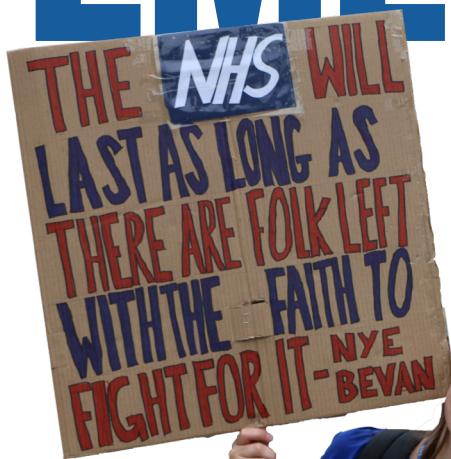




For social ownership of the banks and industry

# REQUISITION RESOURCES TO MEET NHS EMERGENCY



» Pay NHS workers their 15% pay rise. Level up careworker pay

» Bring social care into the public sector, test and trace into public health

» Take private hospitals and clinics into NHS

See page 2

## Chile: why the rightist threat?

On-the-spot report from Kelly Rogers on the background

Pages 8-9

## Night Tube strikes start strong

Start of a battle against coming cuts in London's transport

Page 13

## Sheffield couriers strike from 6 Dec

JustEat couriers will refuse to deliver from McDonalds

Page 15

## Rob Dawber 1956-2001

A tribute 20 years after the death of a socialist railworker

Page 10



# Requisition resources for the NHS!

## 6699 Editorial

Discussions about the state of the National Health Service are remarkably muted given the desperate reality. NHS campaigners, the left and the labour movement need to introduce a real sense of alarm – and clear, appropriately radical solutions.

In the *Guardian* earlier this month, one doctor wrote about her difficulty even getting an emergency ambulance for a baby with falling oxygen levels. She commented that “this incident was only one of many examples I could quote which illustrate how close basic medical care is to collapsing in the UK”.

The *Financial Times* has found that 2,047 more people died this year in the week ending 12 November than during the same period between 2015 and 2019. Only 1,197 had Covid-19 on their death certificates: so an extra 850 non-Covid deaths in one week. Cardiovascular diseases and strokes, where prompt and efficient health services are vital, were the main causes of death. Office for National Statistics figures show that was not a one-week blip: the pattern of non-Covid “excess deaths” in similar numbers to Covid goes back [three months or more](#).

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine estimates 4,519 excess deaths due to long waits in A&Es over the last year. It says the number of people waiting more than 12 hours in A&E rose by 40% – just between September

and October. In 2010 the waiting list for pre-planned NHS treatments was two million. It is now close to six million and rising steadily. Health Secretary Sajid Javid has flagged up a possible peak of 13 million. There are plausible estimates that go even higher. The numbers waiting over 18 weeks and over 52 weeks have also grown dramatically.

### Capacity

Things are so bad that the NHS lacks not just facilities but often even just space. As another doctor put in the *Guardian* last month: “There is often a wait to secure even a cubicle to bring a patient in for examination. Sometimes I have to send a colleague to fetch a patient while I wait in some inappropriate location – on one occasion an equipment store – just to reserve somewhere with sufficient privacy before someone else takes it.

“Ambulances queue outside the door with waits of hours just to unload their patient and get back on the road; a criminal waste of their time.”

And all this before winter proper, December-January, the usual peak months of stress for the NHS. Before the impact of the new Omicron variant, which may be modest or may be large. While flu counts are still low.

Last year, in the early days of the pandemic, some governments requisitioned private hospitals and healthcare facilities for public use. Spain for instance. Even some Indian states took measures in that direction. The UK government did almost the opposite, handing over large sums of public money to private healthcare providers to access their facilities – but then making very little use of them.

There are various figures for the number of hospitals in the UK, but estimates hover around 1,300 NHS hospitals and 500 private ones. The deal the Tories made last year supposedly gave access to 187 of the latter, with 8,000 beds.

Research from the Centre for Health and Public Interest [indicates](#) that those beds were occupied by less than one Covid patient a day for 59% of the first year of the pandemic. On average private hospitals cared for eight Covid pa-

tients a day between March 2020 and March 2021, while the NHS averaged 10,000. NHS-funded activity in the private sector, the usual contracted-out tests and procedures, fell by 43% in 2019, as against a fall of only 21.5% in equivalent NHS activity (due to the pandemic).

### Costs

The full costs of this disturbing farce have not been disclosed. Estimates vary from £2 billion and £5 billion – equivalent to a big chunk and maybe the big majority of the measly extra £6 billion NHS funding the government has just announced.

Moreover it seems the terms of the deal were renegotiated in a way that effectively bailed out many private providers from collapse. That allows them now to benefit from the huge treatment backlog in the NHS.

To address the growing NHS emergency, all private hospitals and medical facilities should be taken into public ownership, at the full disposal and under the full control of the NHS. The experience of the pandemic highlights how flimsy any objections that this is impossible or too difficult really are. The same goes for objections to public ownership of social care, also desperately needed.

Hospitals are not the only thing that needs requisitioning. The PPE crisis and scandals last year highlighted not just Tory venality and shamelessness, but the appalling [mess](#) NHS supplies and logistics are in as a result of decades of privatisation. Companies, production facilities and equipment in these sectors also need to be brought into public ownership, an essential measure to meet this emergency and to begin untangling the wider structures choking the health service. All outsourcing and privatisation need unwinding.

At the same time, perhaps the biggest NHS emergency of all is the staff shortage. Requisitioning private hospitals will help a bit, but only a bit: most of them rely on NHS consultants working in their spare time. Urgent measures are also needed to increase the size of the NHS workforce and its

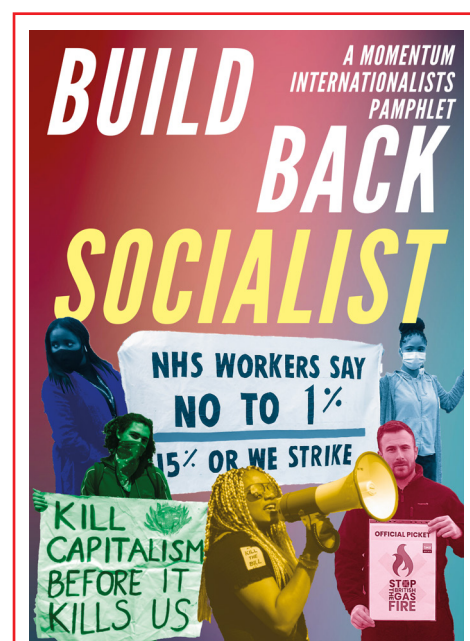
well-being and morale. The first step is to immediately accept the demands of NHS workers for a 15% or £3,000 pay rise to make up for the real-terms cut they have suffered for over a decade (and raise wages in social care sharply towards NHS levels). Major funding should be made available to recruit more workers. We are against all tuition fees, of course, and for living grants for all students, but the imposition of fees and loans on those who want to train for NHS jobs is particularly grotesque. It should be ended.

The labour movement must rally round health workers’ pay demands, the new campaigning by midwives and birth workers over their conditions, and struggles to drive up conditions and reverse outsourcing by United Voices of the World and other unions.

To fund the salvaging and restoration of the health service, we demand the government requisition wealth from the rich through heavy progressive taxation. □

## 23-24 April

Workers’ Liberty’s annual conference, where we debate our policies, plan our actions, and elect our committees for the coming year, will be on 23-24 April 2022 in London. (We’re working on the assumption that Covid rates will be relatively low by then, at least for a while). More info? Email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org)



Social inequality has deepened the Covid pandemic; the pandemic has deepened inequality. This new pamphlet, from Momentum Internationalists, offers ideas for the labour movement to regroup and fight back on socialist lines. □

[momentuminternationalists.org](http://momentuminternationalists.org)



# Social care: the public-service alternative

By Mohan Sen

Really the only good thing about the Tories' proposals for social care funding is that they are so blatantly not a solution to anything. The door is still open wide, perhaps now even wider, for a labour movement push for a real alternative on this crucial issue, shifting the debate, winning concessions and damaging the government in the process. But at the moment the push is far too weak.

Our minimum alternative should be to make social care and support provision a publicly-owned, publicly-provided system, with enough public funding to ensure it is completely free, high quality and provides its workers with decent pay and conditions.

In 2011 a commission led by establishment economist Andrew Dilnot recommended a life-time cap of £35,000 on social care costs paid by individuals.

After a decade of doing nothing but cutting public funding for care, the Tories have now announced a cap of £86,000. £35,000 in 2011, adjusted for inflation, would be £45,000 today.

People with assets of less than £100,000 will receive means-tested support.

Guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) also makes clear that only the amount contributed personally – and not any public contribution – will count towards the cap. Given the very high costs of care, many poorer people will still pay the same £86,000 as much richer people.

As Torsten Bell of the broadly right-wing Labour but generally thoughtful



and informative Resolution Foundation put it: "If you own a £1m house... over 90% of your assets are protected. If you've got a terraced house in Hartlepool (worth £70k) you can lose almost everything."

Even Dilnot and similar figures have expressed dismay at this disastrous stipulation.

However, yet another dire aspect of the policy comes straight from Dilnot's original recommendations. The DHSC guidance makes clear that the cap only covers care itself. "Daily living costs" will be excluded and set at a nationwide flat rate of £200 a week. So accommodation etc. for someone in care for five years will come to more than £50,000.

In terms of overall cost, some people will benefit from the changes the government is introducing – but mainly the relatively well-off. (The genuinely rich and the capitalist class, of course, have no worries, easily affording lavish care whenever they need it.)

In terms of other urgent issues in social care, the policy does nothing. Care and support services will remain desperately underfunded. The government claims that its regressive "health and social care levy", making workers

pay through national insurance, will raise £10-12 billion a year. The conservative Institute for Fiscal Studies say it may be more like half that. In any case, only a sixth is earmarked for social care, in a period when demand and costs in the sector are rising sharply.

The policy does nothing to address the terrible terms and conditions of most care and support workers, and many other consequences of a comprehensively privatised and radically fragmented sector.

The only real alternative is the one demanded by Labour Party conference, by many unions and by the cross-union care and support workers' network CaSWO! – for the transformation of the whole sector into a free public service, with public funding to abolish all charges and raise service standard and workers' pay, terms and conditions. Social care should be aligned with the NHS as a free, publicly funded service and its workforce immediately elevated to directly employed NHS terms and conditions. (Ill thought-through and probably harmful suggestions of "integrating" the NHS and care are another matter.)

Socialists, trade unionists and Labour Party activists must do everything we can to boost care workers' organising and struggles. We must challenge the Labour leadership over its bizarre failure to propose pretty much any alternative to the Tories' catastrophic plans, and our union leaderships over their failure to even speak up and exert pressure, let alone organise a serious campaign. On that basis we should advocate the cohering of a broad labour

movement campaign for transforming social care.

- CASWO's demands: [bit.ly/caswo-d](https://bit.ly/caswo-d). More: [workersliberty.org/social-care](https://workersliberty.org/social-care)



## Activist Agenda

Neurodivergent Labour's AGM on Sunday 5 December will debate motions on dyscalculia provision, non-maintained special schools, compulsory voter ID and housing, as well as electing a new Executive, reflecting on the successes of the past year and agreeing plans for next year.

Sunday 5 December will also see the Ugyhur Solidarity Campaign's regular 5th-of-the-month protest: 6pm at the Chinese Embassy, 49-51 Portland Place, W1B 1JL.

On Thursday 9 December (7pm: [bit.ly/9dec-fou](https://bit.ly/9dec-fou)) Free Our Unions is running a Zoom meeting with former postal worker and CWU activist Dave Chapple on how workers in the postal service (unlike almost everywhere else) have retained a tradition of unofficial, "wildcat" strikes which defy the anti-union legislation, enabling them to take swift and often victorious action, for example in defence of victimised colleagues. □

- Links and info for these and other campaigns, suggestions for labour movement motions and petitions: [workersliberty.org/agenda](https://workersliberty.org/agenda)

## Barbados ditches the monarchy. Let's do the same!

By Sacha Ismail

On 30 November, the Caribbean nation of Barbados became a republic, removing the UK monarch as its head of state.

The English monarchy took control of Barbados in 1625, wiping out the island's indigenous population and creating a society based on slavery. The forced labour of black Barbadians played a crucial role in the rise of the first capitalist empire: by 1660 Barbados generated more trade than all other English colonies combined.

Enslaved Barbadians resisted fiercely, including through a major uprising in 1816, an important precursor to the abolition of slavery in

the British empire. The country remained a British colony until 1966.

"The time has come to fully leave our colonial past behind", commented president-elect Sandra Mason. To actually do that will take a socialist revolution in Barbados, the UK and worldwide. More immediately, Barbados and other Caribbean governments have demands for aid and support from the UK and other larger, richer countries. Nonetheless, ditching the British monarchy is a noteworthy step.

Barbados' Labour government – elected in a huge landslide in 2018 – is far from radical, let alone socialist, but it does seem committed to some progressive changes, for example the introduction

of same-sex civil unions and a referendum on introducing same-sex marriage.

Commentators have cited the Black Lives Matter movement, the Windrush scandal and revelations about racism in the royal family as factors contributing to the debate in Barbados and the eventual decision.

There is also talk of other Commonwealth countries following this lead. We should follow it too. Abolish the monarchy! □

- More on [workersliberty.org](https://workersliberty.org): Abolish the monarchy – fight for democracy (2021); Abolish the monarchy! Up the republic! (2012); "A prop for privilege" – speech by Tony Benn (2003)



## Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom.

**Saturday 4 December 9.30-10.30am:** From Climate Coalition to Climate Movement

**Monday 6 December 7.30-9pm:** Yorkshire AWL: Class Struggle and Climate Crisis

**Wednesday 8 December 7-9.00pm:** Socialist Film Club: White Riot (New Cross Learning SE14 6AS)

**Wednesday 8 December 7-8.30pm:** Scotland AWL: China – The Nature of the 1949 Revolution, with Paul Hampton

**Thursday, 9 December 7.00-8.30pm:** Free our Unions: How postal workers maintained a tradition of unofficial action

**Sunday, 12 December 2-4pm:** Socialist Film Club: Gramsci: Everything that Concerns People (New Cross Learning)

**Sunday, 12 December 6.30-8pm:** Capital: Workers' Liberty Zoom study group

**Wednesday, 15 December 7.00-9pm:** Socialist Film Club: 10,000 Black Men Named George (New Cross Learning)

**Saturday, 18 December 4.30-6pm** LLI/MI: NHS and social care – make Labour act!

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





# Squaring anti-racist instinct with pro-Brexit policy



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

To be fair to the *Morning Star*, the fact that it had no coverage of the Wednesday 24 Nov tragedy in the Channel until its Friday edition (26 Nov), a day later than the rest of the media, was probably due to its limited resources and inability to extend deadlines.

When it did come, the *Morning Star's* coverage was mainly pretty good: a front page headline "Give Safe Routes To Refugees" and a lead story quoting refugee rights groups blaming racist border fortification policies by both the British and French governments. The editorial on Friday 26 November was headed "Britain's inhumane immigration policy caused this tragedy in the Channel" and made the important point that the government's focus on traffickers "doubles down on an unworkable policy of seeking to block

all points of entry that demonstrably drives desperate people into the most dangerous routes."

Apart from a bizarre digression seeking to defend Putin, Lukashenko, and Erdogan against the charge of seeking to use refugees to destabilise the EU (something all three are clearly doing), the editorial contained little that most readers of *Solidarity* – or, come to that, of the *Guardian* – would disagree with. It closed with the straightforward statement: "Our duty is to let them in".

The next day's editorial (27-28 November) went further, denouncing "an economic system underpinned by racism – by racist border controls, by racist migration policies and by a racist ideology..." It even denounced "capitalism's reliance on super-exploitation and control of migration."

The casual reader would assume from this that the *Morning Star* and the Communist Party of Britain that controls it, support free movement and oppose all immigration controls. But, of course, they don't. As this column noted last week, prominent CPBer Nick Wright had a major article in the MS of 18



November praising the outspokenly anti-immigration German politician Sahra Wagenknecht and sneering at Angela Merkel's relatively liberal policy towards migrants. The CPB states in a 2020 document ("No Racist Immigration Laws") that "The left cannot pose as champions of EU free movement. And whilst Communists want to see a world where all can come and go without restrictions, the material conditions do not exist for this." Scraping round for a "left wing" justification for backing immigration controls, the document comes up with an old chestnut: "We must also recognise that, as has happened within the EU and recognised by the EU Commission, free movement of labour can result in nations losing many of their skilled younger workers."

Meanwhile, the *Morning Star* and CPB continue, repeatedly, to defend their pro-Brexit stance and to deny that

the referendum result had anything to do with immigration – though one *MS* contributor, Chelley Ryan gave the game away in an article on 24 January 2020, stating that Labour should have backed Brexit, "just a slightly softer version which would protect jobs, while still giving us the freedom to control immigration, a strong driver for the Brexit vote."

I for one don't doubt that the *Morning Star* editorial team and the CPB, like all decent people, were genuinely horrified by what happened in the Channel last week. Nor do I question their anti-racist instincts and intentions. What is open to question, however, is how they square their instincts and intentions with support for Brexit and a mythical, never explained or defined, policy of "non racist" immigration controls. □



## Protesters silenced, not Stock



Letter

Academic freedom is a specific principle relating to the sphere of academia and the university setting. It is the right to research and teach without political or commercial interference and institutional censorship. Despite Jack McDonough (*Solidarity* 615), I'd say Kathleen Stock's academic freedom has not been compromised.

Since Kathleen Stock's resignation, she has positioned herself as a victim of a university-rife "cancel culture" and she has tarnished student protesters as medieval witch-hunters. It is the voices of the student protesters that have been silenced, not Stock's.

What were the students protesting about? Kathleen Stock's signing of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights and her involvement in the LGB Alliance – both of which are hostile to

trans people and are a threat to the existing legal rights of trans people in the Gender Recognition Act.

Free speech is different from academic freedom and does not exclude academics. Free speech is a limited right in law.

The student protesters at the University of Sussex had a right to protest against hostility and threat to trans people. The University had a responsibility to investigate – through due process – this grievance. It did not. The Vice Chancellor sided with Stock.

Should I be sympathetic to Kathleen Stock, who faced these student protests? These protests were opposing a movement – and those within it – which is against trans existence and rights, and cruelly vilifies and delegitimises the trans woman. This is the reality. Kathleen Stock is not a victim, in fact, she has hegemony on her side. Solidarity with our trans comrades is both critical and urgent. □

Camila Bassi,  
Sheffield



Women's Fightback Issue 26 out now. Includes articles on protecting women beyond the police, sex positive feminism, solidarity with Afghan women, and more. □

[workersliberty.org/publications](http://workersliberty.org/publications)

## Our pamphlets

Browse, download, buy, or listen to [our pamphlets](http://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
- Arabs, Jews, and Socialism: Socialist Debates on Israel/Palestine
- The Occupation of the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead 1984
- When workers beat the fascists
- Automation and the working class □

[workersliberty.org/publications/](http://workersliberty.org/publications/)



# Protests against child marriage in Iraq



**Women's Fightback**

By Katy Dollar

An Iraqi court has resumed hearing a case in which a judge was asked to formalise a religious wedding between a 12-year-old girl and a 25-year-old man. The court, located in Baghdad's Kadhamiya district, adjourned the case last week amidst demonstrations.

Demonstrators had been chanting "No to child marriage" and "Marrying children is a crime against children".

The case caught national attention when the girl's mother – in a video on social media – called on authorities to save her daughter. She told local media her daughter had been raped and forced into a marriage to her stepfather's brother.

The Ministry with responsibility for violence against women and girls released a statement that after meeting the girl, her father, and her husband, it was reassured she had not been coerced into marriage.

Though this case has drawn scrutiny, many cases occur with little scandal, according to legal professionals.

"This case gets particular media attention because the mother of the

young girl went on social media and stirred up nationwide discussion," Mariam Albawab, a Baghdad-based lawyer who works on children's rights cases in Iraq, told Al Jazeera.

"However, there are thousands of cases that have gone under the media radar, and many of those marriages went ahead without much notice or condemnation."

## Legality

The legal age for marriage is 18 in Iraq, but the law says it can be lowered in "urgent" cases if the father consents to marriage.

Child marriage is common in Iraq, especially in rural areas. Poverty drives many parents into marrying their young daughters off, hoping it will either ease the burden of the financial burden on the family or bring in more resources.

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted by the government of Iraq published in 2018, 7.2 percent of married women aged 20 to 24 were first wed before they turned 15 years old, and another 20.2 percent were married before age 18.

Due to entrenched gender inequality worldwide, girls remain disproportionately



impacted by child marriage. Globally, the prevalence of child marriage among boys is just one sixth of that among girls.

## Dangers

Girls who enter child marriage are susceptible to physical health risks including rape, early pregnancy and early delivery. They are also vulnerable to psychological and emotional harm, due to premature ending of their childhoods, separation from their families, and possible domestic violence.

Although Iraq has criminalised rape, the government can drop charges as long as the victim and perpetrator get married. Since Iraq has not criminalised rape between spouses, there is no legal remedy against sexual assault once girls are married.

The court's ruling in this case could be a watershed moment in the campaigns for or against child marriage.

Iraq's Personal Status Law forbids child marriage and increases women's marriage and custody rights. There is a pushback against article 8 of Iraq's Personal Status Law which allows for a judge to authorise an under-age marriage if the judge concludes that the action

is urgently necessary or if the father of the bride gives his approval to the marriage.

There are also those pushing for child marriage to be easier, and proposed amendments to the Personal Status Law to abolish legal difficulties when forcing children into marriage.

The parliament in Iraq has so far rejected these proposals, including an amendment that would allow religious communities to have their own family laws. □

# Nationalise water to stop sewage dumping!

By Wilson Gibbons

Water companies in the England and Wales have been found to be illegally dumping raw sewage directly into Britain's waterways and seas at staggering rates. An investigation from the Environment Agency (EA) found that in 2020 alone water companies had discharged sewage into rivers more than 400,000 times, for a total of more than [three million](#) hours.

Companies are legally allowed to discharge raw sewage this way but only in exceptional situations where it would otherwise threaten to overwhelm the sewer system, such as after prolonged peri-

ods of rain. Then discharging allows fluid to move through the system rapidly and avoid backing-up which leads to flooding and sewage leaking into populated areas. However, activists and the Environment Agency have shown that overflow discharge has been frequent year-round, including in long dry summer spells.

Probably the findings massively under-report the level of sewage being dumped. Spills are monitored through companies self-reporting. Southern Water was recently [fined £90 million](#) for repeatedly dumping raw sewage along the UK's southern coast whilst fudging the numbers given to the EA. Thames Water have

been accused of failing to report [up to 95%](#) of their discharges, even though it says the company says it regards all untreated sewage discharges of untreated sewage as unacceptable.

## Infrastructure

The water companies have pointed the finger at Britain's creaking infrastructure, inherited from the Victorians, but in doing so they have inadvertently given the game away. Undoubtedly the system might be due an upgrade, but the chief block to investment in infrastructure has been the rampant profiteering of the directors and shareholders of England's nine main regional water companies since privatisation in 1989, and public spending cuts before then, especially under Thatcher.

Since 1991 dividends payouts to shareholders of parent companies amount to above £57bn. That money could have increased the spend on maintaining and improving infrastructure by [about 50%](#)



and the large amounts spent on top water company bosses' salaries, by even more.

## Backlash

The backlash has forced a limited response from the Tories, who passed a watered down amendment through parliament. Campaigners for clean water have pointed out that there is still no legally-binding rule for companies to report when they release sewage into waterways. [Even this](#), however, would simply be a plaster on a gaping wound.

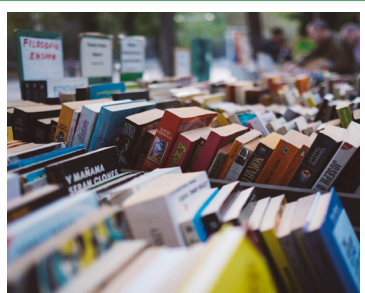
Only bringing water back into public ownership, with democratic control and oversight, can truly begin to address the impact of decades

of underfunding. Only public ownership can give the investment needed to upgrade and adapt as the climate changes and Britain experiences prolonged periods of heavy rain. Water is a natural monopoly. We all depend on it to survive. Shareholders and directors should not be able to use our need to line their pockets.

*Solidarity* campaigns to win the labour movement to public ownership of the water companies and other important public services like gas and energy companies, and major investment to improve infrastructure and transition rapidly away from environmentally damaging practices. □

## Second hand books!

Workers' Liberty is selling hundreds of second hand-books – politics, but also fiction, history and much more. Visit [bit.ly/2h-books](https://bit.ly/2h-books) for the current stock and prices, and to order. □





# Developing carbon drawdown via algae



## Environment

By Franziska Elmer

*Franziska Elmer is a marine biologist working on a project to boost the growth of algae in the oceans as a carbon draw-down technique. She spoke to Stuart Jordan from Solidarity.*

We are working on a research and development project that investigates how the macroalgae *Sargassum fluitans* and *natans* can be grown in parts of the ocean that have very little nutrients in the surface water. A few hundred metres below the surface there is very nutrient-rich water that is currently not used by any organisms as there is no light for photosynthesis.

By bringing this water up through artificial upwelling we make the nutrients available to the algae and turn a desert-like part of the ocean into a productive ecosystem that supports many species.

*Sargassum* grows rather fast. Under ideal conditions the patches double in size in less than two weeks. The algae also float, so no infrastructure is needed to keep them at the surface of the ocean, which gives them an advantage over other algae such as kelp.

Because of these properties, they are ideal for carbon dioxide removal. Long term storage of the carbon could be accomplished by sinking the algae to the deep sea. We will closely investigate the effects that sinking the algae has on the deep sea environment with a pilot project, as we do not want to create a new environmental problem while fixing an existing one.

Our vision is to remove about 1 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere per year, equivalent to the emissions of Germany in 1990. All pathways to 1.5 and 2 C of the IPCC report rely on several Gt of carbon being sequestered per year by mid-century and this nature-based solution is one of the few that could be scaled up to the level needed.

Artificial upwelling requires large structures that can impact marine life or interfere with shipping and fisheries. But the farms would take up just a few percent of the entire ocean, an area roughly of the size of Croatia. The impact on marine life can be studied. Probably, the pipes will become encrusted with animals and algae and become their own small ecosystem.

We are applying to get our methodology approved by a carbon credit verification firm so that we can sell carbon credits. Until we are at that stage, we will need capital to do the research and development. For this we are applying for grants from governments and philanthropists, and we are looking

for investors who are willing to invest early and take the risks and potential rewards that come with this type of investment.

It would be great if research agendas were set in a more democratic way than they are done today – not only as regards the carbon removal techniques, but all research.

To win greater democratic control, three things need to be done: the public must be informed about the research options and then the public must be asked about which option they want to pursue, and their answer needs to feed into the decision making of what is being funded.

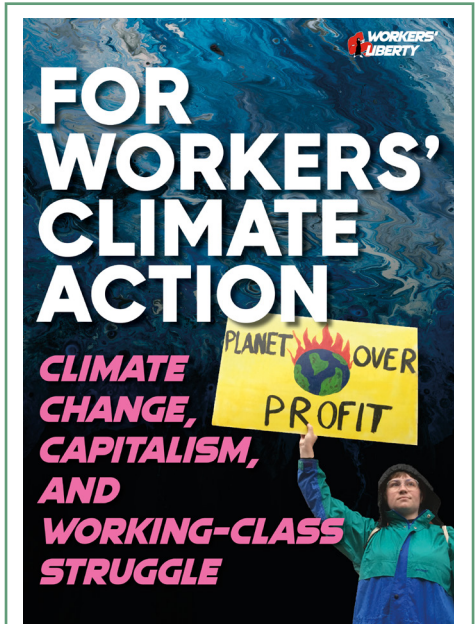
As for seafields, the mantra is “there is plenty of money available in this world, we just have to make sure some flows towards us”. A crowdsourcing specialist in our team is in charge of raising a few million dollars in the next couple years that will pay for the research and development. Most of that money will come from rich individuals or philanthropists.

The other problem is that our governments do not control much of the money, it is the corporations and rich individuals. Wealth has to be redistributed by taxing the rich. That entire process will likely take a while.

The reason why my scientific colleagues and I are working with seafields is because the research will get funded faster this way than relying on government grants etc. So unfortunately, we

cannot wait with climate research and development until the scientists and the unions have taken over the world; but we can work on both fronts simultaneously, exploit the current system and build a new one. □

• Much abridged. More: [bit.ly/fr-e](http://bit.ly/fr-e)



Workers Liberty have published a new edition of our climate pamphlet, updated with new articles, reviews, and debates.

[workersliberty.org/climate-pamphlet](http://workersliberty.org/climate-pamphlet)

# UAW sells out the workers at John Deere

By Angela Paton

Ten thousand strikers at twelve John Deere plants across the US have accepted a contract backed by management and the UAW union after 5 weeks of strike action. One striker summed up the feelings of those battling Deere (and unfortunately their own union): “We were sold out”.

A six year contract with a 12% wage increase (i.e a shoddy 2% a year) was passed by 61% across Deere, although in the tractor plant at Waterloo, Iowa, it is reported that 56% of workers rejected the deal. The bosses’ papers dutifully parrot the Deere media blitz that a “significant margin” passed the deal, which is meant to have given them general raises, bonuses, improvements in the pension fund and a boost in base reduction pay. That account is grossly overstated, or just plain wrong. As a UAW member in Milan, Illinois, puts it: “they said we got everything we asked for. Far from it”.

The UAW strike fund is \$800

million but workers strike pay was a measly \$275 a week, so the union effectively starved workers into settling. Deere management had entered “phase 1” of their “customer continuity plan” – basically sending as much work overseas as possible and having ill-equipped and untrained supervisors, managers and engineers take over production lines in the US plants, obviously resulting in accidents, stress and 12 hour work-days six days a week. “Phase 2” was to bring in scab labour. Before that, the UAW and Deere managed to ram through a little-altered version of the contract that was voted down by 55% two weeks ago.

The company made \$5.8 billion profit last year (an increase of 62% since 2013 and the last contract negotiation), and is at its most profitable in its history. Shareholders recently received a 17% rise in their dividends.

Workers at Deere, meanwhile, have conceded rights,

benefits and decent wage rises for decades.

The last strike was in 1986, lasting five months and turned into a lockout. In 1997 the agreed contract eliminated healthcare benefits after retirement, cut pensions by two-thirds and brought in a two tier system, with lower wages and health benefits for new workers.

The recent UAW-backed contract had originally included a third tier, which would eliminate pensions for all new workers. The second vote got rid of that two weeks ago. It is unclear whether this has been snuck back in as the full contract has not been shown to the workers by the UAW, although the UAW press statement was prepared well in advance of the vote.

All this comes against a continuing backdrop of corruption scandals and allegations in the UAW, and a federal investigation. Two of the previous four presidents of the UAW have been imprisoned for embez-

zlement. Current president (and former Treasurer) Ray Currie has been investigated for accepting high-value football tickets from firms the union did business with, in breach of union rules.

The Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD) campaign continues to work in the UAW for direct one-member-one-

vote election (in place of indirect elections) to get an honest leadership elected by the rank and file and for other democratic organising principles.

Shame on the UAW bureaucracy! Support the UAWD for a democratic union that won't sell out its members or steal their dues in the future. Help them transform their union! □



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# For a publicly-owned integrated transport system!

By Simon Nelson

The government decision to scrap the eastern sections of the HS2 high-speed rail project is unsurprising. Rumours that the Tories were looking for short cuts over the project alongside an apparent new “package” of upgrades had circulated for some time. But the government’s own claims that their new package of upgrades to existing lines adds some new capacity bear scrutiny.

The section that would have connected Birmingham to Leeds will now end at the existing East Midlands Parkway station. A new high speed line between Manchester and Leeds has gone. Instead it will end in Marsden, West Yorkshire, and then there will be upgrades to the existing network.

This is the effective scrapping of the original Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) project, replacing it by the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP). Whatever the problems with HS2, the limited gains that could have come from it will be lost. Bradford, which is the worst-connected city in Britain, but would have been a stop on the new high speed line, will not be

included in the IRP. *Solidarity* has no fixed view on HS2. This writer believes it would be wrong to focus activist time and energy on opposing it, but it will probably fail to deliver the kind of benefits that its supporters champion. Investment in rail and transport, particularly in the north, would better start with the electrification of the railways, and particularly the lines running East to West between Hull and Liverpool.

## Electrification

Electrification would help to upgrade a crumbling rail network, allowing more and better services, and it would also bring environmental benefits, with the scrapping of diesel trains. Improvements in rail’s freight capacity would also have the benefit of removing HGVs from the road network.

Electrification was another project abandoned by the Tory government in 2016. Even before that, they had limited the scope of their plans.

The local transport network connecting towns and cities outside the London commuter belt is in a parlous state. Relatively short journeys across the Pennines and within some large city regions can take as long as the journey from London to Leeds or Newcastle to Edinburgh. There has been a rather mild war of words between Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, and some London-based Labour MPs. But pointing out the regional disparities need not mean ignoring or neglecting the necessary improvements to the transport system in and around London, which is also inadequate.

Essentially, the Tory government is determined to continue with the



breakup of the railway and bus networks. even when its “operator of last resort”, i.e. the state, is running an increasing number of lines.

As Burnham must know, Transport for London faces a big funding squeeze too. That follows from the Tories’ removal of the government subsidy – so London is now unique among metro systems in large cities in lacking subsidy – and the impact of Covid-19 in reducing fare income.

Labour should be arguing for full public ownership of the transport system and its infrastructure to deliver an

integrated system fit for purpose. Burnham is right when he says that the plans are a “patchwork quilt of upgrades that roughly costs the same, will mean greater disruption to existing users and will not deliver the capacity uplift that is needed. More trains on existing tracks can only result in a poorer service than at present”.

The IRP looks like another failure of the government to do any real “leveling up”. Instead the Tories are papering over the cracks with another plan which will fail. □

A socialist dissects Left antisemitism. Third ed., 253 pages, £9.99 □ [bit.ly/shop-wl](http://bit.ly/shop-wl)

## Day school celebrates struggles and international solidarity

By Sara Lee

The audience erupted in cheers for Indian activist Nodeep Kaur when she spoke at our Workers’ Liberty day-school on 27 November. It was, as one participant described it, “a remarkable moment of international solidarity.”

We celebrated the Indian farmers’ recent victory against Modi as our own. It was a rare opportunity to hear Nodeep Kaur herself tell the story of how that victory was won. Learning about how she and her comrades led a mass struggle, building solidarity between farmers and work-

ers across religion and caste, energised us in our own fight to rebuild the left and labour movement.

### History

In another of the day’s ten sessions (most running in parallel), Omar Raii of Workers’ Liberty walked us through the history of Israel/Palestine from ancient times to now. Often on the left, we are told about the history of the region as if the 1948 war fell from the skies. Omar sketched a broader sweep of the history, and elucidated how the differing political narratives of the conflict pick up on phases and events.

This essential session gave participants the tools to think for themselves and decide how Palestinian liberation can be best achieved.

### Plenary

In the closing plenary, “Building a New Left”, John Moloney, the Assistant General Secretary of the civil service union PCS, speaking in a personal capacity, gave a rousing speech on why the unions should band together to develop a serious programme on climate change. He put it plainly: the Tories and the bosses are quite content to watch the world burn while they turn up

their air-conditioning; only we, the labour movement, have any chance of actually tackling climate change. One of the Sage care home strikers, Julia Veros Gonzalez, talked about her and her comrades’ ongoing struggle, the partial victory they have just won, and their unwillingness to be tricked by the bosses into giving up their fight for better pay and working conditions.

Throughout many sessions ran our fundamental ideas: why we see the international working class as the protagonist of change in the world, and why we vigorously oppose

all imperialisms, including for example China’s.

We believe socialist revolution is a real possibility. To achieve it, we have to be serious about the ideas we advocate. At the day school, we rigorously examined popular ideas on the left and asked ourselves if those ideas would lead us to a socialist future. Many of them won’t.

### Educational

Through educational events like our dayschool, we equip ourselves with the theoretical tools to win our fight to make socialism a reality. □



# Chile: how to build on two years of le

By Kelly Rogers

In the days after the first round of Chile's presidential election on 21 November, the mood amongst left activists in Santiago is bleak. Jose Antonio Kast, candidate for the far-right Christian Social Front (FSC) received the largest share of the vote on Sunday, with almost 28%, while Gabriel Boric, candidate for the left coalition Apruebo Dignidad, received almost 26%. They will face each other in a second round run-off on 19 December. Polls predict a knife-edge result.

## It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years

When I arrived in Santiago a fortnight ago, one thing quickly became clear. This is a country deep in political crisis. Clear enough from the fact that practically every inch of every building is covered in graffiti and posters, but unavoidable when walking past Plaza Dignidad on a Friday evening, when armoured vehicles, heavily dented, are chasing a handful of protestors through the streets, shooting water cannons and letting off tear gas. A weekly show-down, I'm told.

The current political moment is the latest chapter of a story that began in October 2019 with what people call "the social explosion". When President Sebastián Piñera introduced a 30 peso fare hike on the Santiago metro, school students organised a mass fare boycott. The action ignited an eruption, and on 25 October the largest protest in Chilean history took place, with 1.5 million taking to the streets in Santiago and up to three million in total across the country. No group or party claims to have organised the protests; they were leaderless and organic.

So began months of near-constant protests, strikes and disruption, a lot of destruction – metro stations were burned down, churches destroyed, and heavy repression from the state. Forty people have been killed by armed police, and more than four hundred blinded, mostly by tear gas canisters shot directly into protesters' faces. Between October 2019 and March 2020, 11,300 people were arrested, 2,500 imprisoned. Piñera declared a state of emergency and implemented a mandatory curfew, arguing that the government was at war. Despite the state violence, the movement flourished with public assemblies meeting frequently in plazas up and down the country. It was here that people formulated their demand for a new constitutional process.

Piñera later withdrew the fare hike and announced that he was open to hearing the concerns of the protesters, but it was too little, too late. The protests continued unabated, demanding the resignation of the president, the



Protestors face down water cannons

rewriting of Chile's Pinochet-era constitution and an end to the state of emergency.

A common slogan of the protests was "it's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years". In the almost three decades since the Pinochet dictatorship ended, Chile has continued to experience neoliberalism in its purest form, and is today the most unequal country in the OECD. Private healthcare is the norm for anyone who can afford it, and the country's privatised pensions are notoriously miserly.

Much of this regime is underpinned by Chile's 1980 constitution, much of which has remained unchanged since it was created by the junta. In broad terms, anything that can be provided by the private sector has to be, and the state is only supposed to step in when companies fail. The state is forced by law, for instance, to fund the education of a private school pupil as much as it funds the education of a publicly education child – because not doing so would be "discrimination". The end of this legal set-up will be, hopefully, a solid legacy of the recent social movements.

But there has been a backlash to the protests, too. Kast represents the legacy of the Pinochet era; in 2017, during the last general election, he ran on an openly Pinochetist platform, receiving 8 percent of the vote. For this election he has shifted towards a more broadly appealing political platform, but remains a far right candidate cut in the mold of Bolsonaro and Trump, promising to persecute communist and left activists, ban abortion in all circumstances, and to dig a ditch in the north of the country to keep out migrants.

Kast's voter base brings together military and ex-military personnel, many of them from the Pinochet era who were never brought to justice following Chile's transition to democracy; the evangelical right who have been mobilising in opposition to the new social

movements, in particular the feminist and LGBTQ movements; and the rural poor who feel threatened by immigration in the north and the indigenous rights movement in the south. Perhaps most important of all, Kast claims to offer order and stability, in the wake of two years of unrest and then the disruption created by the pandemic, which seems to have won him votes even from people who might have initially been part of the uprising.

## The left

The left in Chile is a complicated tapestry of parties and coalitions. In brief, Gabriel Boric is standing for Frente Amplio (Broad Front, FA), an electoral coalition formed in 2017, which brings together a large number of groups ranging from the centre left to the far left. It traces its roots to the student revolts of 2011, and many of the coalition's MPs, including Boric, were student organisers in that period.

The Trotskyist left in Chile is separate and small, though not insignificant, and the FA's political centre is informed primarily by social movements and by a generation of activists who wanted to create a more radical electoral alternative to the Communist Party (an ironic aim, say many activists now, given more recent developments).

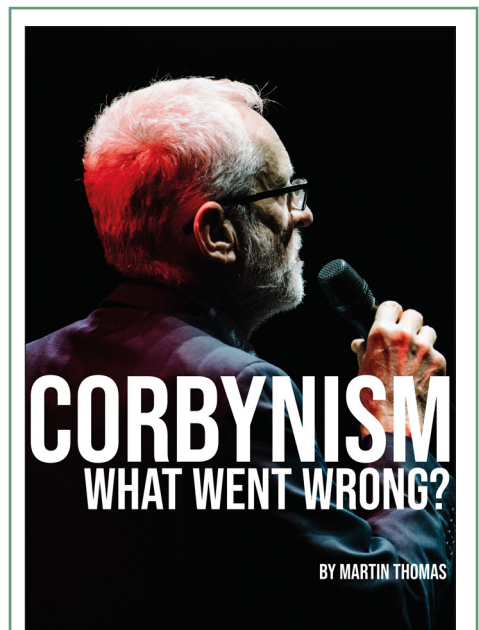
Boric himself is from Social Convergence, a group that merged from three smaller autonomist and libertarian left groups; slightly to its right is Revolución Democrática, the largest group in FA's parliamentary delegation, a more reformist coalition that tends towards left social democracy; and alongside them sit a handful of other left groups: UNIR, Commons and Common Force. The Liberal Party, who are openly centrist, split from FA when it began to work more closely with the Communist Party.

Although Frente Amplio was established on radical left principles, and (on paper at least) advocates for a tran-

sition to a socialist economic model, a number of activists that I have spoken to have been disappointed by what they see as a shift to the centre, under the guise of the politics of "respectability". Activists from within the coalition accept that the electoral programme is at best a left social democratic programme, but the main bone of contention is a series of controversies during the "social explosion" which stained Boric's reputation with the radical left. For example, Boric – alongside MPs from Revolución Democrática – supported legislation in congress to criminalise the erection of barricades.

The key complaint, however, is that a majority of Frente Amplio MPs, Boric included, voted with Piñera's government to create a process to draw up a new constitution. Many saw this as a measure to demobilise the street protests – and as lashing up with a government responsible for brutal repression against protestors. The deal offered by Piñera also stipulated that all elements of the new constitution needed to be agreed by two-thirds of the Constitutional Assembly, which people believed would mean that the process was bound to end up in a deadlock. A significant chunk of Social Convergence's membership left the party over this in the midst of a fraught internal debate, and Boric was temporarily suspended from the party.

For this round of elections, Frente Amplio has entered into an electoral pact with the Chilean Communist Party (PCCh), under the name Apruebo Dignidad. Boric won a surprise victory against the Communist candidate, Daniel Jadue, in the primary last July to become the presidential candidate for the coalition. With more than 50,000 mem-



Lessons for socialist activists and the Labour left from the Labour Party under Corbyn 2015-20. 60 pages, £4. □

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# Left-wing revolt to defeat the far right?



Protestors In Santiago mount a statue

saw widespread student occupations and more than eighty thousand educators out on strike. It was the same generation of school students that would go on to organise the fare boycott that ignited the social explosion.

The activists that I have spoken to, both from Frente Amplio and the Communist Party, have acknowledged that their work within the unions is limited. The Communists have comparatively more worker members and, obviously, a more long-standing presence

in the unions, but the workers' movement is not nearly as high profile within the left as one might expect. Social movements (feminist, LGBT, environmentalist, etc.) appear to be the key building-blocs for the Chilean left's recent rise. The focus on these issues is obviously a strength, but cannot in the long run compensate for the weakness of the labour movement.

## A new, feminist constitution

In the end, despite all of the controversies and splits that have taken place on the Chilean left, the uprising has had a very clear institutional legacy: Chile's constitution is being rewritten. In the elections for the Constitutional Convention held in April last year, left wing parties and (more substantially) a vast array of left-leaning or pro-reform independents, gained an 80% majority in the new body, overcoming the two-thirds rule which so many activists thought would be a fundamental barrier to change.

Crucially, as part of the agreement that brought about the Convention, the constitution they are writing starts from a blank page, so anything they can't agree on will simply be left open, rather than reverting to the current text.

Perhaps the most important single element of Chile's reawakening in recent years has been the feminist movement. As in the rest of Latin America, a new generation of women are fighting for their reproductive rights, and for a broader revolution in gender politics, in what is still, in comparison with western Europe, a deeply conservative society. A vast array of networks, circles and campaign groups constitute the movement – some focussed on direct action, others on clandestine, practical solidarity with those seeking abortions, others on the legal and constitutional questions.

The feminist movement had a significant impact on the protests (as well as the left more generally) and there is

now a major push to make Chile's new constitution a feminist one. The Convention itself was elected with a 50:50 gender quota, and if the feminist movement gets its way, future Congresses will be too. The aim is to get the state to recognise the value of care and domestic work and to remunerate it. Whereas Kast wants to criminalise abortion in all circumstances, there is a consensus among progressives that the constitution should enshrine reproductive rights. And with the balance of the Convention as it is, there is every possibility that these goals are attainable.

It would be wrong, however, to pretend that there are no problems within the left majority in the Convention. Some of the left independents were drawn from the feminist movement, and those representing left-wing parties (around twenty per cent of the Convention) are in some way accountable to them. But a large number are mavericks: one was elected because she was famous for dressing up as Pikachu on protests. Another made a big deal of having cancer during his campaign – only to confess this September that he never had it.

While many of the new independents are very left wing and principled, there is a lack of organisation and experience which could create problems in the coming year. In order for any of the constitutional reforms to pass, they will have to be approved by referendum no later than September 2022. Already, there is a campaign by much of the media to paint the Convention as a squabbling, self-referential waste of time and money. If Kast wins in December, he will use the power of the Executive to sabotage its functioning and prevent its proposals from becoming a reality.

## Anti-politics

One obvious question is why the scale and ferocity of the recent protests hasn't translated into an easy victory for the left in these elections. The problem, it seems, stems from a deep-rooted hostility to politics and politicians; there is a widespread belief that the political elite cannot be trusted, right or left. This feeling was so strong that Frente Amplio activists could not turn up to protests with their flags or banners without being forcibly expelled. This is a problem exacerbated by the fact that Frente Amplio's leaders tend to be from the same social class as the centre-left politicians they claim to be an alternative to, having all attended the same few elite universities.

And so, despite months of grassroots struggle, the left has not been able to give either leadership or direction to the political thrust of the movement. Although the practical demands of the movement have been progressive,

their tone is not so much left-wing as anti-elite and anti-establishment. Kast draws his popularity from the backlash against the protests, and is now carrying the torch of the right wing establishment, but his rise is the product of the same political moment. Here, just as in the UK and US, the far right has managed to capture the anti-establishment mood.

Many left activists were hopeful in the run up to the first round, believing that there would be sufficient opposition to creeping fascism. But the fact that the torturers and criminals of the Pinochet era were not brought to justice (Pinochet himself remained Commander-in-Chief of the army until 1998, when he was sworn in as a senator-for-life) means that people have lived alongside the perpetrators from that era, and tolerated their continued presence in government for decades. It is perhaps unsurprising that far-right politics would seem so normal to so many people here.

## Prospects

Never before has a candidate won the presidency having lost in the first round, but there are reasons to still be hopeful of a Boric victory, albeit a very narrow one. Turnout was very low; more are expected to vote in the second round, which may well benefit the left. Polls are also suggesting that a significant portion of the votes for the third place candidate Franco Parisi – a total maverick who couldn't enter Chile to campaign, let alone vote, because he is being pursued by Chilean authorities for various financial misdemeanours – will transfer to Boric.

Even if Boric wins, however, his Presidency will not be plain sailing. Sunday also saw the election of the 155 members of the Chamber of Deputies, to serve a four-year term in the National Congress, and 27 of 50 senators, who will serve an eight-year term in the Senate. In the Senate, the right held onto its majority. The left did moderately well in the Chamber of Deputies, with a number of iconic candidates getting elected – including Fabiola Campillai, who was blinded by the police in the course of the protests, and Emilia Schneider, Chile's first trans MP. But even here, the left will only have a majority if its measures can count on the support of the Socialist Party and Christian Democrats.

Nonetheless, the prospect of a Boric victory on 19 December would be a dramatic step forward and would be an enormously impressive achievement. Despite the persecution that its activists have suffered, despite the dismantling of the labour movement, and despite heavy and continuing state violence, the Chilean left is on the march and is in a position to win. □



# Twenty years on: a tribute to Rob Dawber

By Sean Matgamna

*Abridged from an obituary published in An Injury To One Is An Injury To All, writings of a socialist railworker (2001)*

Of the large number of people in Britain who have declared themselves “revolutionary socialists” in the last 30 years [up to 2001], few have been called upon to pay any price for that privilege higher than the expenditure of time and energy.

Few British socialists have had to suffer imprisonment, or police harassment, or job loss, or any other form of persecution. Very few have lost their lives in the struggle.

Blair Peach was killed by a policeman’s illegally-led truncheon on an anti-fascist demonstration in east London in 1979. Kevin Gately died during an anti-Nazi march in central London, a few years earlier.

Rob Dawber died of a cancer which he developed as a result of exposure to asbestos. But his death was as directly related to his activity as a socialist militant as if he had been struck down by a policeman’s truncheon or a bourgeois soldier’s bullet.

He was exposed to asbestos because he had a job as a track worker on the railways. Rob, who had graduated from Leicester University, went to work there because he wanted to be part of the labour movement. Rob went on to be an active member of the RMT for over two decades, for many years secretary of his branch in Sheffield. But Rob did not get involved in these things in order to be a worthy citizen of the labour movement. Rob’s choice of work was a political act in the struggle to reforge a socialist labour movement.

Like others, Rob had gone to college with the idea of equipping himself to “get on” in the bourgeois world, but by the time he left, Rob was a Marxist, and a member of a revolutionary socialist organisation – the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty. Rob was still an active member when he died.

This was a time when much of the left concerned itself mainly with cheering for nationalist-Stalinist movements in far away places. At home, much of the left defined itself in terms of the fight to drive the then very powerful fascist National Front off the streets, and by support for single-issue campaigns on the rights of women, of gays, of black people...

Rob knew that all these issues were tremendously important. He knew that the working class can never be properly united so long as bigotry, racism, sex inequality and intolerance are strong. He knew that a socialist move-



ment that did not fight for equality and against exclusion and bigotry, in all of its many forms, would be a sham and a deceit – a living affront to its own stated ideals. He took part in campaigns on all these questions. When he was becoming a Marxist, Leicester, because of its big contingent of Asian immigrants, was an important centre of fascist activity and the scene of many marches and clashes between socialists and the National Front.

## Working class emancipation

Rob was active against the racists and the fascists. But he learned that socialists who do not put the working class and the working class movement at the centre of all their hopes and perspectives, are socialists who have lost the plot.

He believed, with Karl Marx, that “the emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race and sex”. He understood that without the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, the necessary sectional movements against aspects of life under capitalism – racism, sexism, etc. – could at best achieve only a partial and insecure victory.

He understood that the working class is the only force in capitalist society capable of remaking society into something more serviceable to human needs, and more tolerable to human ideals that aspire to a condition of life higher than the bestial war of all against all that characterises life under capitalism.

He knew that the great watchword of labour movements – solidarity! – expresses not only the guiding principle of immediate working class unity in ac-

tion against the employers. That principle is expressed in the old saying – an injury to one is an injury to all. But solidarity can also mean more, the ideal of a world remade according to the high ethic of human solidarity – in its fully developed form, socialism.

Rob was a straightforward, down to earth man. Once he became convinced of these ideas, everything else followed. The socialist organisation to which Rob Dawber belonged encouraged ex-students to find jobs in industry so that they could participate in the economic class struggle and in the bedrock trade union movement. Rob, not long out of university, decided that it was his duty to put his life where his socialist convictions were.

## Labour movement militant

He decided to be a working class militant – to work to remake the labour movement so that the labour movement can remake society: he decided to devote his time, energy, brains and guts – in other words, his life – to the struggle for socialism. In pursuit of that, he became a railwayman.

It was in the course of that work that he suffered the injury which, despite an outstandingly brave two-year battle against it, finally killed him.

His was an altogether more terrible death than policeman’s baton or soldier’s bullet might, in different conditions, have inflicted on him. And he met it with courage such as few victims of direct bourgeois violence have to find in themselves.

Rob Dawber was a victim of capitalist greed – one of many thousands of workers allowed to work with asbestos without proper protection long after it was known that asbestos is lethal.

Those responsible for his death were shown in court during Rob’s compensation case to have been perfectly aware of the risks Rob and other workers incurred on their behalf. They thought it too expensive to provide them with protection! Rob was a victim. But he was not a passive victim: he was there, on the railway, to fight the bastards. And he did, to the end.

Made redundant, he turned his hand to writing. Ken Loach has made a film, *The Navigators* – which Rob was able to view just before he died – of Rob’s script about railway privatisation. In this class war by other means, on a different front, Rob was still fighting the greedy, callous, inhuman brutes who killed him.

I knew Rob Dawber for 25 of his 45 years. When I heard that he had been given only months to live, I rang Rob and we talked for quite a while.

I was myself ailing, and perhaps, so it

seemed, seriously ill. I listened to Rob, who knew that no one had ever survived the disease he had, but yet was full of fight and courage and plans to find a way to beat it. He was otherwise fit and healthy, he was in the prime of life, he had never poisoned himself with tobacco: maybe they could experiment on him, develop new drugs, perfect new techniques; there was a possible operation in America... I listened to Rob and felt ashamed of my own inner wimpishness.

Everybody else I know who had contact with Rob in the last period of his life experienced the same bracing backwash from the courage, even ebullience, with which he faced odds he couldn’t beat in a fight he could not win. A couple of weeks before he died he was still fighting to get himself selected as Socialist Alliance candidate to fight the incumbent Blairite in a Sheffield constituency...

## Courage

In extremis people find in themselves courage and inner resources they didn’t know they had. Rob Dawber’s courage was, even so, special, indeed spectacular. Of course it was “personal” – the man Rob was. But there was, I suspect, a little bit more to it.

For his entire adult life, Rob felt himself to be part of something bigger and more important than himself – the labour movement in which he worked and which he sought to serve.

Rob was a fighter convinced that here and now he represented and promoted the ideals and methods of a better labour movement – the working class movement of the future, which he struggled to bring into existence.

Nonetheless, he was a citizen of the movement that exists here and now. He was of, for and with that movement, and – within it – of, for and with the socialist minority. That is what gave meaning to his life; it was the meaning he chose to give his life. And it is a meaning that transcends his life. He knew that, and he spent most of his life working to ensure that it would be so.

He knew that the labour movement goes on and that the socialist fight will go on – that it will go on as long as capitalism and capitalist exploitation go on.

Some, maybe only a little, but some, of Rob Dawber’s startling courage came from his sense of being part of something that transcends the individual lives of those, like Rob Dawber, who give it life – the struggle for the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, and thereby for the emancipation of humankind from class society.

Leon Trotsky says somewhere that we only die completely when we fail to take root in others.

Rob Dawber did succeed in rooting himself in others. There is quite a lot of Rob Dawber left. □



# Vigilante violence stalks America

By **Barrie Hardy**

*Have you seen that vigilante man?  
I've been hearin' his name all over the  
land.*

*Would he shoot his brother and sister  
down?*

- Woody Guthrie

Vigilante violence spreads a bloody stain over the pages of American history.

The novels of John Steinbeck and songs of Woody Guthrie highlighted attacks by union-busters and racists on the labour movement, people of colour, and the poor in general in the 1930s. "Vigilantism" was also associated with the violence of the Klu Klux Klan and other racist-terrorist groups intent on maintaining white supremacy in the southern USA from the end of the civil war right through to the civil rights era a century later.

The recent trial and acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse in Wisconsin demonstrates that vigilante violence in defence of white supremacy is still a grave danger for those seeking racial justice. Rittenhouse crossed the state line carrying an illegal assault rifle and journeyed twenty miles to the town of Kenosha where a demonstration was taking place against the police shooting of a local black man. There he shot dead two protesters and wounded another.

From the very start the trial judge showed bias towards the defence by decreeing that they could not refer to Rittenhouse's victims as "victims", but it was OK to call them "rioters" and "arsonists". If anyone needed confirmation of the political sympathies of the judge, they got that during the trial when the ring tone on his phone blared out "God bless America" – a cheesy country song much played at Trump rallies.

Since his acquittal, Rittenhouse has been adopted as a mascot by far-right figures who now dominate the Republican Party. Three congressmen have offered him internships on Capitol Hill. QAnon acolyte Marjorie Taylor Greene says he should be awarded a congressional gold medal (she voted against giving one to police who defended the



Capitol on 6 January). Donald Trump jr. suggested Rittenhouse be given a brand new assault rifle as a present. To cap it all was the puke-inducing sight of Trump himself with an arm around Rittenhouse, declaring him "a nice young man" – a sentiment the families of the victims he gunned down would find disgraceful.

## Precedent

The verdict sets a precedent by giving the green light to all self appointed militia groups and fascist formations to up intimidation of civil rights activists, trade unionists and the left in general. Turn up armed to the teeth and shoot demonstrators down, and there's a good chance of getting away with it by citing "self defence". It matters not one jot that the men Rittenhouse killed were white. They came to support the cause of racial justice and their murder is of the same order as those of white civil rights activists in the 1960s – intimidation.

Just days after the Rittenhouse trial concluded, another trial of vigilantes claiming "self-defence" ended in Georgia, this time with their conviction for the murder of Ahmaud Arbery. Three white men took it upon themselves to chase Arbery, corner him and shoot him dead because he was jogging

around the neighbourhood, which they considered "suspicious" simply because of the colour of his skin.

Their conviction was regarded as a positive outcome by supporters of the Arbery family and some advance on the days of Jim Crow rule when all-white juries would never convict racists accused of murdering black people or their supporters.

Nevertheless, despite this outcome, serious instances of racial discrimination were evident in the legal proceedings. Foremost was the fact that it took the state authorities 74 days before getting around to charging the three man lynch mob with murder. That was mainly because one of the perpetrators had previously worked with local law enforcement.

Additionally the defence managed to whittle down the jury to just one black member despite the population where the trial took place being 25% black. Even this though was not enough for the defence, who complained that the jury pool did not contain enough "Bub-

bas or Joe six-packs" – i.e. racists prejudiced enough not to convict despite the obvious guilt of the accused.

Both these cases occurred against a background of growing threats of political violence across the US being "normalised" by Republican members of Congress. One such is Paul Gosar, a member of the House of Reps from Arizona, who sent an animated video showing him killing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. He got censured in Congress for it, but only three Republicans there supported the censure. Those three are likely to receive death threats for their stand, as countless election officials and school board members have done throughout the country.

## White Supremacy

White supremacy is under threat in America and the Republican Party is the political force that wishes to maintain it or else risk being swept from power. Their four main weapons are voter suppression, electoral gerrymandering, racist dog whistles and threats of violence. Heavy support exists in the police and military for their politics. Notable amongst the numbers charged after the 6 January insurrection attempt were ex-members of the police and military.

Some historians have compared the present situation in the USA to that in the years running up to the American civil war (1861-1865). With the current trajectory of Trumpism, the fear is not wildly exaggerated or alarmist. The Biden administration, failing to seriously tackle racial injustice, voter suppression, or general social inequality, will not block the threat. That will take a movement to combat the violence of white vigilantes and the system they uphold. The American labour movement and those committed to socialist values need to step up to the task. □

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- The State, Crime, Prisons, and Police
- Socialist Feminism
- Black Lives Matter
- Socialist commentary on the Covid-19 crisis
- ABCs of Marxism, an introductory series
- An introduction to Marx's Capital, in 19 parts, with Martin Thomas
- Tubeworker/Off The Rails, videos by the producers of the bulletins □

Watch, subscribe, like, comment and share: [youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK](https://youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK)

## Free Khurram Parvez!

Since the Modi regime suppressed the autonomy of (and broke up) the Muslim-majority Indian state of Jammu and [Kashmir in 2019](#), the repression there has been unrelenting.

On 22 November Kashmiri human rights activist Khurram Parvez was arrested. India's National Investigation Agency raided his home and the office of his organisation, the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), seizing his mobile, laptop and some books, plus his wife's mobile.

Last week the JKCCS condemned the killing of three civilians in Srinagar. As it repression and atrocities mount, Indian government is trying to silence and scare into silence of defenders of

human rights in Kashmir.

Predictably Parvez is being accused of connections to Islamist terrorism. His arrest was under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), which allows Indian authorities to detain people without producing evidence and keep them in prison by setting unmeetable bail requirements. In the wake of the [farmers' victory](#), Indian activists have made repeal of the UAPA one of their key demands.

Free Khurram Parvez and all human rights defenders! Stop the repression in Kashmir! □

- Petition to free Parvez [bit.ly/khurramp](https://bit.ly/khurramp)



# To curb Omicron, requisition Big Pharma!

By Martin Thomas

On 23 November South African medical authorities identified the Omicron variant of the virus behind Covid. It had probably been circulating for a while before that, and has already spread to many countries. This sharpens the urgency of requisitioning the patents and other assets of Big Pharma. It focuses three facts:

1. Covid can't be abolished by a lockdown or even a vaccination drive. Governments which say they will "send coronavirus packing" are blustering.

2. Curbs like mask mandates, work-from-home rules, vax-or-test rules for entering higher-risk spaces, and even full lockdowns, only delay Covid spread. But delay makes time for vaccines to get out, treatments to improve, hospitals to avoid being overwhelmed, mutations to slow down. With winter and Omicron coming, we need delays.

3. Vaccines are not 100%, but they

limit spread, and limit severity even more. Vaccinating the world is urgent.

Because of vaccines, the Covid death rate in the UK now is, despite everything, only a tenth of what it was in early 2020 when case counts were similar.

## Vaccines

Scientists say that Omicron probably evades existing immunity from vaccines and prior infection to some (unknown) degree. It may also be more transmissible anyway. We don't know whether it causes worse, similar, or milder disease.

Pfizer says it can probably get a revised vaccine, tweaked to target Omicron, onto the streets in 100 days. In the meantime, existing vaccines or boosters are still urgent, since they almost surely give some protection; and sustainable covid-distancing curbs can slow the spread.

Scientists' best guess is that Omicron

evolved through repeated mutations of the virus in a single patient ill with Covid for a long time. But it has evolved in Africa, where still only 7% are fully vaccinated.

More vaccine supplies have been arriving in Africa since October. But richer countries send such supplies as an afterthought, often at short notice, often near the vaccines' expiry dates, so it's difficult to use the supplies efficiently.

Africa's vax rate is still around 0.1 doses per 100 people, as it has been since mid-August. The worldwide rate is still around 0.4/ 100/ day, largely static since May.

There would be limits to the speed of vax production and distribution even with the best social organisation. But over the course of 2021 new vaccines have been approved. Since May there's been time to build new production lines and increase roll-out.

Probably I was wrong to follow the World Health Organization (and many

scientists) in being sceptical about booster jabs. Boosters seem to help a lot. But, four months on from "boosters" starting, it also looks as if by now, with policies that flouted Big Pharma's "rights" to profit, the world could have delivered both boosters and wide vaccination in poorer countries.

The EU is only now saying it could favour "limited exemptions" to Big Pharma's patent rights in order to expand production. (The USA came for a full waiver back in May). The labour movement should push for maximum waivers, and indeed for full public requisitioning of Big Pharma's assets.

Longer term, and short-term too, essential to underpin reducing the toll of Covid is increased social equality and social provision: full isolation pay for all; ample health care and social care with sufficient numbers of well-paid health workers and careworkers; improved housing, with less overcrowding. □

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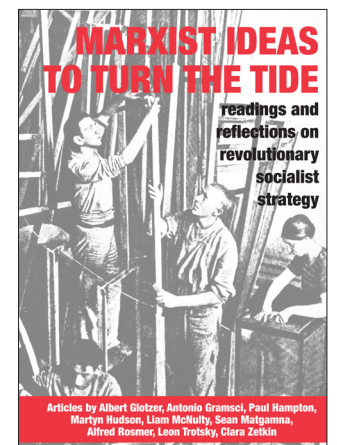
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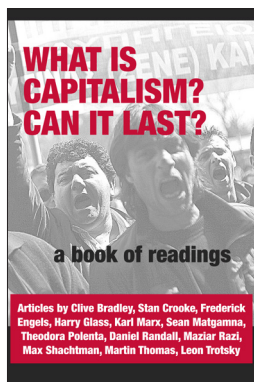
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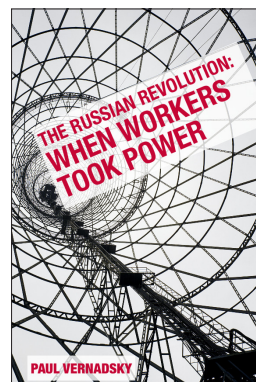
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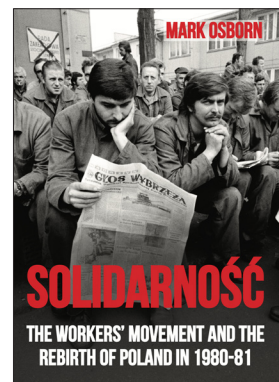
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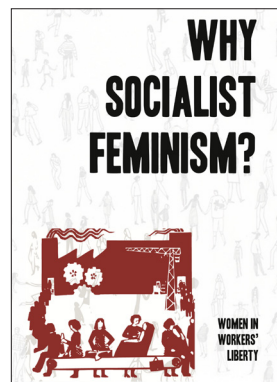
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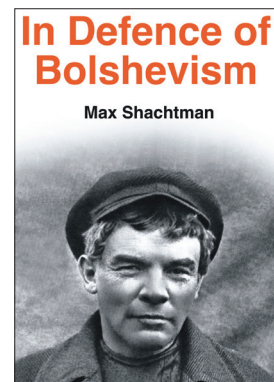
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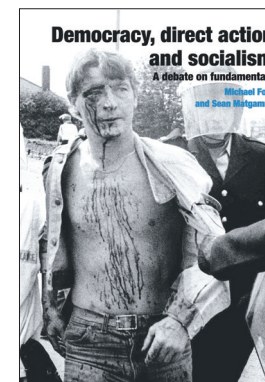
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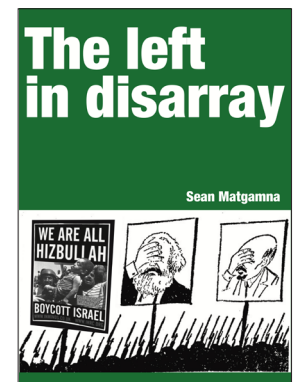
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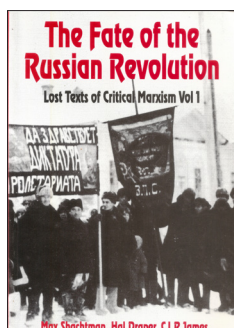
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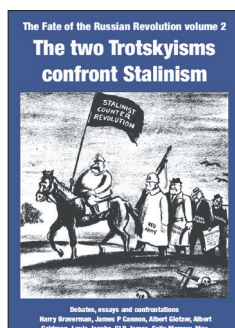
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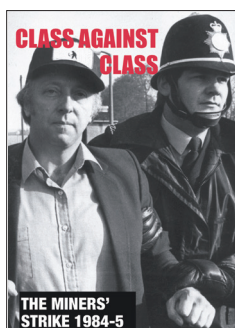
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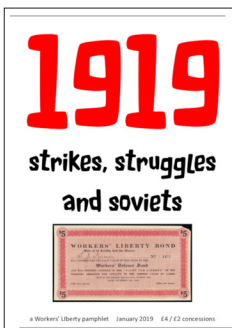
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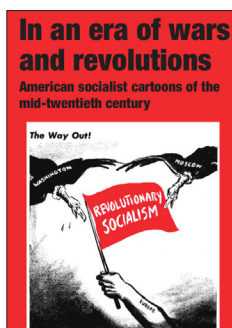
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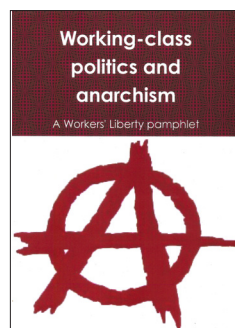
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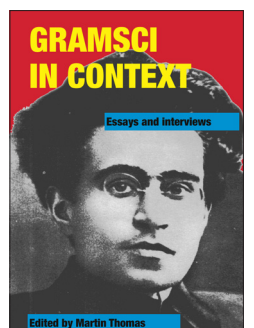
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# Solid start to strikes over Night Tube

## From Tubeworker

The strikes by rail union RMT on 26 and 27 November over grading changes in the reopening of Night Tube caused widespread disruption across the Tube network.

Solid pickets across the affected lines meant bosses were often unable to run even token services. Attempts to run a shuttle service between Cockfosters and Arnos Grove on the Picc barely got off the ground.

Central London had no Piccadilly and Central line trains for the whole of Friday and the other lines were severely disrupted, running maybe just a 30%



and mostly unusable service. RMT drivers remain determined to defeat grade consolidation, an attack on jobs and work-life balance. This is the bosses' first assault on our terms and conditions, the prelude to the attacks on our pensions and others yet to come.

Despite senior reps from the other drivers' union on the Tube, Aslef, signing off the deal, its implementation is not a foregone conclusion. Aslef members in many areas privately do not support this deal and showed their respect for the pickets.

They should continue to do so, and not give up kicking up a stink about it in their union.

The momentum of the 27-28 Nov strike must be kept up right through to the next all-out Night Tube line strike on 18 December. Picket lines must continue and grow on the Friday and Saturday nights on the Victoria and Central. Drivers from other lines are already discussing how to support the next set of

strikes. We won't let the cold weather put us off!

The solidarity from station staff, fleet, engineering and other grades is also vital for this dispute to win. With the grading changed, Night Tube station staff in particular face the potential of one of the few lines of promotion that would maintain their hours being cut off.

As usual the media kept up their tirade against "greedy" drivers, even in a dispute where the RMT have rejected more money... The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has continued his attempt to straddle two camps.

Khan says he is all for workers joining unions, but he balks any time they take action. Khan denounced the strikes as trying to halt the opening up of the economy following the pandemic and shamefully suggested the RMT is indifferent to the reopening of Night Tube.

Unlike Khan, the workers know that the Night Tube is only safe when it is well staffed on its stations, and when drivers are not fatigued. Pretending the strikes are a threat to women's safety is low for a mayor who continues to refuse to bring the low-paid and majority-women London Underground (LU) cleaner workforce back in house, or provide them free travel and the same benefits as directly employed workers.

Khan also repeated the shameful lie that RMT had refused to meet LU bosses on 25 November.

LU bosses, clearly feeling under pressure, had sold Khan this lie. Mis-

information about strikes is par for the course from the right wing media, but here is yet another Labour politician, a supposed representative of the labour movement, denouncing one of the few weapons workers have at their disposal to take effective action. Labour Party members and representatives who support the strike should vocally oppose him and hold him to account. □

## Hospital security guards to strike 6-9 Dec

By Ollie Moore

Outsourced security guards at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) in central London will strike from 6-9 December, demanding parity with directly-employed NHS workers' pay and conditions.

The strike follows the successful struggle of outsourced cleaners at GOSH to win in-house employment and NHS contracts. Following the cleaners' victory, security guards voted unanimously for industrial action.

Security guard Samuel Awittor said: "We are going on strike because we feel that we have not been treated fairly and we've been discriminated against. GOSH is made up of departments of families. If you take security out, it's not going to be complete. If you take a clinical department out, it's not going to be complete. And in a family circle, even when one member of the family feels he's been left behind, or he's not been treated fairly, there's always going to be a reaction. We ask ourselves, are we less human than others? We begin to question why there is this two-tier system where others get different benefits, when we do the same or more".

The workers' union, United Voices of the World, will hold a rally in support of the strike at GOSH at 12:30 on Tuesday 7 December. A union statement said: "Most of the workers are from Black, Brown and migrant backgrounds. Denying them equality and full rights is nothing short of racial discrimination. During the pandemic security guards have gone above and beyond to take care of the patients."

Rally to support the workers: Tue 7 Dec, 12:30, [bit.ly/7dec1230](https://bit.ly/7dec1230) □

## Goldsmiths union calls for boycott to back strike

By Cathy Nugent

A week into three weeks of strike action at Goldsmiths University of London (23 November to 13 December), the local branch of the University and College Union (UCU) is now looking at ways to escalate and diversify the dispute.

For example, the branch plans to request the national union applies an academic boycott on Goldsmiths. If agreed, the national union will back up the local dispute, now that it is facing management intransigence, by asking for external academics to avoid contact with the university in a smaller or larger range of ways. That could include: not speaking and lecturing at the college, declining visiting positions, not writing for the institution's journals.

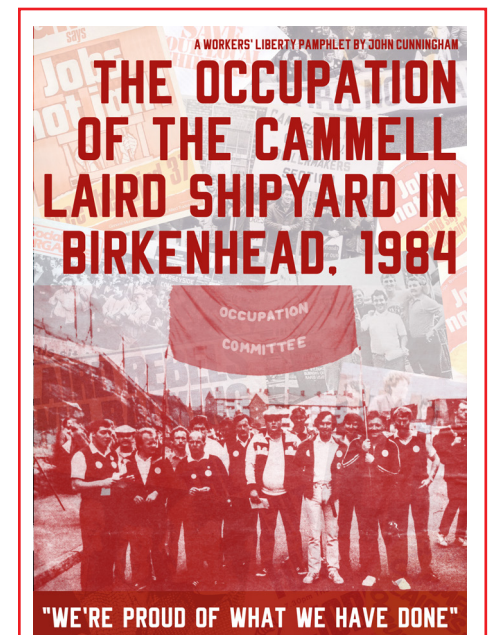
In the meantime an impressive programme of daily teach-outs ([bit.ly/g-t-o](https://bit.ly/g-t-o)) involving hundreds of students and staff has gathered pace on topics from "Design of Resistance", to casualisation of labour, to Palestinian solidarity.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) has threatened to cut 52 jobs this aca-



ademic year – 20 academics in English and Creative Writing and History and 32 professional services staff. More cuts will follow. They claim the cuts are needed to stick to a deal they have made with the banks to reduce the college's deficit. A demonstration through Lewisham protesting against the deal with the banks will take place at 12 noon on 2 December.

UCU's firm line is working. The threat of strike action has, the union branch says, spurred the SMT to propose a



This pamphlet remembers the brave workers who occupied their shipyard to try and save not just their own jobs but the jobs of future generations. □

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"reduction in the number of redundancies being proposed for staff in student-facing services." However, until all redundancies are off the table and the restructure (including the centralisation of services) is halted the fight goes on.

The branch needs to raise a lot of money for the hardship fund, especially to help the most precarious and low-paid staff. Please help by donating to the strike fund, or send cheques/make a transfer to "UCU Goldsmiths College Hardship Fund", Account number 20392303, Sort: 60-83-01, UCU, Office 4, 18 Laurie Grove, London, SE14 6NH. Live updates on Twitter: [@GoldsmithsUCU](https://twitter.com/GoldsmithsUCU) □



### Corrections

The pay rise won by Sage care workers was to £10.85 an hour minimum (the 2020-1 London Living Wage rate), not £11.05 (the new rate from [15 November 2021](https://www.livingwage.org.uk/)). □



## 6699 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.

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

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

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- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a green society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
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- 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
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If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! ☐

• [workersliberty.org/join-awl](http://workersliberty.org/join-awl)

# The worst in twenty years



## Diary of an paramedic

By Alice Hazel

I've been off the road on a secondment and returned to station for the first time in six months this week. The changes in that time are dramatic. The situation for crews and patients is by far the worst I've ever seen it in twenty years on the road.

On my first day back we've just about checked the vehicle when a job comes through. Nothing new there. We visit an unresponsive man. It takes a while to get to the bottom of the situation. He appears to be suffering from an extreme stress reaction. His carer says he has been deteriorating over the last year after having little contact with his family.

I spend an hour trying to get hold of his GP, despite using a bypass number. The doctor is fantastic when we do eventually speak, but he too sounds exhausted. The long term effect of Covid on everyone's mental health is clear.

We take the next patient into A&E and I find there is a new system for getting in the door. When crews arrive we have to write our crew number on a white board along with the patients NEWS score, which gives an indication of the seriousness of their condition. We then wait in the ambulance with the patient to get called in.

My crew mate tells me the ambulance queue is normal now. On my next shift there is also a queue of patients



self-presenting. It runs out of the A&E department and about 20 metres down the road. A woman approaches me and says she's bought her husband, who has chest pain radiating to the back and jaw, up to the hospital in the car, as they were told an ambulance would take three hours. She's understandably worried about him waiting in that queue. While I'm talking to her a man approaches me gasping saying he was discharged two days ago after treatment for Covid but is struggling again.

We get our kit and do mini assessments in the car park. When I take them both in to the department, the triage nurse pulls me up for assisting queue jumping.

Later that day we take a seriously ill

unconscious woman to A&E. I make a pre-alert call on route, which would usually result in us being allocated a place in Resus [resuscitation] where the patient can get immediate treatment. I'm told they are full and we will have to join the car park queue. We monitor and treat the patient there.

Being late off from shift is a routine part of the job, but it's got worse. There's always a bit of end-of-shift time-keeping to cope with that, but things are so unpredictable now that's gone. On my last shift of the week we are fifth in the queue when the clock ticks past our finish time. An hour and a half later I leave station ready for a few days off. ☐

## Chinese film after "socialist realism"



## Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

After 1949 Chinese filmmaking was trapped in a version of "socialist realism". Eventually the filmmakers of the so-called "Fifth Generation" broke away from that deadening practice, starting with Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984), with brilliant cinematography by Zhang Yimou.

The film follows the journey of Gu Qing (played by Xueqi Wang), a soldier in the People's Liberation Army sent to a remote region to collect folk songs. He moves in with a family of poor peasants. Gu Qing struggles to convince the peasants of his aims. He impresses 14 year old Cuiqiao (Bai Xue), the daughter of the household, with his talk of a new role for women.



Her father is angered by these challenges to the traditional way of life. When Gu Qing leaves, Cuiqiao attempts to go with him, but he sends her back, not knowing that she is condemned to an arranged marriage.

Some in the Party hierarchy disliked the fact that Gu Qing doesn't win over

the peasants, who remain sceptical about his views. The director was accused of an "indulgence with poverty and backwardness projecting a negative image of the country". Nevertheless, *Yellow Earth* signalled a new era in Chinese filmmaking. ☐



# The union and outsourcing



**John Moloney**

Following their victory in the recent dispute, our members in Royal Parks are preparing further demands, including over a range of safety issues, to submit to management.

Throughout my time as Assistant General Secretary I've worked support and empower outsourced workers in the civil service to organise and take action. We've increased our membership by hundreds. We have a number of targets for next year, including winning company-wide bargaining with Mitie. This company holds ten major outsourced contracts in the civil service; we currently have recognition in seven. We want an agreement that guarantees us collective bargaining across all Mitie's contracts, rather than having to agree contract-by-contract recognition.

A number of outsourced contracts, for cleaning and other facilities management work, which were previously devolved across multiple departments, are now due to be consolidated into a single contract by the Government Property Agency.

In April next year, the GPA will be "going to the market", that is, seeing if companies are interested in bidding for the contract and on what terms. In the run up to going out to the market, we'll be campaigning to demand the contract is in-sourced rather than put out to tender.

We're also looking into a judicial review around the claim that outsourcing is indirect race and sexual discrimination, on the basis that it leads to workforces that have a higher proportion of BAME and women workers than the directly employed workforce, having worse terms and conditions. The United Voices of the World union recently had success with a similar claim, albeit in an Employment Tribunal,

and the RMT is also pursuing a claim against Transport for London. Beyond this, we'll continue to put political pressure on the Scottish and Welsh governments particularly, which claim to be pro-worker and pro-union, to bring their outsourced contracts in house.

Our National Executive Committee meets on 9 December. By then, we may know more about the new variant of the virus. It may be that we need to step up our campaigning to prevent workers from being forced back into the office.

We know a letter has gone out to government departments, around a week ago, from the head of the civil service, saying risk assessments should be revised in order to get more people back into workplaces.

The new variant may change their thinking, but if it doesn't, we will need to fight, including via industrial action.

On Saturday 27 November, I spoke in the closing plenary of Workers' Liberty's day school "Building a New Left."

I believe left revival has to be based on the class struggle, primarily the trade unions. We are seeing some signs of an increasing willingness to fight.

The election of Sharon Graham in Unite, and CWU's call for a national demonstration to demand a "new deal for workers", should be built on.

PCS will be writing to other members of the Trade Union Coordinating Group, such as CWU, FBU, and BFAWU, to propose a conference to plan a trade-union-based campaign around climate change.

The Labour Party remains a key terrain of struggle, but, as we saw with Corbynism, if left organisation there isn't connected to an effort to revive class struggle and transform the unions, it will founder. □

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of the civil service workers' union PCS, writing in a personal capacity.

## Couriers prepare strike against pay cut

By Michael Elms

On Sunday 28 November Sheffield's JustEat couriers – who are employed by the gig-economy contractor Stuart – held a demonstration through central Sheffield against an impending pay cut. They were supported by the city's Trades Council, labour movement and left. They are members of the IWGB union and have been organising in the city for two years with the help of members and friends of Workers' Liberty, who were also central to organising this demonstration.

Olivia Blake, MP for Sheffield Hallam



spoke on their platform, as did representatives of GMB health workers, Unite and UCU members at Sheffield's two universities, PCS members working in the DWP, and the Green Party. Messages of support were also sent to the demonstration by Louise Haigh MP for Sheffield Heeley and Paul Blomfield MP for Sheffield Central.

Union members delivered speeches and chanted slogans in English, Kiswahili, Arabic and Oromo. A member of the Student Solidarity Group spoke on behalf of students, to express solidarity and denounce the slack response of the Students' Union at University of Sheffield to this and the UCU strike. Banners from various union branches and Constituency Labour Parties followed the demo.

"Sheffield are the real trend-setters!" was how couriers' chair Pariss summed up the dynamics of the JustEat/Stuart

pay dispute. The company is planning to roll out a 24% cut to the per-delivery base rate for drivers, which will oblige them to drive further and faster to earn the same money.

While the cut was rolled out in many cities in October, the company held off implementing it in Sheffield because of the drivers' militancy. The Sheffield drivers hope that their strike action from 6 December will spark strikes in other cities, and they are making plans to spread the action out. The superior organisation of drivers in Sheffield means that they are the leaders of the entire national movement of delivery couriers.

This is due to the tenacity and verve of the couriers' own leaders; and due to the consistent work of agitation carried out among this workforce by Workers' Liberty activists in co-operation with the IWGB union.

A eulogy was also delivered at the rally for Ethan Bradley. Ethan, the national chair of the IWGB Couriers and Logistics Branch, passed away at a tragically young age in the week prior to the strike. Ethan's comrade Fran Scaife, IWGB Welfare Officer, praised Ethan's rebel spirit and dedication as a union activist.

Sheffield's Stuart/JustEat drivers are now preparing for a strike from 6 December. Labour movement activists in

Sheffield will be helping the drivers on picket lines. Nationally the most important help these drivers need is financial. Please donate to the strike fund at [bit.ly/StuStrike](http://bit.ly/StuStrike) □

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A picket line at Goldsmiths: see p13

## Uni strikes are launchpad for January

By a Cambridge UCU member

In 58 University and College Union (UCU) branches across the UK, strikes kick off on Wednesday 1 December for an initial period of three days, to 3 December.

From 1 December onwards, indefinitely, UCU members in those branches and others where they won ballot mandates for it will also be doing “action short of strikes” (ASOS). Detailed info: [bit.ly/ucu-i](https://bit.ly/ucu-i)

The disputes have been called over a range of issues, split into two industrial disputes: cuts to the USS pension scheme, and the Four Fights (over falling pay, increasing casualisation and workload, and worsening campus inequality). In Higher Education (HE), pay has fallen by 20% over the past decade, proposed pensions cuts average nearly 35%, our sector is ridden with insecure short-term, zero-hours contracts (and for some jobs, no contract at all).

Victories in this industrial action will allow university workers to start winning back what we deserve in work and in retirement.

The first round of strikes offer an important opportunity to rally Higher Education staff and students, and mobilise towards escalating action in the new year, when we should be joined by more branches and strikes can be more effective.

The union has announced that a further 42 branches are to be re-balloted from 5 December to 14 January. Victories in all of those would take the percentage of Higher Education UCU members able to strike or take ASOS from about 60% now, to nearly 90% by the end of January when many exams will be starting or ongoing. This would bring about a substantial improvement in our ability to not just win our strike demands, but

organise more members of our union for longer-term gains.

ASOS is likely to prove essential. In a sector so reliant on unpaid overtime, weeks and months of refusing to work beyond contracted hours, and effective marking boycotts of exams, will slow university operations right down. Working out how best to collectivise some of these actions will be crucial to ensuring these are hard-hitting. Getting staff to picket lines and involved in actions short of striking are both keys to victory.

Workers’ Liberty members and supporters will be distributing strike bulletins to HE staff and UCU pickets throughout the strike periods. We are calling for student-staff solidarity, campus-wide union organisation, to build escalating action in the new year, and for union-wide support to help re-balloting branches beat the turnout threshold set by the anti-union laws.

We recognise that a battle that goes to the heart of higher education and the decades-long assault to marketise every aspect of it, is a fight that will require every worker and student on campus mobilised to fight back. Our UK-wide fighting fund will help to keep striking staff on pickets, and can be donated to here: “UCU National Fighting Fund”, sort code: 60-83-01, account no: 20179432, ref: “Fighting Fund Voluntary Levy”.

At the time of writing, Goldsmiths UCU have already been out for one of their three weeks of strikes. Their dispute is of major national significance: all staff and students should help to build picket numbers for weeks 2 and 3, and sustain the strike by donating to the Goldsmiths fighting fund: “UCU Goldsmiths College Hardship Fund”, account no: 20392303, sort code: 60-83-01, or posting cheques to UCU, Office 4, 18 Laurie Grove, London, SE14 6NH. □

# Push Labour to fight the Tories!

By Colin Foster

The Tory government has brought the NHS its worst-ever winter.

The Tories are floundering on many other issues. A 60%-29% majority thinks they are handling Brexit badly, and a 52%-18% majority, that Brexit has gone badly since December 2020.

Yet Keir Starmer’s eyes remained fixed on reconciling Labour with big business. He told the CBI bosses’ group (22 November) that “Labour is the party of business”. It was the same keynote in his soon-forgotten pamphlet just before Labour Party conference in September, and in his conference speech.

The government is setting records for u-turns. Yet the Labour leadership never seeks to mobilise the labour movement and the working class to force a u-turn.

The 29 November Shadow Cabinet reshuffle points to more of the same.

*Solidarity* campaigns for the labour movement, and the unions in the first place, to push Labour into an active fight against the Tories. Several unions have recently passed motions for street protests against anti-union laws, or for Labour’s “New Deal for Workers”, in spring 2022. Protests now on the NHS and the Borders Bill, and active support for the university workers’ strikes, will be even better.

The argument that Labour can only win currently “middle-ground” voters by being weak and conciliatory towards big business and the Tories is false.

More left-wing policies do not automatically bring more votes. But if “middle-ground” working-class people see Labour as too weak to make much difference on issues like the NHS, if they see no hope of replacing capitalism or even of modifying it largely, then they will go with the thought that the Tories know best how to run capitalism.

Labour feebleness tends to lose votes even in the middle ground. It pushes younger and more left-wing voters not to vote at all, or to wander to the Greens or SNP or even Lib-Dems. And it gives the Tories a free hand to recover their balance and confidence.

Check out recent decades. The Tories floundered and lost morale after their defeat on the



Labour members marching against austerity

poll tax, the Exchange Rate Mechanism fiasco, and the house-price crash from 1989. Those factors established a big opinion-poll lead for Labour, around 15%, long before Tony Blair became leader in July 1994.

In 1994, Blair had a media “honeymoon”. Labour was also supporting, and winning new members from, an on-the-streets campaign by the Communication Workers’ Union to block privatisation of Royal Mail, which forced the Tories to back down. The Labour lead grew.

It then narrowed as Blair settled in, but remained large to 1997. Many people thought that Blair was a smooth performer cunningly opening the door to a “real” Labour government.

They were disillusioned bit by bit. By 2005 “New Labour” policies had reduced Labour’s score to 35%; by 2010, to 29%.

Ed Miliband’s shelving of his occasional leftist talk blocked revival, so Labour’s score was still at 30% in 2015. More left-wing policies then increased the score to 40% in 2017. Missteps by the Corbyn leadership (and not left-wing ones, in our view) brought it down to 32% in 2019. That was still higher than 2015 or 2010.

Keir Starmer had relatively good ratings in early 2020, on the basis of his leftist pitch in the Labour leadership contest, but has developed a poor “approval” score (about 10% to 15% more “disapproval” than “approval”) as he has pushed to the right.

The Starmer road is the one that has taken the once-strong French Socialist Party and Dutch Labour Party to near-extinction; and impedes the labour movement from pushing back the Tories now. □





# Solidarity

For a workers' government

## SAFE ROUTES FOR REFUGEES! FIGHT FOR FREE MOVEMENT!

By Mohan Sen

Many hundreds joined the protest at the Home Office initiated by Sisters Uncut on 25 November, to mourn and denounce the deaths of 27 refugees in the Channel the day before. Hundreds joined a Stand Up to Racism rally at Downing Street on the 27th. There have been protests around the country.

The PCS civil service union has joined a legal challenge to the Tories's "pushback" policy, and [says](#): "If the government does not abandon this appalling approach, we will pursue all legal avenues including a judicial review... PCS will not rule out all forms of industrial action, including disrupting the implementation of the Pushback policy if the Home Secretary insists on going ahead." Even though most workers at the sharp end of Border Force work are in a breakaway union, this is a big step forward in labour-movement response. We need more, in the streets as well as in the courts.

The [Nationality and Borders Bill](#), returning soon to the House of Commons for its final vote before it goes to the Lords, will make a dire situation even worse. Boris Johnson said he was "shocked, appalled and deeply saddened [by the deaths]. Now is the time... to stop these gangs who are get-



ting away with murder." He meant the people who arrange makeshift boats for the desperate refugees denied safe routes. The British government is a much bigger gang getting away with murder. It has conspired with the French government to kill, in one incident, twice as many as are known to have died so far in the stand-off on the [Poland-Belarus](#) border.

Refugee rights organisations have [pointed out](#) that there are now essentially no safe, legal routes by which people seeking asylum can reach the UK. Even the stingy resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees which the government made so much of in August is still not operational – and there is no date for it to be operational.

The realities which create refugees are not going to disappear; in many parts of the world they are getting worse. So people smuggling will inevitably flourish – until the opening of safe routes for people diminishes it. Until then, smuggling is in fact a sort of lesser evil, as against governments' attempts

to prevent people reaching safety and security.

Our touchstone should be free movement and equal rights for all. We agree with Nottingham East MP Nadia Whittome: "Even if, rather than fleeing war or persecution, someone moves for a better life – we should welcome them."

If it goes through unamended, the Nationality and Borders Bill will institute discrimination against all refugees who arrive in the UK by other than the almost non-existent safe and legal routes. It will also further criminalise those who aid people coming to the UK, including by helping those in difficulty in British waters. The government knows this will create more suffering, more deaths and more business for petty profiteers. It does not care.

Since the deaths on 24 November, Labour has suggested vaguely that the Tories are inhumane. But literally two days earlier Starmer and shadow Home Secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds were much [closer](#) to condemning the Tories for failing to implement inhumane policies with enough vigour.

Another, very big reason for Labour and trade union activists to call Starmer and co. to account. □

• Labour Campaign for Free Movement:  
[labourfreemovement.org](http://labourfreemovement.org)