

Workers' Liberty

Education Workers



Support Ukraine's War



- Arm Ukraine
- Russian Troops Out
- Open Door to Ukrainian Refugees

Vladimir Putin openly denies Ukraine's right to exist as a free and independent state. Putin intends to seize Ukrainian territory and forcibly subordinate Ukraine to the Russian state.

Nevertheless, inside Russia, many brave people have taken stands against the war. Workers' Liberty supports these activists and citizens.

Ukraine is much weaker than Russia, and with a GDP per capita of only \$3700 Ukraine is much poorer than even the most impoverished EU state (Bulgaria's GDP per capita is \$10 000). Ukraine's army is much smaller than Russia's and has less sophisticated weaponry.

We oppose Russia's imperialist war. We support Ukraine's right to self-determination and so, consequently, back Ukraine's war of self-defence against the Russian attack. Ukraine has the right to demand weapons to defend itself and we demand the West adequately arms Ukraine so it is able to do so.

We are now in the sixth week of Russia's brutal, unprovoked attack on Ukraine.

The scale of destruction is enormous. In the southern port of Mariupol, battered and largely destroyed, surrounded by 14000 Russian troops, and defended by 3,500 soldiers of the elite Ukrainian 36th Marine Brigade, the mayor plausibly claims 5000 civilians have been killed.

Four million Ukrainians, including two million children, have fled the country. Another six million Ukrainians have been internally displaced.

The Russian armed forces have met a determined resistance. The pro-Putin Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper appears to have mistakenly printed a report from the Russian Defence Ministry stating that 9861 Russian troops have died in Ukraine (reported in the Guardian 22 March).

The Ukrainian people know that Ukraine's freedom is at stake, together with their democratic and trade union rights. They are right to fight the invasion and we should support them.

After 2014

Since a popular movement ousted a corrupt pro-Russian government in February 2014 Putin has targeted Ukraine. Russia annexed Crimea and carved out two mini-states, the so-called Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics (LPR and DPR). These areas are run by warlord-gangsters responsible to Moscow. Half the pre-2014 populations have left, their economies have collapsed, trade unions are repressed, torture and arbitrary arrest are widespread.

This is what the areas of newly Russian-occupied Ukraine will begin to look like. In towns overrun by the Russian military, Ukrainian politicians have been kidnapped and councils have been replaced by “People’s Committees” run by Quislings. Ukrainian demonstrators, demanding the Russian army leaves their towns, have been violently dispersed.

The NEU

What has the NEU done to help Ukraine? The NEU President Daniel Kebede Tweeted an NEU statement on the war which failed to back Ukraine and advocated Ukraine negotiate with the Russians on the basis of the Minsk agreements.

Kebede’s Tweet was met with widespread outrage from NEU members and was quickly withdrawn, in part because the statement had not even been properly agreed. (The National Executive later voted through the statement, 38-20, but on the bizarre understanding that it would not be widely circulated.)

It’s not clear who wrote the initial statement but it is no surprise that some people at the top of the Union got this so wrong. The influence of organisations like Stop the War and the Morning Star amongst the NEU leadership is powerful and distorting. Previous attempts to have the Union express clear opposition to Russian attacks on

Syria and Ukraine have failed as a result. The Minsk agreements are dreadful pro-Russia documents, signed in 2014-5 under pressure from France and Germany (who were prepared to sacrifice Ukrainian rights to stabilise their relations with Russia), and the threat of Russian guns.

Worse, by the time the NEU statement was issued the Minsk agreements were obsolete. We know this from actually reading the documents.

Minsk 2 states that the LPR and DPR should be reincorporated into Ukraine as Russian-controlled entities with the right of veto over Ukraine government policy. Days before the start of the war Russia recognised the independence of the LPR and DPR and Minsk 2 consequently became outdated.

So, in as much as the NEU statement made sense it amounted to saying: Ukraine should give up, accept being ripped to pieces and subordinated to Russia. That position is a betrayal.

Trade unions march on 9 April

It is no surprise that the NEU – to its shame – did not back the British trade union march for Ukraine in London on 9 April.

Workers’ Liberty members were key to getting that march – backed by many UK unions, two Ukrainian union federations and at least three Ukrainian unions - organised. We want Ukrainian workers to know we defend them, their trade unions and Ukraine’s national rights.

We will work for stronger, direct links, between the beleaguered Ukrainian unions and the UK labour movement. Ukrainian workers have faced serious attacks during this war. We defend them against their bosses and right wing politicians, simultaneously supporting Ukraine against Russian imperialism.

And what arguments do the left opposed to Ukraine’s war of self-defence use?

Stop the War, run by a rag-bag of Stalinists, has been disgraceful. Many of these people who run it are (quietly) sympathetic to Putin’s Russia. What does “stop the war” mean in this situation? If it means “Russia should stop fighting and withdraw its troops”, we agree. But how could that happen without Ukraine forcing them to leave, as an overturn of Putin’s regime seems highly unlikely right now? The way to stop the war is to back Ukraine’s war.

Socialist Worker writes: what about NATO? What about the crimes of US imperialism?

What about looking at the real war being fought right in front of your eyes, in which NATO is not fighting, while Putin’s army aims to obliterate Ukraine’s right to self-determination? What about taking your hands out of your pockets and acting in defence of your brothers and sisters in the burning towns of Eastern Ukraine? What about noticing that the first victims of Putin’s occupation are workers, trade unions and democracy.

Finally, notice the connections

This “left’s” unwillingness to back Ukraine is not an isolated mistake. There is a pattern. The leading people who will not back Ukraine are (more or less) the same leftists who backed the nationalist stupidity of Brexit and who demonise Israel.

Mistake after mistake on the left is explained by the corruption of socialism by Stalinism. These socialists define themselves by opposition to the US. Whatever the US does is wrong, whoever their enemies are, we side with.

We need to define socialism by what we are for, not just who we oppose, as a project which has human liberation at its centre.

Defend Ukraine!

By Dan Katz

Teacher’s Pay: A Battle Left Unfought

Teacher’ Pay 2022-4: The Government’s Submission to the STRB

2022/23 pay award

Table 1: Proposed pay awards (2022/23), M1-U3, Rest of England⁴²

	Existing Structure	22/23 Structure	Change (£)	Change (%)
M1	£25,714	£28,000	£2,286	8.9%
M2	£27,600	£29,800	£2,200	8.0%
M3	£29,664	£31,750	£2,086	7.0%
M4	£31,778	£33,850	£2,072	6.5%
M5	£34,100	£35,989	£1,889	5.5%
M6	£36,961	£38,440	£1,479	4.0%
U1	£38,690	£39,851	£1,161	3.0%
U2	£40,124	£41,328	£1,204	3.0%
U3	£41,604	£42,852	£1,248	3.0%

2023/24 pay award

Table 2: Proposed pay awards (2023/24), M1-U3, Rest of England

	22/23 Structure	23/24 Structure	Change (£)	Change (%) ⁴⁴
M1	£28,000	£30,000	£2,000	7.1%
M2	£29,800	£31,650	£1,850	6.2%
M3	£31,750	£33,391	£1,641	5.2%
M4	£33,850	£35,227	£1,377	4.1%
M5	£35,989	£37,165	£1,176	3.3%
M6	£38,440	£39,209	£769	2.0%
U1	£39,851	£40,648	£797	2.0%
U2	£41,328	£42,154	£827	2.0%
U3	£42,852	£43,709	£857	2.0%

increases at the bottom of the pay range but lower rises for everyone else. The pay freeze and the declining value of our incomes continued apace.

This 3-year plan was paused during the pandemic. Instead, we saw an absolute pay freeze this year (2021-2) with a 0% award announced in September. The latest government evidence to the STRB, published in March, indicated an intention to return to the original plan. It envisages increases of around 8% on the first two salary points next year but 3% for everyone above M5. For the first time they propose a 2-year award, with a further set of rises skewed to the lower points in 2023-4. They will boast that this takes the starting salary to £30k as promised. But the

vast majority of teachers are on M6 and above and will receive 3% and then 2% over the next two years. So the long period of pay cuts is destined to continue.

The 0% award was a gauntlet thrown down to unions. In response we seem to have been sluggish and indecisive. There was no sense of urgency when the Executive met prior to the TUC in September and no action plan to consider. Even the October Executive initially had no proposal to consider on our response to a pay freeze officially confirmed weeks earlier. Only after a detailed paper was submitted by ESN supporters was a counter proposal tabled. This borrowed much of the ESN paper but, as always, softened those sections

which talked about moving to prepare members for indicative and formal ballots. Nevertheless, we did at last have some practical plans for raising the profile of the campaign and starting the work of bringing members to a state of ballot-readiness. This was contained in a 3-stage activity plan with 'structure tests' at each stage.

Within a very short time, however, it seemed that the commitment to this strategy from some was superficial. At the national District and Branch Secretaries Briefing only two weeks later no session was held to launch this pay campaign. This despite the fact that stage one required branches to encourage members to lobby MPs ahead of the November budget statement only weeks later. The first structure test would measure engagement with this activity. With virtually no member or branch awareness of this 'campaign', participation was predictably poor.

This was taken up again at the November Executive and the plans that should have been put into action in September and October were set to be launched for the first time. The activity was better after that but it was January before it got to members in schools. First Executive members were asked to hold briefings for branches in their areas to outline the plan. Nearly 5 months after the

announcement of a 0% pay award we ran a systematic survey of members to gauge their response.

Despite this, there were many encouraging results from the survey. Opposition to the pay freeze and support for the Union's position and claim were close to unanimous. Over 70% of respondents were willing to take strike action on the issue. The number of members responding was, however, below what would be required to win a legal strike ballot. It was clear that, where we had engagement, the response was very supportive but also that we had much to do to motivate wider layers of the membership. Old lessons were reaffirmed - where we had active trained reps and large membership density we could deliver; where these factors were missing it was much harder.

The February Executive rejected the idea that we should have any specific timetable for building an indicative ballot. The NEC did, though, carry a proposal to hold a national demonstration in summer, on the themes of the cost of living, pay and funding.

It would have been better if such an initiative was taking place at the same time as a ballot of members for action on pay. That would have helped build both the demo and the ballot. Nevertheless, the idea of a

national demonstration is a wholly positive one and could be the first major sign of the labour movement coming back on to the streets to campaign after the long pandemic.

The challenges presented to us by the anti-union laws are real and debilitating. Short of repealing them (which should be a much greater priority) our best response is to intensify work to build our workplace-level organisation. Even then, however, no union can overcome these challenges unless it demonstrates by its leadership a determination to fight and win.

We may be able to close the gap between the just under 30% responding to the survey and the 50% required. We may see the surge in energy costs and the growth in living costs transform member anger and urgency on the issue of pay. But we are unlikely to break the cycle of pay freeze followed by pay freeze without a much greater sense of urgency and willingness to take risks from the Union. Without that our members face continuing pay cuts up until at least 2024. We have been too concerned not to go to our members and into action too early, whereas the much bigger risk is that we go to them too late or, worse still, or not at all.

By Jack White

Boycott: A Strategy Against High-Stakes, Statutory Testing



indicative ballot of all our primary members to boycott high-stakes testing. The ballot had the strongest results of any of our indicative ballots. 97% of members across the country wanted to replace SATs and high stakes tests, 59% said they wanted to boycott on a 39% turnout. In London those figures were 97% wanting to replace SATs and high stakes tests, 65% said they wanted to boycott on a 49% turnout and in areas such as Lewisham 97% want to replace the tests, 75% wanted to boycott on a 60% turnout.

Rather than looking to build on those results, investigate areas that could win, carry out disaggregated ballots and develop the campaign to win a stronger vote in subsequent years, the leadership threw their hands in the air and said 'see, nothing can be done'. They returned to their failed strategy of lobbying and think-tanks. With every missed opportunity the tidal wave of testing has grown. The only way to turn the tide is collective action.

We need to organise a ballot of all primary school members to boycott statutory high stakes testing in their schools for the school year 2022/23. The ballot should allow for disaggregation of regions and districts on the basis of the results of the indicative ballot, in consultation with the appropriate lay bodies in the area. If there is an attempt to reimpose KS3 SATs we should ballot our members affected to boycott them.

Support motion 18 unamended.

By David Pendleton

Toxic testing has a terrible effect on our children and young people who are suffering an ongoing and escalating mental health crisis, which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. It also de-skills education workers, increasingly our primary role is to prepare our pupils and students for tests. This means not only do children and young people suffer all the statutory tests but also wave upon wave of practice and preparatory tests.

It has a negative effect in terms of preparing young people for the world. Even the bosses institution the CBI calls for the abolition of GCSEs, lamenting that the education system ensures our young people can do tests but not problem solving or creative thinking.

The NEU has strong policy on toxic testing in schools. It supports:

- the abolition of Baseline and all high-stakes summative testing in primary schools.
- the replacement of GCSEs and A Levels with wider ranging, more flexible curricula
- the radical transformation of A Levels and post-16 qualifications
- Nationalisation, amalgamation, and rationalisation of the work of the exam boards

This is good, however, the problem is that our policy is having no effect. In fact the burden of toxic testing grows year on year. Baseline test were introduced in 2021, The Year 4 times table test was trialled in June 2019 and will be fully rolled out this year. There are reports that the government is considering reintroducing KS3 SATs.

Our union has missed opportunity after opportunity to turn the tide on toxic testing. When the phonics screening test was introduced in 2012 we should have boycotted. When the new SATs were introduced in 2014, there was a widespread mood for a boycott, none was organised. We should have boycotted the Year 4 times tables trial in 2019 alongside boycotting the SATs that year. We should have boycotted the introduction of Baseline testing this year, alongside boycotting the SATs.

When all statutory testing was suspended during the pandemic, everyone could see it was unnecessary, we had a golden opportunity to boycott their reintroduction but we didn't.

In 2019, against the will of the leadership of the union, conference voted to organise an

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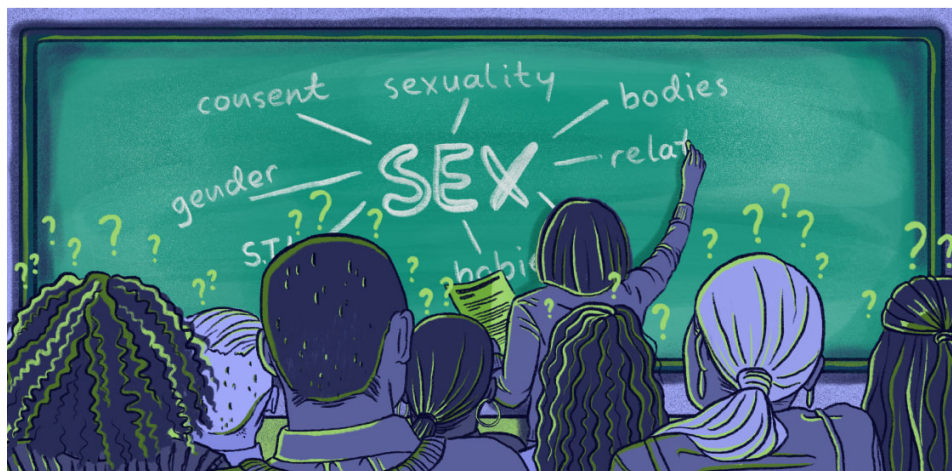
Porn: Proscription and Condemnation Don't Work

Is it truly porn that is the problem when it comes to young people's attitudes to sex? Or is it taboos, inadequate sex education and a lack of reliable information and advice?

The answer is that it's all of these things. The writers of Motion 36: Tackling Pornography are right to assert that mainstream porn is extremely problematic. It trades in implied lack of consent, where even if there is consent happening outside the film, it certainly isn't happening within it. That sometimes includes behaviour most of us would consider violent. (There are laws in place to aim to prevent the portrayal of violent acts, but they aren't applied consistently.) Mainstream porn trades in racist tropes and promotes large age differences and even incest. Mainstream straight porn generally shows sex as something women do *for* men rather than *with* them or, dare I say it, for their own pleasure!

The other truth in Motion 36 is that it *is* worrying how people are viewing porn at pretty young ages - though it draws on research that lumps together 11-13 year olds, which I'd argue is a pretty broad age range in this regard. The secondary teachers among us know how different a new year 7 is compared to a year 9. Nonetheless, it actually is worrying that some really young people have access, whether they intend to or not, to this material.

It's worrying partly because sex education in Britain is woefully inadequate. Our attitude to it tends to be to teach just the biology for fear of promoting the wrong message; to teach it *after* many young people have had to work things out for themselves;



and to leave people with different experiences out, including LGBT+ and disabled people. There is an overwhelming fear and taboo around sex ed that stifles the very necessary conversations we need to have with young people in order to promote consent, understanding and empowerment.

It's worrying partly because young people often aren't given any context to the images they're seeing. The difference between "porn sex" and "real sex" is rarely explored with them. Thus, how are they meant to know that ongoing consent is necessary or about normal variations in people's anatomy? How are they meant to know when to use condoms (to prevent STIs as well as pregnancy), how to treat women with care and respect, or what women might actually enjoy?! There's no context given as to how porn is made and the audience it is made for. There's no context given as to the huge variations in human sexuality that exist outside the narrow confines of mainstream pornography.

The porn that is most easily accessible is, for the most part, pretty bad for a whole host of reasons. But what we do about that is the really important part. Sex education that is based on

empowerment and choice, not shame, is absolutely key. If this many young people are accessing porn, what good does it do to attach stigma and shame to it (as I think the original motion does)? Especially when some will have come across it accidentally, or out of curiosity, or because it's filling the void left by inadequate sex ed?

I'd argue there's nothing inherently wrong with exploring one's sexuality in private and that not all porn is the same. But even if you believe the world would be better without any porn and think it's possible to place it back in Pandora's box for future generations, what about the young people we work with *now*?

We're education workers who believe in the transformative power of education. The answers to the effects of porn on young people already exist, and the most vital among them is high quality, shame-free sex ed. It's the only antidote to being miseducated by mainstream porn.

Put young people's needs at the heart of this, and vote for amendment 36.1.

By Elizabeth Butterworth: Sex educator, youth worker and secondary school teacher



Girls Day School Trust Dispute

Teachers who are members of the NEU and work at any of the 23 schools run by the Girls Day School Trust (GDST) have completed 6 days of industrial action in defence of their pensions.

The GDST want to withdraw from the Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS) and replace it with an inferior private pension. The dispute thus far is really a 'game of two halves'. The indicative and formal ballots, and the campaign around them were carried out in an exemplary fashion.

The formal ballot for strike action returned a 95% 'yes' vote on an 84% turn-out easily exceeding the anti-union law thresholds, demonstrating the level of anger among members and the effectiveness of a well-organised and serious campaign by the NEU. The NEU has good density

and a high number of reps in GDST.

The six days of strike action were well supported, with large pickets and protests outside all the schools. This led to some small concessions from the Trust, financial sweeteners and a delay in the withdrawal from the TPS.

However, after the six-days of strike action, and an initial refusal to meet at ACAS, the employer agreed to talks at ACAS. That in itself isn't bad, but the strikes were suspended, allowing the momentum members had built up to dissipate. That was on the 4th March, on 15th March it was announced that members at GDST had voted to end their strike action and accept a deal offered by the employer. The deal meant that all existing teachers remained in the TPS,

an enhanced pay deal for teachers and support staff and the end of the threat to fire and rehire.

However, newly employed teachers will not have access to the TPS. Although the members accepted the deal the NEU did not sign it and lamented the inability to get a negotiated deal.

The union is right! A two-tier workforce is not something we should accept. Nor should we accept more teachers who don't have access to TPS, it sets a dangerous precedent. That all said, significant gains were won from the serious and prolonged action of our members against an initially intransigent leadership. Clearly, members' resolve was waning and they cannot be blamed for accepting the deal, however we agree with the national union this is not a satisfactory deal.

Report from the Executive: Ukraine Debate



In the first days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine a statement was issued by the National Education Union (NEU) and appeared on the social media accounts of some national officials. It was a shameful statement, weak and evasive in defining the problem and mealy-mouthed in condemning the assault on the Ukrainian people.

The wholly unjustified act of aggression against Ukraine was described as ‘the situation’, ‘a dispute’ and ‘a conflict’. At no point was the word invasion used. It opened with the suggestion that this (the war) was what happened when diplomacy failed, as if there was anything reasonable the Ukrainians could have done to avoid this outrage, as if there was any legitimacy to Russia’s attack. Most offensively of all it presumed to tell the Ukrainians that they should settle for (and ‘honour their obligations’ under) the Minsk 2 protocol.

There was a call for the withdrawal of Russian troops but everything else in the statement rendered that a tokenistic concession to the overwhelming mood of anger evoked by the invasion.

There was an immediate and strong reaction to the statement on social media and in real life.

There were resignations, at least one national officer wrote to HQ to object and the response on social media was hostile. Within days the statement was withdrawn. Aside from the problems with the content, the statement had not been agreed by any national committee of the Union.

When the NEC met on March 5th we were faced by a clear choice: a motion which endorsed this statement or an amendment which deleted all of it and replaced it with a much clearer declaration of solidarity already issued by the global education union federation, Education International, and the ETUC.

This statement described the attack as ‘an unjustifiable full-scale invasion’, as ‘unacceptable’. It called on Russia to withdraw and on the international community to do their utmost to end the war without putting any prescription on the Ukrainians or promoting any particular settlement.

‘Profound solidarity’ was expressed to education workers and students and ‘unwavering commitment’ to our sister unions in Ukraine. Perhaps the starkest difference was the statement in the EI version that Ukraine has ‘the sovereign right to

democratically decide their future as a nation’.

Despite remarkably feeble arguments from its supporters, the original statement was endorsed. This was made possible by a second amendment which allowed the Executive to endorse both statements rather than delete either. The vote was 20 for the ‘delete all amendment’ and 38 against. The meeting then went on to approve the second amendment and the contradictory composite motion. So, the NEU both supports the right of the Ukrainian people to determine their own future and demands that they agree to the now-defunct Minsk 2.

This was a tribal, factional vote, based not on the actual arguments but on a loyalty test to the author of the original statement. One striking feature of the whole farce has been the apparent reluctance of anyone who supported the position to promote it openly. The mover of the motion (Alex Kenny) said in his speech that he wasn’t saying it should be used in ‘a public-facing way’. The official report of the NEC meeting circulated to members included not a word of the statement, simply stating that a motion of solidarity with Ukraine was carried.

If we want our union to be taken seriously on issues of international solidarity, outside of a small and compromised echo chamber, we need to confront the politics which led to this pusillanimous statement and replace them with a consistent, principled internationalism. An internationalism committed to democracy, human rights and the freedom for workers to organise independently of the state everywhere.

By Jack White

China: for the Uyghurs, Hong Kong and the Working Class

Workers’ Liberty members and supporters are pushing for solidarity with workers and oppressed nations living under the rule of the Chinese state. Unfortunately, the motion we promoted was not prioritised for Conference this year. However, there remains an urgent and ongoing need for solidarity.

China is the largest country on Earth by population, and the Chinese state is the most efficient and effective tyranny on the planet. Under the rule of Xi Jinping, it is now also an immensely wealthy capitalist economy and a major imperial power, investing and exploiting on a global scale (for example, in the mineral extraction needed for new green industries such as electric vehicles) as well as enslaving entire nations within its own borders.

It is a basic duty of trade unionists and socialists to stand, and build solidarity, with the independent trade unions and democracy movement in Hong Kong, with workers’ strike movements which break out (illegally, because all independently organised strikes

and unions are illegal) in other parts of China, and with oppressed nations such as the Uyghurs, Tibetans and Mongolians.

Hong Kong’s independent unions have played a leading role in the democracy movement which challenged the clampdown in the form of the National Security Law and the violent repression of political opposition to the Beijing-loyal Hong Kong executive. Leading democracy activists and trade unionists have been imprisoned simply for organising peaceful demonstrations against the National Security Law and for universal suffrage for elections. Solidarity from trade unions and Labour organisations in the UK has been organised by Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong (LMSWHK), ensuring that the cause has been taken up by unions such as PCS and UCU and raised in Parliament by Labour MPs John McDonnell, Nadia Whittome and Clive Lewis as well as mobilising rank and file trade union activists alongside Hong-Kongers and others for solidarity street

protests against the Chinese government.

The plight of the Uyghur people of East Turkestan in northwest China – officially the “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region” (“Xinjiang” means “new territory”, a name deriving from imperial conquest) – is even more desperate. The official name of the Uyghur region is a lie. There is no autonomy for the Uyghur people who suffer under a bureaucratic tyranny which has become massively more repressively over the last half-decade.

There is now extensive evidence, detailed in the reports of major human rights organisations, of a series of measures which amount to a brutal, steady, creeping genocide - more than a million people detained in camps aimed at breaking their will and imposing political and cultural loyalty and conformity; comprehensive and intrusive surveillance, even reaching into Uyghur homes; widespread torture, rape, abuse and killings; forced sterilisations and abortions; forced marriages of



Uyghur women to Han Chinese men; vast numbers of Uyghur children removed from their families; the extensive use of the forced labour of Uyghur workers, including in the Chinese supply chains of western capitalist corporations.

The use of the word genocide is careful and deliberate, in line with the established UN definition of genocide which identifies other means besides mass killings as possible elements of a deliberate drive “to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”. (1)

The independent Uyghur Tribunal which convened in London last year, having investigated a huge amount of evidence and heard from eye-witnesses and research experts, found in its report that the Chinese authorities were guilty of committing genocide because they had “by the imposition of measures to prevent births intended to destroy a significant part of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang”. (2)

The totality of the repressive measures points towards the deliberate demoralisation, atomisation, dispersal and discontinuity of the Uyghurs as a people with a collective identity and shared sense of community and nationhood.

In response, the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK (USC-UK) has sought to mobilise trade union and Labour support for the Uyghurs against persecution by the Chinese state: calling monthly protests outside the Chinese Embassy in London, and outside the shops of the major capitalist corporations like Nike, Zara and Apple which profit from Uyghur forced labour; gaining support in unions such as RMT, PCS and UCU; raising solidarity for the Uyghurs in the Labour Party, including at its conference in 2019 when there was much less awareness of the plight of the Uyghur people.

There has, unfortunately, at times, been a miserable response from a (thankfully small) number of activists in the trade union movement who echo the Stalinist politics of the Morning Star: refusing to face the reality of the Chinese state’s racist persecution of the Uyghurs; claiming that the reports are US-government propaganda and part of a “new cold war” against China; justifying the Chinese state’s repressive measures as needed to combat terrorism or forcibly train and educate backward rural people out of poverty (echoing the idea of the civilising mission of European colonial empires); claiming that the struggle for democracy in Hong Kong is a CIA plot; and other claims to

seek to discredit all opposition to the Chinese state’s tyranny.

Principled socialists and trade unionists must reject the excuse-mongering and apologism for the Chinese state’s oppressive class rule and colonial rule. It is certainly welcome that the NEU Executive took a principled decision in March 2021 to make clear its support for, in particular, the rights of Uyghur women, and against the systematic rape, abuse, torture and forced sterilisation which, according to reports, are inflicted on them in the concentration camps. (3)

However, we need a lot more than statements on the NEU website. We need to build active, campaigning solidarity. Help us to get solidarity motions prioritised at next year’s NEU conference. And work with us and other labour movement activists in building solidarity with Chinese workers, Hong-Kongers, Uyghurs and all people oppressed and exploited by the Chinese state.

By Rob Gordon

1. UN definition of genocide - www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml
2. Uyghur Tribunal Judgment bit.ly/UTJ2021
3. NEU International: news and campaigns – neu.org.uk/international-news-and-campaigns

If You’re In the Building You’re in the Union: a Union for All Education Workers

The rise in prices, fuel costs and National Insurance contributions is squeezing everyone’s pay. In schools, support staff are the workers that will be feeling this the most.

The NEU has taken up support staff issues more now than in the past, for example the issue of job creep and the support staff pay consultation. However, these were largely done in a lacklustre way, without much conviction, planning and follow up.

The campaign around job creep largely amounted to a single support staff members and reps call. No directives were given to branches or reps to organise local meetings or school meetings on this issue. Similarly, the support staff pay survey had little life behind it. It was riddled with issues meaning many support staff did not initially receive the email with the survey in it, there was no membership call, again no directives given to branches and reps to organise anything local.

The results of the survey showed a majority (93%) rejecting the pay offer at the time and majority in favour of strike action (57%). However, the turnout was severely lacking. Since then

there has been effectively no national movement by the union on pay for support staff. The fact that the teacher pay survey and the support staff pay survey were not conducted at the same time, meant that the issues were largely seen as separate. Given the lack of publicity around the support staff survey compared to the teacher survey, resulted in support staff feeling unheard and unsupported by the union on the issue of pay.

On a national level we want to see a NEU that acts like an industrial union, with the ethos that if you are working in education, if you are in the building, then you are in the union. Concretely this means a union that refers to its members as education workers not just as teachers, support staff, “educators” or “education professionals”.

The union needs to push campaigns and encourage action rather than just surveying members passively about their willingness to do so. Underlying this, we need a union that can and will actively recruit support staff members. The TUC Agreement between the NEU and other support staff unions means this is not possible. As

NEU members we need to argue for this to be changed so that the NEU can actively recruit support staff and that we can seek collective bargaining agreements both nationally and locally.

What can we do as lay members? The short answer is organise locally around support staff issues and push for the union to do the same nationally. If you are a support staff member, become a rep in your school, run for a position as support staff officer of your local branch and run for a position on the Executive Committee of the union. If you are a rep in your school or on the committee of your branch, organise a school or district wide support staff members meeting.

It is easy for the NEU leadership to ignore support staff if we are not kicking up a fuss. If we kick up a fuss and organise ourselves we can transform the NEU into an organisation that actively fights and wins for support staff. By doing this we can transform education for staff, students and society at large.

By Alex Green

Our pamphlets

Browse, download, buy, or listen to [our pamphlets](#) including:

- The German Revolution: selected writings of Rosa Luxemburg
- For Workers’ Climate Action
- Two Nations, Two States
- Workers Against Slavery
- How to Beat the Racists
- Shapurji Saklatvala: Socialist Rebel in Parliament
- Stalinism in the International Brigades
- Left Antisemitism: What it is and How to Fight it
- The Occupation of the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead 1984
- When workers beat the fascists □

workersliberty.org/publications/

Support These Campaigns:

Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong

uklaboursolidaritywithhk.wordpress.com
uksolidaritywithhk@gmail.com
Twitter/Facebook: @labsolidarityhk

Uyghur Solidarity Campaign (UK)

uyghursolidarityuk.org
info@uyghursolidarityuk.org

Twitter: @CampaignUyghur
Facebook: @UyghurSolidarity
Instagram: @uyghursolidarityuk



Upcoming meetings

Workers’ Liberty meetings are open to all, and unless otherwise stated are online over zoom.

For our calendars of events, updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, see workersliberty.org/events or scan QR code □



Join Workers’ Liberty!

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

Organise the Gig Economy: Support the Couriers' Strike

Food couriers across the UK are continuing their battle over pay against industry giant Just Eat and their delivery supplier Stuart. At the same time as fuel prices spiral upwards, Stuart riders are dealing with the effects of a 24% cut in their base rate of pay; and those riders who are contracted directly by Just Eat have also been hit with falling rates of pay per delivery.

There is an urgent need for the labour movement to back these couriers by supporting their strike fund and helping spark couriers' strikes in their area. Please use the QR code to donate to the strike fund and pass a motion in your district to make a donation.

Couriers' strikes over pay started in Sheffield on 6 December. Following a break for Christmas and new year, strike action has occurred every single day in Sheffield since 10 January. The Sheffield drivers, who started the strike and remain key to its spread, are approaching 100 days of strike action.

The strength of the Sheffield drivers' organisation is due to the years of organising which drivers there have conducted, with the help of the Sheffield Workers' Liberty group since 2019. Lately other socialists in the city including members of the Labour and Green Parties, Socialist Alternative, and the Socialist Party have joined in with the strike effort.

Far from petering out, the strike continues to spread and drivers continue to mount ambitious actions to rattle their exploiters into conceding on pay.

On Thursday 24 March dozens of drivers and supporters from across Yorkshire and the North East demonstrated inside the national headquarters of Greggs in Newcastle, "Greggs House". Drivers piled into the lobby area



with banners and placards, and demanded to speak to the senior management team who bear responsibility for the Just Eat contract and its outrageously low pay. In successive speeches, drivers revealed the depths of misery that these firms' greed have plunged them into.

This action punctured the "socially responsible" posturing of the Greggs firm, which has burnished its image by making donations to charities. Faced with the reality of its profiteering, Greggs would only send down the HR manager, who commanded the demonstrators to leave, and immediately called the police.

Meanwhile the strike continues to spread. Strikes, meetings and fresh organisation drives are in progress in Worcester, Wolverhampton, Colchester, Hampshire, Kent, and other places. For some weeks, drivers in Dewsbury have been striking on a weekly basis. In the space of 24 hours strikes began in Morley and Birstall (targeting the McDonalds restaurants in those locations) and a drivers' meeting was held in Leeds itself, in the Elland Road McDonald's, which resolved on strike action, to begin on Friday 1 April at the Elland Road and White Rose restaurants. On Monday 28 March, drivers in Chesterfield

restaurants on the Just Eat platform and demonstrated in the town centre.

Socialists across the UK should throw their weight behind this escalating movement to organise and civilise the gig economy!

Donate to the strike fund here:



Get Solidarity every week!

Trial sub (6 issues) £7; Six months (22 issues) £22 waged, £11 unwaged, €30 European rate.

Visit workersliberty.org/sub

Lewisham Ammendment Redacted: Oppose Intimidatory Heads

An amendment from Lewisham District to The Defending Reps in the Workplace motion (38) has been redacted in its entirety by the officers of the national union.

The amendment read:

Add:

Conference notes

3. Reps can't function without a functioning school group to support them

Conference further believes that school groups cannot function effectively unless it is ensured that at least a section of their meeting can happen without leadership members present.

Conference further instructs the Executive to investigate and return to the next conference with proposals, for guidance to be issued to all reps on how school can constructively have a section of their meeting without leadership members present.

It was redacted 'on the grounds that it would commit the Union to acting in breach of its aims and objectives (set down by rule) and potentially commit the Union to act unlawfully in preventing Union members accessing collective rights.'

This is a multiple outrage. It is an outrage because conference cannot discuss and vote an amendment so innocuous. Read what it asks for. Surely, the Executive is capable of investigating and returning to conference with proposals that do not 'breach ... its aims and objectives and potentially commit the Union to act unlawfully in preventing Union members accessing collective rights.'

It is also and most importantly an outrage because it effectively prioritises the need to representation of leadership members over the representation of other members and the ability of our union lay bodies to function unhindered by intimidatory leadership members. They can rule out the amendment but they can't wish away the problem. This issue will not go away.

By David Pendleton

Ukraine should decide its own future!

Russian troops out now!

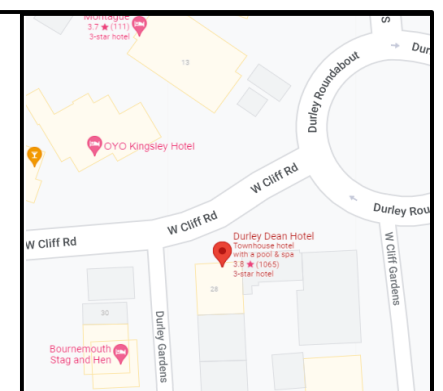


Tuesday 12th

6pm

Kennedy Room

Durley Dean Hotel



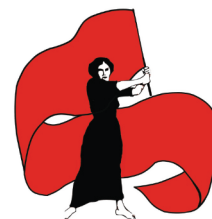
Speakers:

From the socialist group Sotsialny Rukh (live from Ukraine)

Chris Ford - Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

Workers' Liberty

Education Workers



Stamer Wants to Ban Us, Join Us!

On 29 March the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) voted 20-11 to ban Labour members from “supporting” Workers' Liberty.

The document for the NEC suggests our “aims and values” are incompatible with Labour’s, and says it will explain why — but doesn’t.

We are open and proud about our “aims and values”. As explained every week in Solidarity, we aim to build up a working-class movement to fight capitalism and replace it with socialism.

Our politics are radically different from the Labour leadership’s. But so are those of huge numbers of Labour members. If those pushing the ban were logical and consistent, they would advocate banning any advocacy of anti-capitalism and militant working-class struggle.

Class-struggle socialist ideas have a long history in Labour. The party was founded as a coalition of trade unions with socialist organisations, including the Marxist Social Democratic Federation.

When the leadership got the NEC to ban four organisations in July 2021, they cited antisemitism. There can be no such justification here, since — unlike Starmer’s clique — we are militant campaigners against antisemitism on the left.

The NEC has also banned the Labour Left Alliance and Socialist Labour Network. We strongly oppose many aspects of these groups’ politics, particularly on antisemitism. We oppose banning them for the same reasons we opposed the



bans in July 2021. The document cites Workers' Liberty’s democratic structures; that we have local groups; and that we have social media, a website and publications. It makes no attempt to explain why these criteria are damning only for some organisations, except declaring vaguely that “networks of members” and “ginger groups” are acceptable.

It cites the fact that we previously (between 1998 and 2010) supported some socialist candidates against Labour (ignoring that we always advocated a Labour government). But since 2010 we have advocated a Labour vote everywhere, without exception.

People were “auto-excluded” without due process in 2015-17 for no other reason than past association, sometimes of the loosest sort, with Workers' Liberty. So this is not really new. It is a move to expedite expulsions. As with the 2015-17 purges and the bans in July 2021, it will not be airtight, but it will intimidate some socialists who have worked with us on Ukraine, on free movement, on

anti-union laws, and more. The more who speak out against the ban, the less it will push back the whole left.

That the Labour leaders are spending time on this, weeks before local elections, at a time when the UK working class faces the worst fall in living standards for decades, sums up their attitude to the world. Most of the leadership, and certainly the aggressive Blairites who have gathered around it, do no campaigning to support strikes, for action on climate change, to rebuild the NHS, or to strengthen workers’ rights. In many cases, as in Coventry council, they are the people attacking workers. They reserve their greatest passion for attacking the left.

We will continue and step up our organising for a serious fight against capitalism’s assault on the working class; to transform the labour movement into an effective instrument of working-class struggle, and replace the Tories with something radically different, not a Blair government mark 2; and to fight for socialism. We urge Labour members to help us in those struggles.