going into "Section 114" (declared inability to

balance a budget) in September 2023 and since been making £300 million of cuts.

It also led the council to attack the pay of its refuse workers, leading a strike which is now ten months old.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham has called on the council to "admit it was wrong and honour the deal scoped out at Acas to resolve the bin dispute". The council dropped that deal months ago, reportedly on the insistence of commissioners. □



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 Red society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
- Maximum left unity in action, and full openness in debate

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

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Diary of a Tube driver

How not to deal with signal failure

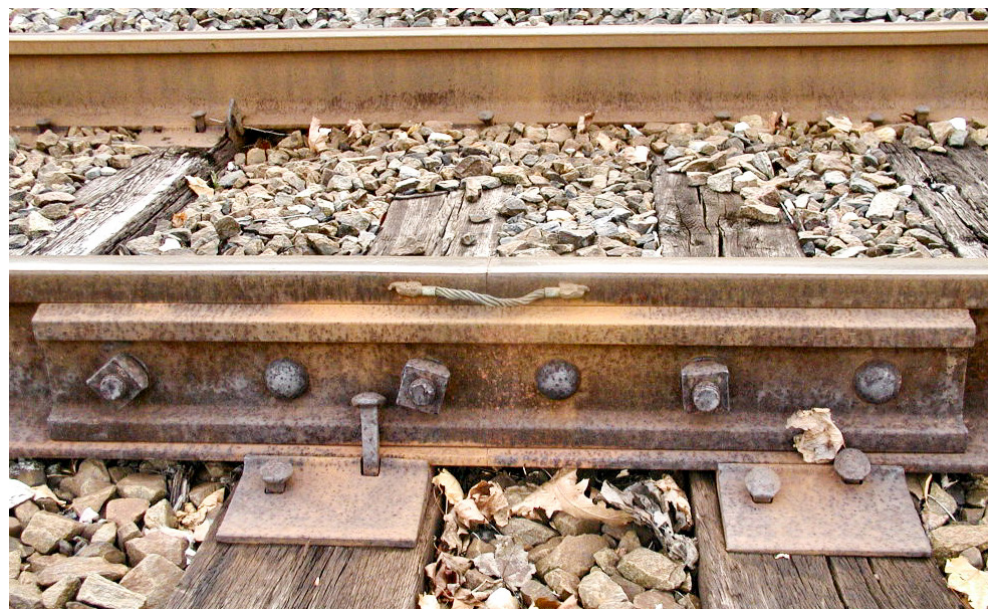
By Jay Dawkey

"Go and wait on the platform". The instructions from the Trains Manager don't really make a lot of sense. "So there will be a train I can take back west?" "Go to the westbound and you will get further instructions".

Not an answer to the question, but that is quite familiar at this point. Should have got a train an hour ago. It would have been a "three pipe" half, up and down through the tunnel three times, so I'm happy not to do all of that, but now I am stuck down the other end of the line, and the suspension doesn't look like it is being lifted anytime soon.

At the westbound cabin sit three other drivers. Another two of us are trying to get back west. All of us have been told the same thing. "I'll call our desk, see if we get a different answer". S suggests.

S rolls his eyes. That means we can't expect a lot of help from whichever manager has picked up the phone. "Yes, we've spoken to the TM here". S sounds exasperated and about ready to give up and continue to wait it out. Twenty min-



utes later, still no movement, we can hear that trains have been emptied. Definitely some drivers are now over their parameters, stuck somewhere on a platform while an entire signal block joint on the track is replaced.

Of course, this repeated signal failure has been going on since about 0630, and it's now well past lunchtime. More trains out there now, more people delayed. It is often the way it goes.

A new driver gets the opportunity to hear the war stories from everyone else. "Yes, it is often like this." "I once got stuck for two hours". Familiar tales for most of us.

Eventually, trains start moving, and after we are asked three times by a signaller if anyone is waiting for various trains due to arrive, they eventually work out that it would be better to give the trains coming in to the drivers who are actually waiting.

I pull back into my home depot, 15 minutes earlier than my actual finish time, and with two hours less driving done. I hope the controller will have found a driver to take the train. Four drivers are waiting, none of them for this train.

A call on the radio and another seven minutes sat in the platform with some increasingly bemused passengers, and eventually someone is found who can take it. It is now back to "good service", and I am done for the day. □



Kino Eye

A film centred on a library

By John Cunningham

Eric Lee's recent article on libraries re-kindled some happy memories of various libraries I have visited over the years. However, I can only think of one film (there must be more) which is centred on a library: Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Name of the Rose* (1986), adapted from the novel by Umberto Eco.

The year is 1327. There are some mysterious goings on in a Benedictine Abbey in Northern Italy; anyone working in the library, toiling away at their illuminated manuscripts, is liable to be bumped off in unpleasant circumstances. Father William of Baskerville (note the homage to Sherlock Holmes)

is brought in with his faithful novice Adso of Melk — playing the role of Watson — to investigate this monastic mayhem, as monks start dropping like flies.

Without, I hope, giving too much away, I can say that the clerical hierarchy are keen to suppress certain philosophical works which they believe will undermine the power of the church if they become known. More importantly for them it will mean "vale" (for those of a non-classical disposition, "Goodbye" in Latin) to their wealth and privileges. Those who are "in the know", i.e. the librarians and a few others, can kiss their cassocks goodbye.

Book and film are both highly recommended. □

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Sheffield uni prepares for strikes

By Sam Myerson

Students have been back on campus in most parts of the UK only for a few weeks, but the rotten stench of cuts and underfunding has been lingering around since the last academic year, brewing over the summer, and festering into a new pestilence.

At the University of Sheffield, where staff agreed to suspend industrial action on the promise that there would be no further compulsory redundancies in the coming year, management have reneged and we await strike days being announced. At Queen Mary in London, cleaners, teaching assistants and teaching fellows have not been paid in some cases since August, with staff on trade union facility time also not receiving pay.

Staff at the University of the Highlands and Islands organised in the UCU have voted to strike over cuts to courses and jobs. Turnout has high and many will be hoping for this to be backed up with strong action.

The Queen Mary London UCU (University and College Union) tracker of university cuts reports eight new cuts programs, most of which (Brunel, Nottingham, Queen Margaret, Teeside) are cuts on top of cuts on top of cuts. So far 15,000 jobs have been lost in HE this year, and 4,000 courses closed. The National Union of Students has yet to wake up and take a stand.

At Sheffield students in the Anti-Cuts coalition have met to prepare for the coming UCU strike, delayed owing to issues with the national union. Over the coming weeks they will build on-campus support for the strikes, and encourage students to get involved. Sheffield students are also helping students at other universities prepare for strikes by sharing campaign materials and plans.

Bridget Phillipson, education secretary and Labour deputy leader hopeful, has announced that universities will be able to raise tuition fees in line with inflation from September. No mention of increased financial support for students. These fee rises must be fought.

Linking student groups in action against cuts is how a new movement can be built. It all depends on initiative on the ground. □

Museum workers out for nine weeks

By Ken Worthington

Workers at the National Coal Mining Museum for England have been on strike for nine weeks. Around 45 members of Unison, including mine guides, horsekeepers, and cleaners, are striking in a dispute over pay.

In June the museum offered workers £1 per hour or 5% (whichever is greater). The board of trustees rescinded the offer a week later and changed the offer to a flat 5% pay rise. That was rejected by the membership and they voted for strikes. Days before the strike began, management offered 80p per hour to all workers, but that was rejected by members who demanded the employer honour their original offer.

Unison members received a new offer from the employer last week, which offered £1 an hour to craftspeople (skilled trades) and 5% to everyone else. Very few of the members on strike would have benefited from the offer and the average pay rise on offer for members was 72p



per hour, less than the offer that was rejected at the start of the strike. This offer has been rejected by the workers and they have vowed to continue action to force the museum to honour the offer of £1 per hour.

The strike began on 20 August. *Solidarity* supporters have regularly visited the picket lines which are strong and lively, with many cars turning round and supporting the strike despite the strike-breaking behaviour of the mu-

seum bosses. They have employed security guards on the gate to intimidate and harass the picket at a reported cost of over £1,200 a day, brought in agency cleaners to cover work and hired staff and amusements to put on events during the strike.

It has been estimated by Unison that the employer has spent over £50,000 to try to break the strike and it would cost only £8,000 to resolve the dispute. □

MHCLG dispute wins talks

By a PCS member

Members of the PCS civil service union in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have entered a potentially critical stage in their long running dispute over:

- Office closures in Newcastle and Truro (both now completed), Exeter, Sheffield, Birmingham and Warrington.
- Rigid, defined, levels of office attendance backed by possible disciplinary action.

- Maintenance of the location neutral postings and promotions policy, which enables staff to retain their existing office when applying for new MHCLG roles (exceptionally important for members in areas with few opportunities) and opposition to a recruitment practice which favours a small number of office locations.

Following further selective strikes in September, management finally made an offer to talk, on condition that during the negotiations PCS would not rebalot members for further action, and setting out an inadequate negotiating starting point, which nevertheless represents movement and contains potential for further movement.

After two online membership consultation meetings (PCS MHCLG is a UK-wide branch) attended by hundreds of

members, PCS set out its own conditions for talks:

- A six-week negotiations deadline.
- Negotiations to be structured into "rounds", enabling branch representatives to fully update members and seek their views at the end of each round.
- A postponement of the closure of the Exeter office.

Management agreed to the first two conditions but refused to postpone the closure of the Exeter office (and currently insist that the remaining offices will close in due course). However, in a conciliatory move, management also abandoned its "no rebalotting" demand.

On that basis PCS representatives agreed to enter negotiations and the first meeting took place last week. They have assured members that they will be pushing management for maintaining a staffing presence in each of the closed and still-to-close office areas, for an improved excess fares compensation package for those affected members who relocate to a new office, and for homeworking for everyone who would prefer it.

PCS representatives are committed to transparent negotiations. Members want to see progress on their demands. Representatives should be very clear to management that they need to see early, substantial, movement from them. □

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





No King in the USA!

By Colin Foster

October 18 saw 2,700 local “No Kings” protests against Donald Trump across the USA, up from the 2,000 on 14 June.

Total numbers have been estimated at seven million, on the basis that counted five million on 14 June (other evaluations then ranged from 3 million to 12 million).

Yet Trump is still pushing for absolute monarchy.

His latest moves include using the debt-ceiling government shutdown to sack more workers and squeeze the Democrats into approving healthcare cuts; pardoning cronies, and prosecuting his former (now dissident) National Security Adviser John Bolton; and declaring de fact (limited) war on Venezuela without consulting Congress.

There were union contingents on 18 October, but fragmentary, secondary in an effort led by NGO-y and left-Democrat groups. To beat Trump, the US labour movement must move forward to leading the fightback. See page 18. □

No King in Britain!

By Alan Gilbert

No king in the USA! Yes, and no king in Britain, either!

The monarchy in Britain is not the centre of executive power, like Trump in the USA. But it is a bastion of unelected, unaccountable, undemocratic privilege.

Starmer has used the monarchy as a channel in his squalid attempts to schmooze Trump. He surely thought that Trump would feel good about a ceremonial dinner with an actual signed-and-sealed king. Maybe the common factor of being burned by the Epstein scandal (shared also Starmer’s now-disgraced ambassador to the USA, Peter Mandelson) would help to bond the overlords.

A backstop, constitutional-last-resort monarchy is undemocratic, too. The authority of Britain’s monarchy was used in 1975 by the Governor-General of Australia to make a legal coup, sacking the elected (mildly reformist) Labor government to replace it by Tories.

No king in Britain, either! □

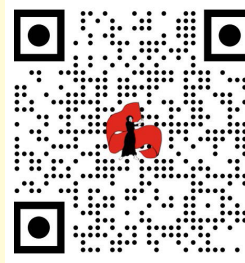




IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

22-23 Nov 2025

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See page 17

Warning from Caerphilly

By Chris Reynolds

The Caerphilly by-election for the Welsh Senedd comes the day after *Solidarity* goes to press.

Only one opinion poll has been taken, and that with a small sample, but no-one has questioned its basic prediction: Labour will lose badly in a seat which has been a Labour stronghold since World War One. The contest will be between Reform (who got 1.7% there in 2021) and Plaid Cymru (the previous runner-up).

The trend of UK-wide opinion polls is still for Labour’s score to dwindle, and Reform’s lead to rise. Since Zack Polanski took the Greens left, the Greens’ score has improved too.

Rachel Reeves’s Budget due on 26 November is certain to include new tax rises. They won’t be the £60 billion taxes on the rich sketched by Tax Justice UK. They will include some increase on the best-off, but almost surely tax rises which hit the working class too.

After much campaigning in the Labour Party, the Budget may include a repeal or partial repeal of the two-child benefit cap. But it will also include social cuts (and not cuts in military spending).

Farage now talks of restoring public services,

where previously he advocated privatising the NHS wholesale. But in the May 2025 council elections Reform made their pitch on cuts (supposedly of “waste”). The Tories promise huge cuts in welfare.

Yet Labour will lose votes, including to Reform, if the government does not improve the NHS and council budgets.

Plenty of voters want social provision. Only, increasingly, they think Labour won’t deliver. They may cast a protest vote for the Greens, or give up on social provision and hope to glean something from Reform’s promises to cut taxes and immigration. France and the USA show us where that can lead.

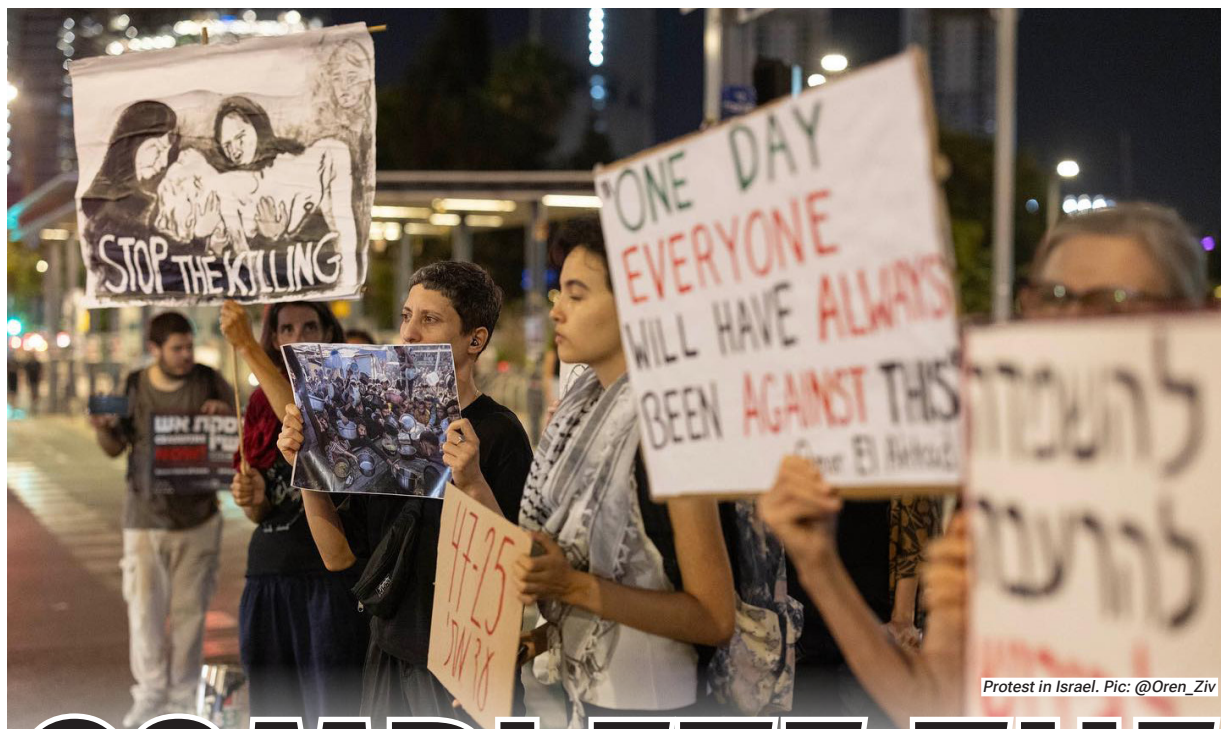
The results of Labour’s deputy leader contest are also out soon. If Bridget Phillipson wins, it will be a slap in the face for discontented Labour voters. If Lucy Powell wins, not so bad, but nothing good.

Solidarity pushes for the unions to step up their use of the great latent power they have in Labour structures. Workers have to be convinced that the labour movement can win something for them (and with them). Otherwise we are likely to face threats like those the USA’s working class does now, or France’s working class soon. □

For a workers' government

SOLIDARITY

& WORKERS' LIBERTY



COMPLETE THE CEASEFIRE!

By Ira Berkovic

The Gaza ceasefire remains fragile, with, as of 17 October, tensions escalating over the question of the return of the remains of hostages. Israel has claimed Hamas's failure to return remains represents a breach of the ceasefire agreement. Hamas says the large-scale destruction caused to Gazan infrastructure means it is impossible to recover remains without heavy machinery. An agreement now appears to be in place to allow Turkish

aid workers into Gaza to help with recovery efforts.

In response to the failure to return remains, Israel refused to reopen the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt for aid deliveries. To use aid provision as political leverage in this way is obscene. The action does not punish Hamas, but the entire population of Gaza, who are not responsible for Hamas's actions.

Meanwhile, with global attention still largely focused on Gaza, Israel continues to inten-

sify its settler-colonial project in the West Bank. There have been more than 30 documented instances of settler violence there since the Gaza ceasefire came into effect. The latest spike in violence coincides with the annual olive harvest. The left-wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement Standing Together has been mobilising activists from Israel to travel to the West Bank to help protect olive farmers and their livelihoods from attack. □