

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry



GET THE

TORIES OUT!

**Push unions and Labour
onto the offensive**

March on 18 June

Wage battles to beat price surge

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Johnson vote and Tory turmoil

Join TUC march 18
June: Portland Place,
assemble 10:30 to 12

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Stop the insect apocalypse

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stop insect extinction
and wide side-effects

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Ukraine: making a liberation war

Ukrainian socialist
Vladyslav Starodubtsev
talks to *Solidarity*

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CWU ballots BT. And Royal Mail?

Pay ballot in BT starts
13 June. Royal Mail
should be soon

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The ideas that Starmer wants to ban

Ukraine: Russian troops out!



The picture some on the British left have – that the war in Ukraine is one between NATO and Russia, driven by a NATO scheme to humble Russia – is contradicted by all the facts.

NATO members are not fighting and are not simply lined up behind the US. The US armaments policy is being carefully calibrated to help Ukraine against Russia but without escalating the war by drawing in other states.

The Western governments seem concerned about two extremes: first that Russia's President Putin becomes desperate and uses chemical or nuclear weapons; second, that the Russians win an overwhelming victory. The US is attempting to manage and contain the conflict.

Workers' Liberty demands the West arms Ukraine so Ukraine is able to defend its right to self-determination. *Socialist Worker* claims to believe Ukraine has the right to fight, but only without Western support. In other words, *Socialist Worker* says, Ukraine can fight but only in such a way that it will inevitably lose.

Socialist Worker believes Western arms will inevitably lead to broadening the war into a new world war. No doubt such a risk does exist, but the alternative is to stand by and watch Ukraine be overrun and its democratic and trade union rights be crushed by Putin. *Socialist Worker* also needs to be careful with this argument or it will end up having to revise its own history. They didn't object, for example, to Vietnam taking Russian and Chinese help to fight the

Americans in the 1960s and 70s.

An argument to oppose arms for Ukraine, now being used extensively by groups such as Stop the War, is particularly unpleasant: that British arms for Ukraine means less money for Health and Education in the UK.

Stop the War is saying: either your kids' education, your granny's operation, or arms for Ukraine. Guns for foreigners in an obscure country a long way away, or spending on British people? It is an appeal to every backward sentiment in the British working class. Stop the War invites you to choose, as if it is normal for the left to accept that a choice has to be made between realistic things workers might want and need.

Tax the rich

By making this argument Stop the War is also accepting and reinforcing the basic Tory argument that "hard spending choices" have to be made. The real left has always responded that there is no need to choose between the NHS and welfare, that we require both, and that the rich should be taxed or have their wealth seized to pay for what we need.

Ukraine estimates 30,000 Russian troops have been killed and *Forbes* believes Russia has lost \$13bn in equipment.

The *Economist* calculates Russia's imports have fallen by 44% since the February invasion, but exports have risen by 8%. Russia is now earning \$1bn a day from the sales of oil and gas, which have surged in price. Russia has had no problem finding alternative energy markets, increasing sales to China, in April, by 50% year-on-year.

Nevertheless the IMF thinks that Rus-



Russian troops

sia's economy will contract by 8.5% this year. Over time stores of Western supplies hoarded by Russia will run out. Russia is trying to circumvent sanctions and in particular is looking for industrial machinery, semi-conductors, parts for aircraft, and luxury goods. It is attempting to sell wood products, seafood and alcohol.

Firms willing to risk breaking sanctions are being offered big discounts by Russia. Apparently Russia has also sold grain stolen from Ukraine to Turkey.

In the long run the effect of sanctions might well be to reconfigure the world economy to create stronger bloc around China.

Ukraine's finance minister states that, so far, the war has cost Ukraine \$8.3bn on military spending and humanitarian aid. Kyiv School of Economics estimates infrastructure damage to be around \$100bn.

Inflation in Ukraine was 10% before the war and now stands at 17%. In response the Ukrainian state has increased interest rates to 25%. It has received \$53.6bn in equipment and aid from the US, and much less (\$4.8bn) from the EU states.

Workers' Liberty believes the West-

ern states should cancel Ukraine's foreign debt.

6.6 million Ukrainians have left the country. Poland has taken in 3.5mn refugees. The UK government claims 65,700 Ukrainians have arrived in the country, which is 10 per 10,000 of the population, almost the lowest in Europe. The equivalent figure for Poland is 957 per 10,000. The UK's miserable, xenophobic government shames us; we demand the UK open its door to Ukraine's refugees.

Victory to Ukraine! Russian troops out now! □

Summer schedule

We skipped a week with *Solidarity* on 1 June because of the difficulty of distributing the paper efficiently over the 2-5 June public holiday. We will also skip some weeks in the high holiday period of July-August, giving our small staff time to work on other projects and to take some breaks. Nos.638-640 will be on the regular schedule, 15 June to 29 June. Nos.641-644 will be 13 July, 27 July, 17 August, and 31 August, and then we're back to usual. □

Belarus: free the Railway Eleven

By Dan Katz

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko kept himself in power by rigging elections in 2020 and then using mass arrests and terror against the movement which rose up against him.

There are now about 1,200 political prisoners in Belarus, including working-class activists from the independent trade union movement which struck in opposition to Lukashenko.

Belarus is closely aligned with Vladimir Putin's Russia

and allowed Russia to invade northern Ukraine in February, using Belarus as a staging post and a base. Tens of thousands of Russian troops were deployed from Belarus.

The invasion reactivated opposition networks from 2020 in defence of Ukraine.

Despite facing tremendous repression from the regime, activists in Belarus successfully disrupted the Russian invasion by sabotaging the railway network. 11 men were arrested in February and March 2022 and face extremely serious charges, including terrorism.

The Railway Eleven are: Siarhei Hlebka, Dzmitryi Ravich, Aleh Malchanau, Dzianis Dzikun, Siarhei Kanavalau, Aliaksei Shyshkavets, Siarhei Pleshkun, Yuryi Selvich, Yauhen Minkevich, Dzmitryi Klimau, and Uladzimir Auramtsau.

Some of these men face up to 20 years in jail.

They are accused of various acts to snarl up the Russian war effort including destroying signals cabinets. Five attacks in the days after 26 February brought rail traffic to a halt, according to Sergey Voitekovich, a rail worker now in

exile in Poland. According to the *Washington Post* the saboteurs took inspiration from Belarusian partisan actions against the German Nazis during World War 2, when railway lines and stations were blown up.

The "Rail War" against the fascists is taught in Belarusian schools and regarded as one of the most important tactics used against the Nazis.

An exiled Belarusian trade unionist, Yury Ravavoi, said the new "Rail War" was a factor in the chaos of the Russian attempt to grab the Ukrain-

ian capital, Kyiv, in February. Ravavoi says: "We didn't want to kill any Russian army or Belarusian train drivers. We used a peaceful way to stop them."

The rail activists were helped by "Cyber Partizans" who hacked the railway's cyber networks. Yuliana Shemetovets, based in New York and speaking for the hackers, states that the hacking was relatively easy because the Belarusian railways still run on Windows XP.

The Railway 11 are heroes and we express our solidarity with them and their families.

Free the Railway Eleven! □

Tories in turmoil: seize the chance to oust them!

By Mohan Sen

In many ways the result of Conservative MPs' 6 June confidence vote in Boris Johnson – 148 of 359 voting no confidence, 41% – is a good one for the labour movement.

Of course it would have felt good to see the tinpot Mussolini ousted. But his removal by Tory MPs and replacement with another leader, equally or more right-wing but less discredited and less tinpot, could have enabled the Tories to get out of their spiral of u-turns and scandals. Now Johnson will continue with about half his MPs having adver-

tised that they distrust or despise him. The whole government be discredited further. It will be easier for union action – if it organised – to push back the government on public-sector wages and on benefits.

The labour movement should take heart from the Tory disarray – heart for a fight, not complacent optimism. It should campaign for a general election to kick out the Tories and win a Labour government. But a *Labour government to do what?*

Commenting on the vote, Keir Starmer claimed to have a “plan to ensure Britain is never again plunged into

a cost of living crisis”. Oh yes? What is it? And does he have no “plan” about the price surges now?

Since the Tories' adopted its windfall tax proposal, Labour is advocating essentially nothing to defend real wages and benefits. Gavin Barwell, who was Theresa May's Chief of Staff and is now an anti-Johnson Tory, [says](#): “on [the] big questions, there isn't a huge difference between what a Labour government and a Conservative government could do”. He can say that because the Labour leadership does nothing to signal he's wrong.

The labour movement should step up

to seriously challenge the Tories, and the class they represent, on the streets and in workplaces. The unions should sharpen up and step up our planned 18 June protest, launch wage battles, insist Labour backs that fight, and call for serious [alternative policies](#) to raise living standards and slash inequality.

Let the Tories get through this time of disarray without mobilising ourselves to seize the chances, and we'll see further shifts to the right and further attacks such as those foreshadowed in Johnson's rhetoric about scrapping EU-derived worker and social safeguards. □

Russia: repression prompts arson

By Michael Baker

Growing numbers of military enrolment offices are being set alight across Russia. In the last week, two enrolment offices were attacked by individual would-be arsonists: one threw a Molotov cocktail through the window of an empty office in Simferopol at night, although the room did not catch light; a second individual in Tulsk attacked the building with an axe, smashing open a window and attempting to set a room on fire.

In Komsomolsk-na-Amure, someone poured flammable liquid on the door of a Rosgvardiya (National Guard) building and ran away. These individual acts are unlikely to build to a greater political

goal, but they are evidence of growing unrest in sections of the Russian population. As the government blocks avenues for civil protest, some people will inevitably be driven to less civil means. No set of laws or increased police force will prevent continued attacks – only the full withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

Two elected deputies from the Primorsky region have been expelled from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) for publicly opposing the war. The KPRF stated that the deputies were being fired for “action discrediting the party”, and that they had used the party name under false pretences to get elected in the first place.

Two more elected local pol-

iticians, Mikhail Lobanov and Aleksandr Zamyatin, have set up a new campaign for independent candidates to run in the upcoming Moscow municipal elections.

The elections will be one of the few remaining opportunities for political platforms to be openly advocated and debated openly, and given the complete refusal of the KPRF and other “opposition” parties to live up to that label, standing as an independent candidate appears to be the only way forward.

Dmitry Ivanov, administrator of the Telegram channel “Protestny MGU”, has been arrested and will be charged with spreading “fake news” about the Russian military. The channel has detailed the de-

velopment of a student protest movement in Moscow State University for the past several years, with its work growing since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

Students and staff at Viatsky State University in Kirov have signed an open letter calling for the university administration to remove a “Z” banner on the face of the university building. In the letter, which is still collecting initial signatures, the students state: “we consider this banner to be a political gesture that does not correspond with the opinions of the entire university, but is being made in its name. We believe that such action should only be taken after general discussion and the agreement of students, teachers and other

staff at the university.” This letter follows on from a similar one at Ural Federal University in Yekaterinburg in May, which gained over 600 signatures and helped inspire more widespread protest across the university (see [Solidarity 636](#)).

A new online project for long-form socialist analysis of the Russian anti-war movement has been set up in the past week. [Posle](#) (Russian for After) has articles covering various aspects of the war, opposition to it, and the tasks for socialists in Russia, Ukraine and further abroad.

All articles are published simultaneously in English and Russian, and those that have been published so far are well worth reading. □

Next couriers' day of action 1 August

By Michael Elms

Delivery couriers across the UK are using the summer to re-organise before ramping back up their campaign for better pay. Since December, delivery drivers working for Stuart, a firm that does deliveries for JustEat, have been mounting strikes across the UK against a pay cut. The drivers' next day of action will be on 1 August.

Organised in the IWGB

union, drivers took six months of strikes, and are continuing to carry out protests and days of action, including invading corporate HQs of big clients and turning up at shareholder meetings. As the strikes wore on they inspired action by riders working for other food delivery apps such as UberEats and Deliveroo to also begin pressing their own pay claims.

The action began in Sheffield, where two years of work by activists in Workers' Liberty

had gone into helping drivers build the biggest and strongest organisation of gig economy workers in the UK.

Summer is a difficult time in the food delivery industry. The volume of work available for drivers on all apps goes right down. That means that it is very difficult to pull off strikes in the summer. Drivers will be using this period to build up organisation and prepare for a future round of industrial action to secure a win on pay. □



Upcoming meetings

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

Thursday 23 June, 8pm: first of three Zoom study session on Marxism and wars

Thursday 30 June, 6.30pm: Ideas for Freedom 2022 Walking Tour: Rebels, radicals and revolutionaries of Clerkenwell

Friday 1 – Sunday 3 July: Ideas for Freedom 2022, Camden School for Girls – book now!

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



Delusions of “Non-Alignment”



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

The *Morning Star* – presumably reflecting conflicts within the Communist Party of Britain – continues to wriggle and writhe in its coverage of the Ukraine war.

Pro-Putin International editor Steve Sweeney remains in place (though less prominently featured since he spoke at a London pro-invasion “Victory Day” event called by George Galloway), and regular contributor, Nick Wright, while noting disagreements within what he calls “the world communist movement”, nevertheless reassures readers

Wars; Nationalism and Economic Life; Gramsci

New study groups via Zoom organised by Workers’ Liberty: Thursdays 8pm from 23 June: *Marxism and wars* from [23/6/22](https://www.workersliberty.org/2022/06/23/marxism-and-wars/) to 14/7/22; *Trotsky on Nationalism and Economic Life*: [21/7/22](https://www.workersliberty.org/2022/06/23/trotsky-on-nationalism-and-economic-life/);

Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* from [18/8/22](https://www.workersliberty.org/2022/06/23/gramsci-prison-notebooks/) (through to November). Zoomlink every Thursday: [bit.ly/thu-8](https://www.workersliberty.org/2022/06/23/zoomlink-every-thursday/); Meeting ID: 816 7939 9952 - Passcode: 695850. More: [bit.ly/3-zm](https://www.workersliberty.org/2022/06/23/more/) □

that: “Almost all protagonists in this argument share elements of a common analysis; that the eastward expansion of Nato is in essence imperialist, that the Maidan coup was direct imperialist intervention by the US and the EU and that the post-Maidan attacks on the Donbass region reflect right-nationalist and neonazi influence in successive Ukrainian governments” (major centre-page article, 2 June).

I think we can safely assume that this common ground of false history based upon Kremlin propaganda represents the majority view of the CPB.

But there is an embarrassing problem for a paper that claims to speak for the British trade union movement: in union after union (most recently, the PCS) “whataboutery”, one-sided condemnations of NATO as the supposed “cause” of the war and apologetics that in effect excuse Putin’s invasion, have been rejected by members. The MS, usually assiduous in covering union conference debates, has completely ignored these votes.

Realising that objectively pro-Putin apologetics are not going down well, the CPB/*Morning Star* have come up with a new tack: in order to make their call for Ukraine’s capitulation more palatable to decent people, they’re now marketing it under the guise of reviving the so-called “Non-Aligned Movement” (backed by China and Cuba) and its aim of a “multipolar” world.

In an editorial (25 March), the MS welcomed the fact that “states prepared to sanction Russia comprise almost exclusively Nato ... [while] China, India, Pakistan and much of the rest of Asia, as well as Africa and Latin America are not playing ball” and looked forward to



a “multipolar” world. Roger McKenzie, general secretary of the Stalinoid “Liberation” movement wrote in the MS (22 April): “The war in Ukraine is fundamentally, for me, about power and profits. Just ask the powerful armament companies how they are doing.

“The challenge to the world-power order posed by closer co-operation between a Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa alliance is a serious one for the US, as is any notion of closer bilateral ties between Russia and China”.

Blade Nzimande, general secretary of the South African CP, interviewed in the MS (4-5 June) held “Nato and successive regimes in Kiev - and their alliance with fascists – primarily responsible” for the war and linked this with a call for “co-operation between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.”

This, in reality, means that socialists should endorse authoritarian Third World leaders of the “Non-Aligned Movement” and back the Chinese

state’s imperialism in place of the USA’s. A multipolar world is not a world free of oppressors and empires – it is simply a demand by a rising power (China) for a bigger slice of the pie. It is a demand that the US-led Western alliance should be pushed back, not in the name of wider liberation, but to promote the Chinese ruling class and its own sphere of domination.

Even the US Stalinist blogger Zoltan Zigedy notes: “Today’s leftist celebration of a projected multipolar capitalist world is a further attempt to separate great-power rivalries from their roots in capitalist – specifically, monopoly – interests.

“Multipolarity was a feature of imperialism in the prelude to World War I. In fact, the attempt to impose multipolarity upon a world saddled with the domination of the British empire was a critical factor leading to World War One.” □

Wrong about Morning Star on Ukraine



Letter

It would take a very long letter indeed to respond to each and every one of Jim Denham’s falsehoods which fill his weekly column (obsession?) about both the *Morning Star* newspaper and the Communist Party of Britain. But that would be tiresome and I know would be well beyond the tolerance and patience of the editors and readers of *Solidarity*.

However, I will just focus on one of the most recent,

and allow readers to assess whether Jim is always telling the truth when he makes claims and assertions about the *Morning Star* and the CPB.

Jim claims (*Solidarity* 635) that the *Star* editorial of [13 May 2022](https://www.workersliberty.org/2022/05/13/may-2022/) (accessible online, dated 12/5/2022, as editorials are published in advance of the paper), “repeats its refrain that (the Russian) invasion was an ill-judged but understandable response to NATO’s expansion”, “an error of judgement on Putin’s part.” That the positions of the *Star* and CPB clearly opposing the invasion are somehow soft, hollow, in fact secretly pro-invasion.

Er, no it doesn’t: completely wrong on all counts, Jim.

The 13 May editorial actually said: “we can also understand that Putin’s invasion is also not simply a crime but a gross error of judgment.” So, a crime as well as a gross error of judgment. Meaning in this case, that, far from opposing NATO, the invasion has served to considerably strengthen it.

For anyone who can read English, it is quite clear the “we can also understand...” sentence in the *Star* editorial does not say “it (i.e. the invasion) was understandable,” as claimed by Jim. If I was being charitable, I would say Jim has

“misread” this sentence and deduced it said the opposite of what it actually did say.

The *Star* and the CPB have been absolutely clear from day one that they are in complete opposition to the Russian intervention and demand, inter alia, a complete withdrawal of all Russian forces from all Ukrainian territory and full respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pretty clear and unambiguous. Plus, they unambiguously term it a war and an invasion and oppose the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. So, no soft signals or code of any sort.

Jim has claimed elsewhere the position of the *Star* and the CPB has created controversy and dissent among readers and members. I don’t know about that, but it would hardly be the case if the position of both was in fact as Jim claims somehow quietly pro-Russian, pro-Putin and pro the invasion. No, both the paper and the Party are strongly against all three. I could provide endless quotes from editorials and policy statements, but I am afraid Jim would just “misread” them and try and deduce the opposite from the clear meanings all these contain. □

Andrew Northall, Kettering

Labour's economic policy vacuum

By Martin Thomas

What is Labour's economic policy now that the Tories have taken up the windfall tax?

If by "Labour policy", you mean policy passed by Labour conferences, there is lots, starting with public ownership of the energy industry and repeal of all the anti-union laws. If you mean policy found in official published Labour documents, even then there is a fair bit.

If you mean policy voiced by the Labour leaders, there is *none*, beyond that they want "growth".

That is odd at a time of economic turmoil, when even dissident Tories are proposing such things as UK re-entry to the EU Single Market, and leftish NGOs

comment on rising inequality and shout about the need to raise welfare benefits.

It is unusual by the standard of past right-wing Labour leaderships, too. Tony Blair had an economic policy. We didn't like it, but he had one.

Small target

Keir Starmer's rule, however, is evidently to "campaign" only for measures (like the windfall tax) which he is pretty sure the Tories will introduce soon anyway. Presumably to him that seems "safe".

To workers it means: these Labour leaders are proposing nothing which the Tories won't do (under pressure) anyway.

This is worse even than the "small target" policy pioneered by Australian Labor Party leader Kim Beazley after Australia's conservatives won an election in 1996 to end the Hawke-Keating 13 years of Labor rule there.

Beazley had the same economic policy as Keating (world-market-oriented neoliberalism with social safeguards like Medicare), but just went quieter about it, hoping that the news focus would then be on the conservatives' mis-steps.

That "small target" policy didn't work in Australia. And a "no target" policy won't work here.

Labour Left Internationalists has circulated wording for a motion about alternatives: bit.ly/econ-m. □

stop the
#LABOUR
PURGE



Activist Agenda

Local Labour Parties have to elect their delegates for Labour conference this September by 17 June, and the same deadline holds for rule-change proposals to go to conference.

A draft rule-change pushing back against the National Executive's ban on Workers' Liberty (but carefully worded so as not to be ruled out of order on any of the grounds used in the last couple of years) is in circulation: bit.ly/mo-pe.

The deadline for policy motions for conference is 15 September. Local Labour Parties are likely to debate their choices in July, August, or early September. Three motions originating in or around Labour Left Internationalists – on public ownership of energy, on free movement, on curbing the police – are among Momentum's eleven priority choices: again, see bit.ly/mo-pe.

A motion protesting against the ban has been ruled out of order in one local Labour Party, but the local officials say they will reconsider. Try it out elsewhere. □

• Links, info, etc. on many campaigns: workersliberty.org/agenda

The baby formula shortage and capitalism



Women's Fightback

By Caroline Jeffries

Across the United States, in late May, 70% or more of baby formula brands were out of stock in shops. Retailers have been rationing purchases of formula to desperate parents.

This shortage was caused by bacteria called *cronobacter* found in an Abbott baby formula plant in Michigan. Despite a whistleblower contacting the Food and Drug Administration about unsanitary conditions at the factory, the FDA didn't inspect it until one infant had already died and two others were hospitalised after consuming formula from the plant. This saga highlights a serious lack of oversight from the FDA and a multi-billion dollar company putting profits over the wellbeing of millions of babies.

The baby formula shortage has also re-focused the

debate between formula feeding and breastfeeding. To some the shortage is yet another reason why "breast is best". The persistence of this debate amongst mothers, policy-makers and health professionals is quite unique to developed nations. A 2020 study found that countries' infant formula consumption is positively correlated with income. As GDP per head goes up, so do the rates of formula use. Formula intake is likely to become more widespread as countries develop. Within countries, formula usage is most popular among lowest and highest income families. Middle-income families are more likely to breastfeed. Potentially a baby formula shortage in Rwanda (87 percent breastfeeding rate) would have less impact than one in the US (66 percent).

The Center for Disease Control lists the main reasons women choose not to breastfeed which included unsupportive work policies and lack of parental leave.

In developed countries, a woman is more likely to be an equal earner to her partner. She is also more likely to be a single mother. This creates an added pressure when a working woman has a child and affects her decision on how to feed her child. A recent study found that women with six months or more maternity leave were at least 30 per cent more likely to maintain any breastfeeding for at least the first six months. Globally, only 40 percent of women have any maternity benefits at their workplace. This disparity widens in poorer countries, where women are less likely to work outside home and less likely to have any maternity benefits.

While support for new mothers is lacking, governments and healthcare officials urge breastfeeding. The CDC recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about six months, and then continuing breastfeeding until 12 months of age. This is an impossible standard

for a country with no statutory maternity leave. The NHS has similar guidelines, but has seen major cuts to breastfeeding support services. Statutory maternity leave is similarly unsupportive, with women receiving 90% of average weekly earnings for the first six weeks; £156.66 or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.

The choice to breastfeed or use formula is down to the woman. No woman should feel shamed for her choice on how to feed her baby. However, a woman should not be pressured to choose one over the other because of a lack of healthcare services or maternity leave. A woman's fight for bodily autonomy is not limited to abortion rights, but her ability to make the best choice for herself even after the birth of a baby. Feminists must fight against healthcare cuts and with our trade unions to give all mothers this choice. □

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 for the current stock and prices, and to order. □



Stopping the insect apocalypse



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

Butterflies have existed on Earth for at least 200 million years, surviving extreme fluctuations in the Earth's climate and the meteor strike that wiped out the dinosaurs. But new data from the UK's Butterfly Conservation Trust has found half of UK butterflies now face extinction (a 24% increase of endangered species compared with 2011). This latest dataset corroborates the growing evidence for a global insect apocalypse.

Entomologists believe that 75% of all insect biomass has disappeared in the last 50 years. As 87% of plants, including our all our fruit and most of our vegetables, rely on insect pollination, this is extremely bad news.

The capitalist response to the insect apocalypse has been to turn it into a money-making opportunity. Human workers are employed for tasks that used to be provided free as "ecosystem services" and thus capitalists find new sources of surplus value. Farmers in China, India and elsewhere employ human labour to hand pollinate their crops.

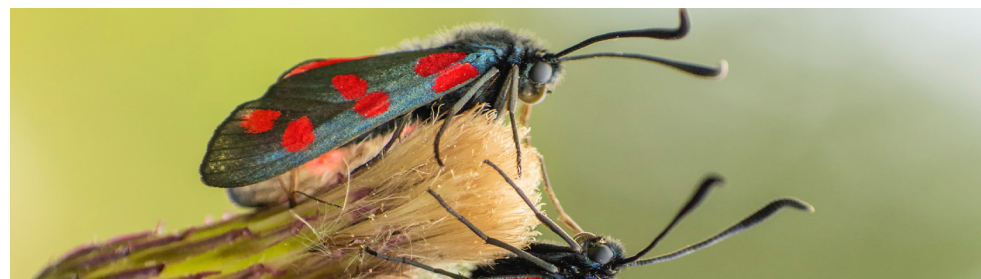
Other human workers farm and transport bees to provide "pollination services" in an industry now worth \$1.5

billion. Big Agriculture is developing robot bees. These industries, alongside the pesticide firms and farmers who wish to maximise profit on every square centimetre of land, have a business interest in further degrading the biosphere. (See Dave Goulson's book *Silent Earth*.)

Understanding of the scale, drivers and terrible human consequences of this anthropogenic mass extinction has emerged only very recently. As a species we appear to suffer from "shifting baseline syndrome" and struggle to notice gradual long-term changes over the course of our lifetimes. Authoritative insect counts didn't start until the 1970s and are still few and far between. Evidence of the insect apocalypse only really came to light in 2017, with the publication of the Krefeld study, although scientists think that we are actually witnessing the tail end of a process that has taken place over decades if not centuries.

The good news is that ecologists know how to stop it. We know that all the species we share the planet with us evolved through the wildly fluctuating climatic conditions of the Pleistocene.

The most ecologically rich areas then and now are not dense forest but Serengeti-like mosaics of woods, scrub, grasslands and wetland. The mosaic is maintained by large herbivores who crash and graze ways through the trees which would otherwise dominate. If these herbivores are kept moving by large predators then biodiversity



thrives, as seen by the famous reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone park. (Benedict MacDonald, *Rebirding*.)

Pre-capitalist agriculture inadvertently managed the land in ways similar to the Pleistocene megafauna, allowing smaller species to continue to thrive. Up until the 18th century much of Britain functioned under a system of open-field agriculture that recreated a Pleistocene-like mosaic. The enclosures ended that. A gradual intensification of capitalist robbery agriculture followed, pushing more and more species to the brink. This form of capitalist agriculture has been exported around the world and intensified with the Green Revolution.

One per cent of farmers now own 70% of the world's farmland. These intensive capitalist farms are monocultures that are created by destroying biologically diverse habitats and maintained by escalating use of pesticides and fertilisers.

The UK is one of the most degraded environments on Earth, in the bottom 10% for biodiversity intactness. Habitat loss is the key driver of mass extinction.

Most of the British countryside is dedicated to the production of just six species: grouse, deer, sheep, cereals, timber, cattle. Two of the British monocultures, deer and grouse, are farmed purely for the pursuits of the super-rich. Over 14% of the UK landmass is intensively farmed for the British aristocracy's blood sports. Grouse moors not only degrade biodiversity but increase the flood risk to many Northern towns.

Restoring the land so that it is brims with life again is relatively simple and could be done in ways that do not impinge upon food production. Later this year the UN's Biodiversity COP15 talks will propose 30% of the Earth is free from human interference. Such a vision (actually a watered down version of E O Wilson's Half-Earth policy) is only possible with heavy regulation that challenge the rights of private landlords.

But workers concerned about this threat do not need to wait for government action. The grass verges, parks, and green space in our cities and towns are managed by impoverished local authorities who waste public money on tonnes of pesticides. In fact, most large employers will have green spaces that are routinely doused in toxic chemicals.

The GMB has produced a useful fact-sheet to help trade union health and safety reps campaign against the use of glyphosate. A collaboration between environmentalists and the workers' movement could make a real impact in restoring biodiversity. A few local councils, like Brighton City Council, have already banned the use of glyphosate.

In France, the *villes sans pesticides* movement has won a ban on all non-agricultural pesticide use. □

Momentum to run new elections

By Colin Foster

The Labour left group Momentum opens nominations for its National Coordinating Group [elections](#) on 13-20 June, and will vote from 28 June to 6 July.

After victories for the left in the recent ballot on democratic reforms in Momentum, the election will be by Single Transferable Vote (with reserved seats) in eight redrawn (more rational) regions.

This creates a real chance for left-wing minorities to gain seats: the old first-past-the-

post system tended to give almost-clean sweeps to whatever was the dominant faction. Labour Left Internationalists (LLI, formerly Momentum Internationalists) is looking to get a slate of candidates.

It'll be hard, but could have impact. In the Momentum ballot on democratic reform, we won not only STV but regular all-member Momentum conferences (something the Momentum left had been pressing for since 2016); in the ballot (supplemented by NCG additions) about policy motions for Momentum to

support for Labour conference 2022, the three draft motions originating in and around LLI were among the 11 that won through.

Two factions within Momentum had evidently been preparing for a while for these elections. Our website carries a briefing: bit.ly/mo-ym. "Your Momentum" is a rebranding of Forward Momentum, which swept the last NCG election in 2020 and has run Momentum since; "Momentum Organisers" is a rebranding of Momentum Renewal, the other main faction then, more oriented

to machine-politics manipulations in union and Labour structures.

Momentum is said to have 20,000 members now, down from 40,000 in 2019, and very few local Momentum groups operate, though as far as we know it still has about 20 paid staff. In the conditions of the last two years, probably Momentum would have declined even with the best leadership.

But the leadership could have done better. It could have mobilised Momentum people to be active in support of industrial battles like the food

couriers' dispute, the universities battles, and the coming rail strike. It could have organised contingents for the demonstrations of the last two years. It could have published NCG minutes promptly and made them informative rather than cryptic...

At some point in the social tumults ahead, the unions and the Labour rank and file will revive from their post-2019, post-lockdowns lull and begin to push back. Let's reshape Momentum to be a help in that process, rather than a drag on it. □

Blockchain: gimmick, not solution

By Luca Brasco

The aim of this article is to pour cold water on the hopes of beneficial use for blockchain technology.

The first, and best known implementation of a blockchain is Bitcoin, “released” in 2008. Companies and venture capital firms started paying attention to it around 2014. Since then, billions of dollars have been poured into the blockchain, without anything to show for it. Blockchain evangelists have been hailing their technology as “the new internet”.

But stripped down to it’s essentials, a blockchain is an immutable, distributed ledger. Bitcoin is an append-only list of transactions. If that doesn’t sound like a revolutionary technology, it’s because it isn’t.

Ethereum, the second best known blockchain implementation after Bitcoin, is a bit more sophisticated, but its additional features arguably make it overall worse. We’ll get back to it later.

Blockchain has been described as “a solution looking for a problem”. As of right now, it’s mainly used for cryptocurrencies, although that name is somewhat misleading. It’s more like a speculative asset. I’ll explore the concept of cryptocurrencies through the example of Bitcoin.



In Portugal, a country with a better tax rate than Britain, and mostly a better record with Covid, the Covid death rate has doubled since early May, to higher than early 2020, and the Covid hospital patient count has also doubled. That’s down to BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants of Omicron. We had expected a surge in Britain, too, with BA.4 and BA.5. That hasn’t happened. But Portugal reminds us that the pandemic isn’t over. Whole new variants, not just sub-variants, will come in time, and may be fiercer. To prepare:

- a sustained public-health testing-and-surveillance system
- good sick pay for all
- restore NHS funding and repeal privatisation
- requisition private hospitals to augment NHS resources
- bringing social care into the public sector with NHS-level pay and conditions for staff
- workers’ control of workplace safety (especially ventilation)
- requisition Big Pharma, especially its patents and technical know-how, to speed vaccine production and delivery world-wide. □

What does it mean to own some amount of Bitcoin? This requires some boring, technical explanation. It’s not an actual thing on your computer. What you have is a Bitcoin address (the equivalent of a bank account), and a key for said address (equivalent of a PIN number). The Bitcoin blockchain, with copies spread across many computers, keeps track of all Bitcoin addresses, along with the amount of Bitcoins associated with each address.

Each time you make a transaction, you send out which address wants to transfer bitcoin to another address in the Bitcoin network, along with the amount of bitcoin involved in the transaction. This eventually gets to a “miner” computer, which takes a predetermined number of transactions and bundles them together in a block.

Each block has a hash, which is a number designed to verify that the data you’re looking at is actually what you think it is. Each block also includes the hash of all previous preceding blocks. The miner that creates the block gets rewarded with additional Bitcoins. This block then gets added to the blockchain. The Bitcoin blockchain contains all transactions going back to 2009. This explanation is a bit simplified, but it’s a good enough overview.

Miners compete over who gets to add the next block to the blockchain, due to the bitcoin reward this gives them. Mining involves solving a mathematical puzzle – this means that the miner that gets the reward is usually the one with the best hardware with the cheapest electricity. Stupendous amounts of power is wasted on concurrent, meaningless calculations. Bitcoin uses more electricity than entire countries.

Protections

If you send your Bitcoins to the wrong address, there’s no way to get them back. If you send them to a non-existing address, they are lost forever. If someone gets your private key for your Bitcoin address, your Bitcoins are theirs now.

Bitcoin claims to be “decentralised”. That is not quite true, but it’s true in the sense that there’s no central authority to take your grievances to. Consumer protections are nonexistent when it comes to cryptocurrencies.

Bitcoin is a deflationary “currency” by design. There will never be more than 21 million Bitcoins in existence. This was considered desirable because Bitcoin comes from a milieu of crank economics, conspiracy theories, and “cyberlibertarianism”.

Many ideas that would later manifest in Bitcoin originated on the Cypherpunk mailinglist – a group of anarcho-capitalist cryptographers, interested in the idea of separating money from government oversight,

among other things. The original milieu around Bitcoin was heavily influenced by the conspiracy theory that inflation is merely the government stealing “value” from people via the US Federal Reserve, and that this was the motivation for the abolition of the gold standard. This was a claim popularised by the far-right John Birch Society. It was also put forward by infamous antisemite Eustace Mullins in his 1952 book *Secrets of the Federal Reserve*.

Austrian school

Another source of inspiration for the economic ideas behind Bitcoin is Austrian economics – a crackpot, hyper-capitalist school of economics that explicitly rejects empiricism. All of its economic predictions are derived from certain axioms, which they say are meaningless to test. Yet they make these predictions anyway.

Needless to say, Bitcoin is very bad at fulfilling the function of money. It’s not accepted widely. Using it is incredibly inconvenient. Transactions are very slow, and often fall through. Its value is incredibly volatile. As I write, it’s down about 50% on what it was six months ago. So much for it being a bulwark against inflation.

As I have alluded to it previously, advocates have a schizophrenic relationship with Bitcoin. They claim that it’s the future of money, but they don’t treat it as such. They treat it as an appreciating asset. You buy Bitcoin so that its price goes up (measured in actual money), so you can sell it, and become rich.

That is the whole hook behind Bitcoin. Cryptocurrency evangelists’ pitch is that the little guy can beat the rigged finance system by being smart, and buying whichever coin of the week, only to leave these “investors” holding the bag. Even without the countless scams, the crypto economy relies on an endless supply of greater fools who will continue to buy coins at increasing prices.

The phony populism of crypto enthusiasts is further discredited by the fact that 0.1% of owners hold 27% of all currently existing Bitcoin.

Bitcoin holders of course react to these criticisms with extreme hostility. Since Bitcoin’s price is almost entirely driven by its public perception, they are financially motivated to make the wildest predictions, as well as to marginalise critical voices. After all, they have an investment to look after.

Not that Bitcoin could ever be universally adopted. The system is simply unable to handle the load. Bitcoin can handle about 4.6 transactions per second. Visa handles 1736, while using a fraction of the electricity Bitcoin does per transaction. Not to mention the unviability of storing the ever-growing blockchain without expensive, dedi-

cated hardware, once it reaches a certain size.

What are the actual uses for cryptocurrency? You can buy illegal goods with it. Mostly drugs. However, this might not be a good idea, given how the purchase is recorded on a public ledger, which is only pseudonymous, not anonymous.

You can use it for money laundering: transfer money to people or organisations you shouldn’t be transferring money to. You could also use it to receive payments after you infect someone’s computer with ransomware. That’s about it.

Ethereum was an attempt to overcome some of the issues with Bitcoin. Ethereum has faster transactions, but the fundamental problems remain. Unlike Bitcoin, Ethereum is a “platform”, capable of hosting many cryptocurrencies.

Apart from its ledger functionality, which keeps track of transactions involving Ether, Ethereum’s native cryptocurrency, it is also capable of storing and running code – so called smart contracts. These are no sort of legal document, but computer code that can’t be changed, due to the immutability of the blockchain, and which run automatically, with no human involvement. The problems with this should be obvious to all.

Security

Let’s assume nobody ever writes malignant code, or creates a virus on Ethereum that transfers all of your assets to a different wallet. No security expert ever would make this assumption (and they shouldn’t, since this has already happened numerous times), but let’s not worry about that right now.

Any programmer will tell you that having to write code that you can’t change later is insane. Programmers create bugs inadvertently all the time. But they can go back after they’re found, and fix them. This is not possible on the blockchain without extreme effort and difficulty.

Smart contracts, however, are attractive to companies, since, in theory, it would allow them to screw over customers, and deflect the blame on the code, which runs without their input, and about which they do nothing.

Contracts in the real world can be renegotiated. They can be updated due to changing circumstances. This is made needlessly difficult by enshrining them in code on the blockchain.

So much for cryptocurrencies. But what about other uses for blockchain technology? I know of no substantial product by any company built on blockchain. Truth is, the blockchain can’t do anything a centralised database can’t do better. □

Ukraine: making a

By Vladyslav Starodubtsev

Vladyslav Starodubtsev, a member of the Social Movement in Ukraine, spoke to Tom Harris

In Kyiv, it's a welcome relief that we aren't under siege. You sometimes get rocket strikes, of course, but it's become more like a peaceful city.

Before the war, everybody was expecting something like a new invasion in the Donbas could start. Nobody expected such an extreme move for Kyiv. So it's more like a return to a logical, rational Russian strategy. On the other hand, it's dangerous because it suggests the Russian command has started to understand what they are doing and think through their operations more rationally.

And the situation in Donbas is hard for the Ukrainian army. Nothing guarantees that the Ukrainians will win. There are numerous technological and weaponry advantages on the Russian side. They don't have any problems with their supplies when they're in the Donbas, they can use their air support and their artillery more freely.

The calls for a no-fly zone? I think for most of our comrades it is a completely unrealistic demand. The west won't do it, so why discuss it?

It's a lot better to simply demand more weapons for Ukraine. Of course, that's still a demand that could lead to escalation, but then anything could

lead to escalation except us surrendering and saying "let's do everything the Kremlin says and let them wipe out the Ukrainian population". That would probably avoid escalation... only for now anyway!

Western governments don't implement reasonable actions that could really help Ukraine. The Ukrainian army is still under-supplied, still short of weapons. And as for sanctions? Russia has a more stable currency now than before the war. The sanctions didn't practically do much.

Many weapons weren't given but sold. And they were sold at a percentage more than they normally cost, which is a problem for our economy. And there aren't enough. It's not like the PR image they like to project, that every Ukrainian has two Javelins [anti-tank weapons] in their backyard.

The Russian army is far better armed. We don't have enough artillery shells. The Russians can fire 50 barrages, and we can fire back only four or five. A Lend Lease bill has been passed in the US, probably the most that Western governments have done for us. It will send a lot of military aid to Ukraine. But time is a factor: it will only arrive in the middle of summer. And it's still insufficient. You want a good way of demilitarising Europe and the US? Easy, just give it to Ukraine, please.

We don't know how long the war will last, but the discussion is already underway on after the war. And it's important the left makes itself heard in that discussion, because there's people who want to rebuild the country on a right-wing, pro-market basis. There's a battle of ideas and visions over what should reconstruction look like.

Even when the war is ongoing, people need social spending, they need food, they need social housing. They need a universal basic income, because everyone is losing their jobs. We need state intervention to guarantee jobs, healthcare and education. With free markets, that won't happen.

After the war there will need to be big investments in the liberated regions, especially if Ukraine liberates places like the Donbas or Crimea, places that are not attractive for investors. We need to have these discussions now or else reconstruction will take place in the interests of the oligarchy and big business.

The war revolutionised Social Movement and all the organisations in Ukraine. It was like an adrenaline rush, an epochal change for Ukrainian society. We have a lot of things to do and if

we don't do them, the left will be destroyed. When the war started, we organised daily meetings. We are doing stuff much more effectively now because we had that early-war experience of doing what was urgently necessary. It's been helpful for our work.

Before the war, we campaigned for the nationalisation of energy, against the rising prices of public transport in Kyiv, small campaigns like this. Now we have diversified our work a lot. Some members of our organisation had gone to the military, so we supported them with equipment and medical supplies. Some of our members started doing humanitarian work.

We have created initiatives of legal consultation and passive resistance by workers, because we couldn't organise strikes and protests. We tried to think creatively. We made a blacklist of employers that are using the war to undermine workers' rights. We approached workers to write an open letter to the bosses. We started media campaigns against bosses that tried to undermine workers' rights or working conditions without good reason. We help workers go to court to challenge decisions and get compensation.

International

Before the war we had international contact with the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and a little bit with Die Linke. After the war started, we reached out to anyone who could help us. Before the war we were very Ukraine-centric, and internationally we were German-centric. But now people all over the world are promoting our debt campaign and supporting our struggle. Previously, few of us had experience of working with so many international contacts, but now it's become a very important part of our work.

Myself, I began activism with Social Movement a few years ago. My first event was a protest of railway workers against the privatisation of the Ukrainian railway. It was a neo-liberal, anti-worker, anti-social reform. Fortunately this reform didn't go as planned for the government. If it had, the rail evacuations during the war would have been impossible. It was a good start!

I found the organisation completely randomly, via a Tinder date with a Social Movement member. We participated in miners' strikes in Kryvi Rih



and in campaigns to raise the wages of medical workers, organised events and became more involved in the ideological discussions in Social Movement. I became the youngest member of the Social Movement executive committee. It is a collective leadership organisation. At the moment my main work is on the debt cancellation campaign.

I think we have many of the same disagreements in our organisation as you have in the western left. Some are more influenced by the western left; they want to talk more about NATO's expansion. Others think that this discussion is just very colonial and Western-centric and we should produce our own Ukrainian narratives. That discussion is pretty big in our organisation.

In general, the debates are between an older Trotskyist-left versus the new left in the organisation, more democratic socialist or anarchist. In general I'd say we are more united than most left-wing organisations! We have absolute unity on the main issues. We agree on the war, we all want socialism, we are all pro-Ukrainian.

We are the biggest left organisation in Ukraine... and we aren't so big! The rest of the left is very small. One should understand that to begin with. We have contacts with every left organisation that exists in the country and has a pro-Ukrainian, not Russian-nationalist, position. Mostly we work with organisations that promote and defend workers rights, even in left-liberal or social-liberal ways.

For example, we have connections with the Social Democratic Platform that are oriented towards parties like the SPD. They're not particularly in the radical left or anti-capitalist left tradition.

FOR WORKERS' CLIMATE ACTION

CLIMATE CHANGE, CAPITALISM AND WORKING-CLASS STRUGGLE



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

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n war of liberation



war but to a “special operation”. They say that no such nation as Kurdistan exists, that the Kurds don’t have civil rights or rights to their land, or that all Kurds are terrorists, just like all Ukrainians are Nazis.

It’s the same with Israel and Palestine - colonisers think in the same way. Israel did not come out strongly against the Russian invasion: There was a diplomatic meeting between Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov and Israeli officials, and he said to them that Ukraine is like Palestine. For once in his life, he was telling the truth!

On the Russian language in Ukraine, I will speak from my perspective; I won’t try to speak on behalf of Social Movement as we have differing views. I would say in Ukraine, some discrimination against the Russian language exists, but mostly not via the law, but via people who go to the Donbas and Russian-speaking areas and reproach people for saying words incorrectly. It’s shaming people and provoking them.

Language

That made some people be against the Ukrainian language – because activists had come to their workplace and homes and told them how to speak!

In Ukraine language is interconnected with the colonial problem. There’s a lot of space for the Russian language. If you know Russian, you’re okay in this country. But if you know only Ukrainian, you will have problems. You need to know both languages or just Russian to have a job, to participate in the public sphere. The media was disproportionately in the Russian language, at the cost of Ukrainian.

After the Maidan, the government tried to push for more equalising politics, to create a space for Ukrainian language and culture to develop freely, which pushed some limitations on the domination of Russian.

Some Russian speakers (I’m Russian-speaking myself, for context!) or people with Russian-leaning political identities couldn’t stand this and felt betrayed that their Russian-centric nation is promoting Ukrainian language and identity.

Personally I am supportive of Ukrainianisation politics, but I think that they should be done in social ways. The state should expand cultural spaces and education to promote the Ukrain-

ian language, rather than doing it in a neoliberal way, which just annoys Russian speakers more. Instead of just renaming streets and passing legislation, really they should fund cultural projects and build dialogue.

We support the general idea of development of the Ukrainian language. We’re against methods that only provoke social conflicts and not social dialogue, and the development of Ukrainian culture needs strong budget funding.

Anti-labour law

In Ukraine, the government is pushing a new anti-labour law (#5371), even harsher than previous ones. Ukrainian workers need international support against this legislation, neoliberal even by European Union standards. It will allow people to be fired without any consultation and introduce zero-hour contracts.

Secondly, the left should call for Ukraine’s debt to be cancelled. Cancelling Ukrainian debt could be the first step in creating a new world economic order, a more social and democratic one, where structures like the IMF can’t exploit developing countries, but where they are supported, given loans on progressive terms, and where social states are promoted rather than neoliberal ones.

The next step is to campaign for Ukraine’s reconstruction. That reconstruction should be a break with the neoliberal consensus and austerity politics. It should be socially-oriented, ecological, feminist and inclusive, built on state intervention and investment, not on free market dominance.

Ukraine needs reconstruction – the whole country has been bombed and many people have died. But also, as a world producer of food, our reconstruction is necessary to prevent a much broader chaos.

The other thing to campaign on is arms for Ukraine. The Ukrainian army is resisting an attack unprecedented on our country since World War Two and they need a lot of help to stop the invaders. There is a narrative that the Ukrainian army is so modern, so well-equipped and so advanced – this is just false! We are holding mostly by bravery and defensive advantage. In terms of military equipment, Russia is far superior. They have more drones, more tanks, more weapons.

We mostly just have Javelins, not a lot of them, actually. It’s not enough. Weapons should be delivered without any terms, without any demands

for payment, without any interest. If Ukraine has to pay for weapons we won’t have money for the basic needs for the people.

And we need sanctions on Russia. Not just on the state and on the oligarchy: all Russians need to have a break with normality and their daily routine. Imagine having a normal life when your country is committing genocide! It shouldn’t be like this. Its economy should be sanctioned in every way. Russia shouldn’t be allowed to have a stable currency for the war, to produce new weapons and military equipment. Russian people should feel that these times are different. When the war is over, they should have a normal life, but when the war is ongoing, they should feel that they’re not just indifferent participants, that they also hold some responsibility for what’s going on.

Sanctions might hurt the Russian working class, but they’ll help the Ukrainian working class which is struggling just to survive. Empathy shouldn’t be unequal, only on the Russian side, but extend to Ukrainians too. Situations are completely different. In Ukraine, people are dying, in Russia, people are being deprived of the ability to buy cheeseburgers. If people are made to feel unwelcome because they aren’t anti-war – that’s absolutely normal, that’s absolutely morally correct. □

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/vl-sta

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- 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/

Workers' Liberty on trans rights

The text below is the resolution passed at Workers' Liberty conference 2018.

The AWL has been discussing the theory and politics of transgender identity and rights. This is the policy we have passed; we are continuing our discussion.

1. We support transgender rights and express our solidarity with trans people. We oppose prejudice, hostility and discrimination against trans people, and advocate support and compassion towards them.

2. We accept people in the gender they identify as (including non-binary identities).

3. We reject the assertion that individuals' genders are defined by or are bound to the genders to which they were assigned at birth, or to their past or current biological characteristics. We recognise that gender is generally initially assigned based on perceived sexual characteristics associated with binary biological sex. Later too, gender is often presumed on the basis of or associated with perceived or assumed sexual characteristics, often coupled with suppositions about the history of that individual's sexual characteristics.

Genders are, currently, strongly socially associated not just with divergent sexual characteristics, but with different practices and behaviours, clothing and presentations, social and erotic relations, and categorisations of people and identities. These varied and inter-

twined social phenomena are for many people tied up with their sense of self, their sense of how they relate to other people, and their desires for how they would like to be socially understood.

We assert that how institutions and society recognise and categorise an individual's gender should be solely on the basis of that individual's declaration of how they self-identify.

4. We recognise and oppose the currently existing social construction of gender, and work to eliminate the inequalities associated with it.

5. We recognise the flaws in current gender recognition law and support proposed changes to it, including self-declaration of gender. We have considered, but are not convinced by, arguments that these changes threaten women's spaces or legal protection from sex discrimination.

6. We support the established labour movement practice of including trans women in women's structures and on all-women shortlists, on the basis of self-identification.

7. We advocate that these issues be discussed in a rational and empathetic way and are addressed through such debate rather than through bureaucratic moves, censorship, no-platforming and violence related to this issue. There are a number of terms which are sometimes used unhelpfully, either to shut down debate or used inaccurately, simply for rhetorical force. That words are used in this way or are perceived by

some as inflammatory does not in itself mean they should be abandoned. We seek to properly define words and use them accurately, and encourage others to do likewise.

8. We analyse women's oppression as taking advantage of women's biological sex rather than being rooted in it. We believe women's oppression to be linked to the biology of women in general rather than of each individual woman.

9. We criticise and will further examine the role that identity politics and privilege theory are playing in these discussions.

10. We assert that trans rights and women's rights are not in conflict, and that movements for trans rights and women's rights need not be in conflict. We contend that there has been a failure of solidarity on this issue, in particular by a proportion of feminists who oppose trans rights, and that centring class politics will enable us to unite against women's, gender and all oppression.

11. We recognise that the oppressions of women and of trans, non-binary, intersex and gender-nonconforming people are rooted in restrictive and oppressive gender relations which are perpetuated by capitalism. This also leads to many commonalities between the ways in which people in these different groups are oppressed, although there are differences and particularities. These factors – as well as the fact that



many trans people are trans women and oppressed as women – provides a basis for common struggle on many specific issues, as well as in the struggle to replace class society with a socialist alternative. We agree on these key points but continue to discuss them and also to debate differences on various issues and nuances in a comradely way. □

• We're publishing this to round off, for now, the recent exchanges of letters and debate articles in *Solidarity*. Debate will be continuing in a special discussion bulletin, now in preparation, and probably further bulletins. See online now: *Autism is not a trauma*, by Janine Booth, bit.ly/aut-t; *Ill-informed repetition at a key moment for trans rights*, by Ben Tausz and others, bit.ly/ill-in. For more background, *Workers' Liberty* 3/61, *Gender: the right to choose*, bit.ly/g-ch, a document which was the basis of the 2018 motion.

Fight still on against Florida "Don't Say Gay" law

By Mohan Sen

On 1 July Florida's new "Parental Rights in Education" law will go into effect. Its noxious effects on children and teachers are already [being](#) felt.

They call it the "Don't Say Gay" law. Similar to, but worse than, the UK's 1988-2003 "Section 28", which banned "the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship", it prohibits classroom teaching on sexual orientation or gender identity

from kindergarten (nursery) to grade 3 (8 years old) and teaching on these subjects that is not "age appropriate or developmentally appropriate" at any age. The law's preamble also mentions "classroom discussion" of the issues.

"Parental Rights in Education" also creates a general assumption that schools cannot withhold information about a child's "mental, emotional or physical" state from parents; and insists on the establishment of procedures for parents to withdraw children from counselling and physical

health services. It allows parents and teachers to sue any school district if they believe the policy is not being implemented.

In March, in the run up to Florida's hard-right governor Rick DeSantis signing the law, thousands of students at schools across the state organised walkouts. Even more impressively, some workers at the Walt Disney Company – which employs the best part of 100,000 people in Florida, the location of Disney World – walked out of work in protest at their management's refusal

to condemn the law, eventually pushing the company to speak up and commit to considering other pro-LGBT demands.

But a discussion of US LGBT rights activism on the website of revolutionary socialist network [Tempest](#) says: "While we've seen stirrings of grassroots protests, like the workplace actions at Disney opposing Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' Bill, they've been short-lived and oftentimes disconnected from one another and overshadowed by predominantly legalistic strategy relying on lawyers, professional

lobbyists, and politicians from Democratic Party".

In the context of the attack of *Roe v Wade*, there may be a wider assault on LGBT rights in the US. That in turn will have an impact on the battles raging in many parts of the world.

Tempest explains that LGBT rights seemed to be pushing forward continually in the US, until a right-wing backlash. The growing reaction against trans rights here underscores the danger. On a small scale, the action by Disney workers shows how to respond. □

Different debates on Ukraine

By Dale Street

Should socialists be in favour of a military victory for Russia in Ukraine? Or should they take a “dual-defeatist” position (opposing both sides), saying it is really a war between NATO and Russia?

These were the parameters of most of the debates about Ukraine at this year’s Fête de Lutte Ouvrière (held near Paris on 27-29 May, organised by the French socialist organisation of the same name).

But not all. Apart from contributions from the Workers’ Liberty contingent at the fête, the [Mouvement Communiste](#) (MC) held a particularly spirited session on Ukraine.

Arguments from the floor of the MC session that it was really all NATO’s fault were given particularly short shrift, along with attempts to counterpose “fascism in Ukraine” to the “democracy” of the 2014 referendum on Crimean independence.

Elsewhere, the Bolshevik Tendency (BT), ably backed up by Socialist Fight (SF), were in the front ranks of the fight for a Russian victory: Russia was a “dependent capitalist country”, whereas Ukraine was an imperialist proxy, ruled by neo-Nazis put in power by a US-financed coup in 2014.

The BT session at the Festival opened with grim warnings about a possible Third World War. But within fifteen minutes the speaker was defending Russia’s “right” to also invade Poland, Bulgaria and Romania (and that just for starters).

Surely a pretty good recipe for a Third World War?

The BT speaker dismissed Belarusian railworkers who had sabotaged the Russian war effort as victims of imperialist propaganda. How such propaganda could be so widespread in Belarus’s no-freedom-of-speech-here society was not explained.

SF provided empirical evidence of the benefits of an eventual Russian victory. The recent recognition of a trade union in Amazon’s New York warehouse, for example, was a direct result of America’s defeat in Afghanistan.

(No, he really did say that.)

A session on Ukraine run by the Greek EEK organisation left the audience in the dark about whether the EEK backed victory for Russia or was dual-defeatist.

But the speaker’s 50-minute tirade was certainly in one direction only: against NATO, the US, Europe, the French Communist Party, and miscellaneous Trotskyist organisations which opposed Russia’s invasion. He didn’t like Ukraine either.

Listening to this nonsense was bad enough. Travelling several hundred miles to hear it in a field in France made it even worse.

Dual defeatism was advocated in the Lutte Ouvrière session on Ukraine, which followed the line in their weekly paper (see bit.ly/uk-lo).

Putin, the speaker conceded, was “formally” the aggressor. But US support for Ukraine meant that Ukraine’s right to self-determination was not the issue in the war, and socialists who raised that slogan were accommodating to their own ruling classes.

But the most outstanding contribu-



tion to debate about Ukraine at the Festival came from the Spartacist Tendency (ST). Banned from having a stall and a session, the ST had to make do with a leaflet. Apart from calling for reforging the Fourth International, for new October Revolutions in Russia and Ukraine, and for Ukrainian and Russian workers to turn their guns on their own exploiters, the leaflet denounced the slogans currently popular on the left:

- “No to war in Ukraine!”: Pacifist.

- “Russian troops out of Ukraine!”: A NATO slogan advocating victory for Ukraine.

- “Down with NATO!”: A good start, but must be coupled with “Down with the EU”.

- “Against Russian imperialism!”: Russia is not imperialist.

- “No to imperialist war in Ukraine!”: Pacifism, with an added tang of fake anti-imperialism.

The divisions between the victory-for-Russia and dual-defeatist camps should not obscure how much the two sides had in common.

Firstly, a general lack of any understanding of Ukrainian society and Ukrainian politics, compounded by the same lack of understanding in relation to Russia.

In place of a serious analysis, both sides offered only snippets of information and references to isolated incidents, usually taken out of context, to bolster their case.

Secondly, the virtual absence of any mention of the people of Ukraine itself in the debates.

They were, at best, the pawns and proxies of imperialism, walk-on actors in a heady geopolitical drama, but not a nation capable of agency and asserting its right to self-determination. □

Yes, rejoin the Single Market!

By Sacha Ismail

Bournemouth Tory MP Tobias Ellwood has outraged his comrades and the right-wing press by calling for the UK to rejoin the EU’s Single Market (in quasi-official parliamentary magazine *The House*, on [1 June](#)).

Ellwood obviously wants to rejoin the Single Market because it will benefit British capitalists. In fact rejoining would mitigate the economic damage and the price surges which are hurting workers. If we organise well, it would give us better terrain for fighting back: the difference here is that Ellwood takes working-class passivity for granted.

For Ellwood, the free movement of people between the EU-27 and Britain that would come with the Single Market is a problem, but a manageable one. For us it is a positive benefit. Rejoining the Single Market would also safeguard the “soft border” in Ireland, defuse the Protocol row which is remobilising Protestant-sectarian reaction in Northern Ireland, and ease progress to a federal united Ireland.

Socialists’ answer is working-class struggle to win higher living standards, to expand public ownership and democratic control in the economy, and push towards overthrowing capitalism. We advocate

international working-class solidarity in that cause regardless of the borders set by capitalist governments. But fewer and lower borders give us a better terrain, better chances to build that solidarity.

We want the UK to rejoin the EU, as part of a struggle for levelling up and social transformation across Europe. Actually reversing Brexit will be a lengthy process, almost certainly involving another referendum. But immediately we can push for the labour movement – trade unions and Labour Party – to stop daydreaming, break its silence, and demand rejoining the Single Market.

We have advocated that since the UK left the EU and the Single Market at the end of 2019. Now is the time to step up the demand.

Since Ellwood put his head above the parapet, former Tory MEP and arch-Brexiter Daniel Hannan has admitted – in the [Daily Telegraph](#) – that staying in the Single Market would have been much better, and that in fact during the 2016 referendum no one significant dared advocate withdrawing from it.

In the run up to the referendum Nigel Farage and similar avoided discussing the issue, but dishonestly hinted they favoured remaining in the Sin-

gle Market, with Farage calling for the UK to become “like Norway”. It was only after winning the vote that they began pushing openly for the hardest Brexit possible.

Hannan rejects rejoining, and instead advocates economic reconstruction at the expense of the working class through a surge of “deregulation”, explicitly centring a downgrading of workers’ rights.

It will be a travesty if the demand to rejoin the Single Market gains ground among the Tories and generates a fight among them about how UK capitalists can best squeeze the working class, while our movement says nothing. □

Protocol flux entwined with Tory fall-out

By Micheál MacEoin

British government plans to rip up the Northern Ireland Protocol of the EU Withdrawal Agreement are in flux, even though Boris Johnson survived the 6 June confidence vote among Tory MPs.

On 17 May Liz Truss made a statement to the House of Commons promising a Bill to unilaterally disapply certain elements of the Protocol. The Bill would lead to the creation of a “green channel” for goods going to Northern Ireland from Great Britain that would not go on to the Republic of Ireland, halting mandatory checks for these exports. Also expected is a trusted trader scheme and the removal of regulatory barriers to goods made in Great Britain being sold in Northern Ireland. If passed and put into force, the Bill would risk retaliatory action or even a full-blown trade war with the European Union.

Truss’s argument is that the agreement – which her Government negoti-

ated and signed – was undermining the east-west relationship between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, putting the Good Friday Agreement “under strain.” The Northern Ireland protocol does not have the support necessary in one part of the community in Northern Ireland,” Truss said.

Truss and the Johnson government are coming under pressure from, and are giving succour to, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the even more hardline Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV).

Brexit

Parties supporting the Protocol as a “least worst” mitigation for Brexit (which they opposed) won the majority of votes in the 5 May Northern Ireland Assembly election. In fact the UK government is acting undemocratically. The Good Friday Agreement limits the requirement for cross-community consent to specific and limited issues, such as the election of a Speaker for the As-

sembly, or for matters which are clearly within the limits of devolved competence. In effect, Johnson and co are simply shoring up a declining Unionist movement, giving it a strength not mandated by its degree of electoral support.

Before the confidence vote, RTE reported over the weekend that two options were being considered: a “hard” version which would immediately break the Protocol and a “soft” version which would simply give ministers the theoretical power to do so at some point in the future. RTE speculated that as Johnson’s leadership comes under threat, the “hard” version may prevail as Johnson tries to fortify his support among right-wing elements in the Tory party such as the European Research Group (ERG). That sequencing has now been overrun by events. The Bill may make an appearance as part of an attempt to demonstrate that Johnson is moving on and carrying out his programme.

The way forward is fraught with difficulties. In 2024, the Assembly is entitled to give its consent (by a simple majority) for the Protocol. If the Bill is tabled and passes, it remains to be seen which version of the Protocol the Assembly would be voting on – the Protocol recognised under international law or the version forged unilaterally by the UK government. The Irish government is concerned that the UK government could give extra power to Unionist opposition to the Protocol by insisting the vote is held on a weighted-majority “cross community” basis and so fixing the result.

Yet again, Ireland is a casualty in a Westminster power play. The British labour movement should demand that Brexit is unwound. The Irish labour movement should elaborate a programme for a federal united Ireland, with minority protections and social “levelling up” across the island. □



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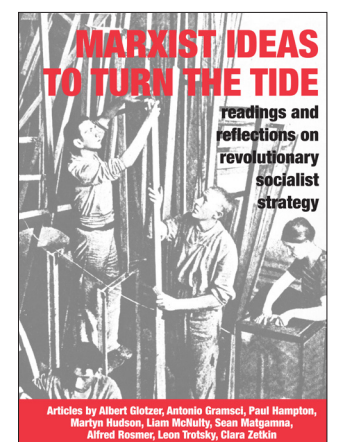
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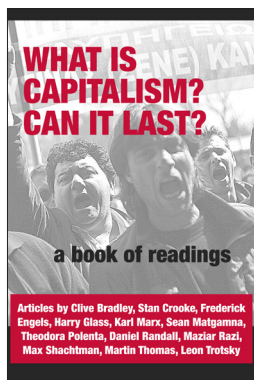
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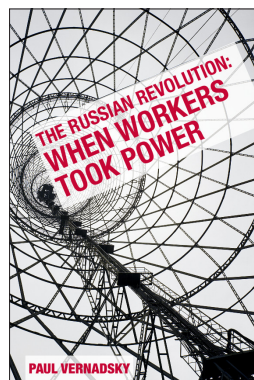
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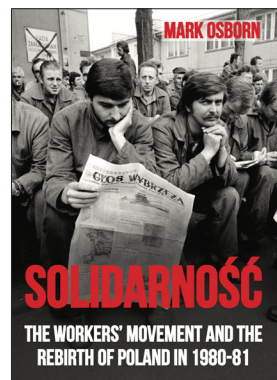
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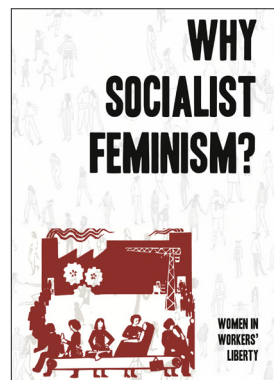
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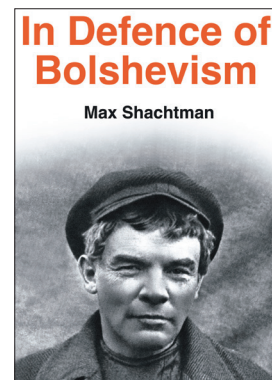
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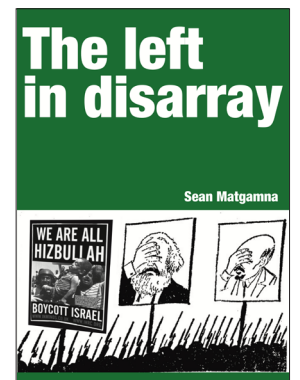
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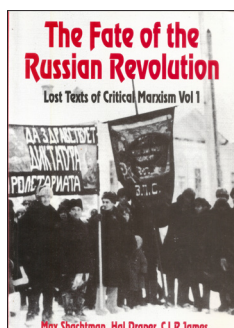
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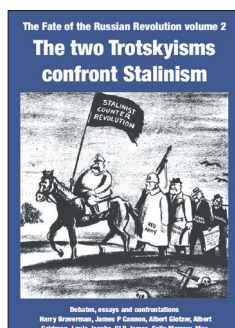
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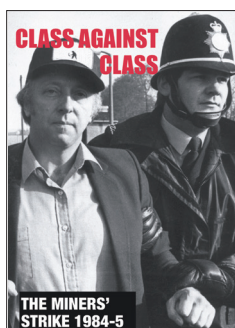
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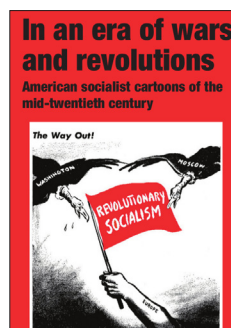
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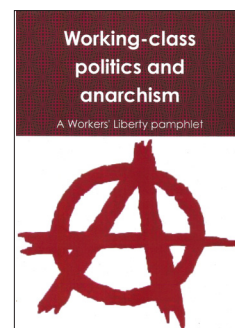
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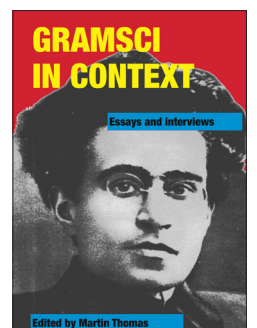
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Unison right wing plans pushback



By a Unison member

The first face to face conference of the public services union Unison for three years meets in Brighton on 14-17 June.

It also the first since Unison's first-ever election of a left National Executive Committee (NEC), the first since Covid hit, and the first since campaigns on 2021-2 pay went badly in Unison's two biggest areas, local government and health.

On 6 June the union, jointly with GMB and Unite, announced its pay claim for local government: the current rate of RPI inflation (presently 11.1%) or a minimum of £2,000. Downsides: the claim comes late, for a pay award that was due in April; and Unison, when consulting members, offered a choice only between two smaller claims.

The union's right wing still controls key committees such as Standing Orders Committee (SOC). Proposals from the NEC such as to elect the union's new Assistant General Secretaries and Heads of Service Group (as the posts become vacant) have been ruled out of order by SOC and not even published in the agenda, which makes it difficult for conference to vote to reinstate them.

The [agenda](#) includes a Uyghur solidarity motion, and we expect a number

on Ukraine, including ones initiated by members of Workers' Liberty and the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign.

Motions include only two mentions of the union calling national demonstrations, as if activists have given up on such things. But the motion on NHS

privatisation from NHS logistics branch (no.96) calls for regional and national demonstrations against NHS privatisation and urges the NEC to coordinate protests over the next 12 months with NHS campaigns and other unions.

Comp. B and motions 65 and 66, on pay, and motion 111 on lessons from pay campaigns, propose coordination across unions; briefings, infographics and case studies for use by branches; regional activists' workshops; bringing weight of the entire union, cross-service-group, to pay campaigns; and a £15 per hour minimum wage. They call for public ownership of retail supply and of the entire energy sector. Amendments demand a tax-free home-working allowance paid by employers.

On sick pay, Comp. D calls for a focus on those sectors and employers with poorest sick pay and work to get Statutory Sick Pay for all into Labour's manifesto.

Comp. E calls for bringing all privatised services back in-house on equal pay and conditions.

Motion 9 from National Black Members is being pushed by the right wing against the left NEC, but is correct in highlighting that no black members have been elected as chair or vice chair of any of the seven NEC sub-committees, and that the four delegates from Unison to TUC and the three-member presidential team were all white. (The previous three-member presidential team under the right was also all-white).

TFRC, the bigger faction on the NEC, deliberately did not stand against Hugo

Pierre and April Ashley of the Socialist Party, who were elected to two of three seats reserved for black members. Continuing such cooperation would have helped.

Motions 10 and 11 must be opposed; they attempt to overturn decisions made by the NEC and no-confidence the NEC. They say the NEC has acted against the union's official legal advice, and denounce the NEC for getting separate legal advice. The legal advice concerned such NEC moves as to meet more regularly and to formalise the presidential team as a committee that can take decisions between NEC meetings. The 66 elected lay members of the NEC should not be overruled by the full-time officials, the elected General Secretary and unelected others. □

Imperfect Victim

By Janine Booth

She doesn't cringe and cower,
she's not a fragile flower
She picked on him and tricked him
She's not a perfect victim

She tells of his coercion,
he tells a different version
How dare she contradict him?
She's not a perfect victim

She unstable, she's a venter,
she's known to lose her temper
She pushed him and she kicked him
She's not a perfect victim

You never can believe her,
a drama queen, a diva,
recanted when they nicked him
She's not a perfect victim

Our well-established dictum
is stranger than most fiction
Our heroes may be lawless
but victims must be flawless.

• Inspired by the Amber Heard/
Johnny Depp trial

Working-class solidarity in the west of Ireland

The new issue (no.47) of *Saothar*, the journal of the Irish Labour History Society, includes a study by *Solidarity* contributor Sean Matgamna on the Ennis United Labourers' Association in the 1930s. It is based on a feature in *Workers' Liberty* 3/35. Order copies of *Saothar* at bit.ly/sao-47 □

Training to the tests?

By a Lewisham teacher

According to the *Guardian* (28 May), "two-thirds of providers, including some top universities, were told this month that they had failed the first round of the new accreditation process" for Initial Teacher Training (ITT).

Those failing to pass the accreditation included the University of Nottingham, whose ITT had been graded as "outstanding" by Ofsted only two months ago and the University of Birmingham, which the Department of Education has chosen as one of the specialist partners for its new school-based National Institute of Teaching. The article says "Cambridge University did not apply for the accreditation due to fears its

curriculum would be compromised". Concern and anger is coming from many universities who currently provided ITT, whether they are applying for the accreditation or not. They are right to be worried.

The new accreditation system is the initiative of Nick Gibb, former schools minister and protégé of Michael Gove. It is part of an ideological drive that Gove started, whilst he was Minister for Education, against university teacher training, in favour of in-school on-the-job training.

Gove

Railing against "the blob" as Gove termed the education establishment and "Marxists" in university teacher training departments, consecutive Conservative governments

have diminished and marginalised the role of universities in teacher training and have increased the amount of school-based training.

Socialists don't have to idealise university-based ITT to recognise how damaging these developments are.

There is much we would criticise about how some of the university courses are run. However, those courses always provided different school experiences and the opportunity for students to critically reflect on these experiences, individually and as part of a collective.

This is largely lost with school-based training, where students are trained on the job in the way that the school where they are training does things. It is an instrumentalist approach to teacher training,

with the goal to create teachers who teach to the curriculum, get students through the myriad of tests and exams, and do what managers tell them.

Socialists should oppose these reforms in the name of education as a liberatory and enlightening process that should be student-centred. The opposition should not be left to the university hierarchies.

Sadly, the education unions whilst mouthing the right words show little sign of a fight on this or indeed much else.

The Labour Party is worse still. Kate Green, who was then shadow education secretary, responded to union concerns with warm words in July 2021. Since then there has been nothing. □



More online

When Trotsky sought asylum in Britain

A pamphlet by John Cunningham tells how the timid Labour government refused asylum in 1929-30: bit.ly/ltdt-uk

Teal and red

Australia's 21 May election: bit.ly/teal-r □

“What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

A mixed mood on Crossrail



Diary of a Crossrail worker

By Steve Allan

The Elizabeth line is two weeks old and the inevitable teething problems are beginning to show. Staff continue to raise the alarm about under-staffing and confusion reigns about roster times. Throw into the midst a London Underground strike and you've got a potential powder keg!

Our cohort has been thrown in the deep end, out on fully open stations after two weeks of training. We're supposed to be shadowing colleagues, but due to everyone being busy we're given general customer service duties. It's frustrating to be on the front line without all the tools to do a full job.

Assessments come and go; we're all "competent" enough to progress to the next stage.

The mood you get on the stations is very mixed. Managers will tell you it's a quiet day whereas staff paint a different picture. Again the Whatsapp group is the main vent for frustration, with stories of stations dropping below minimum staffing levels (grounds for closing a station under TfL rules) and further concerns about the qualifications of agency staff.

Word from the latest meeting between reps and management suggests some agency staff may be brought in-house. But the next few weeks will be testing the waters for how many are needed. Until then it seems we'll have to struggle through.

We receive a memo from management that staff are expected to be in position to start work at their rostered

time. This contradicts an agreement made with reps that start time means signing-on time, before keys, equipment etc. are collected. Reps will be seeking to get this agreement in writing.

The jubilee weekend arrives and there is still no clarity of what to expect on Monday 6 June, day of the LU strike. The Elizabeth line operates like the Overground or DLR - a TfL service but run by a private company called MTR. So if LU stations are shut then surely our services can't run?

At the eleventh hour, rostered staff are told to report to Paddington and await further instructions. In all likelihood they will be sent to work at the stations owned and operated solely by MTR. So staff may end up on the other side of London at an unfamiliar station, but at least they'll be compensated for making the trek. How kind! □

UCU votes for new ballot

By a UCU member

The Congress of the University and College Union (UCU) met from 1-3 June as increasing numbers of higher education branches came to local set-

tlements in the disputes over pensions, pay and conditions. Congress voted for a new aggregated national ballot in the summer or early autumn, with the aim of disrupting induction and

implementing a revived assessment boycott. However, a proposal that aggregated ballots (which need to meet a 50% threshold nationally) should become the default was rejected on the basis

that this was a tactical question. Meanwhile further education branches are to be balloted over a derisory pay offer of 2.25%. More on the congress in the next issue of *Solidarity*. □

Transgender history on film



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

The Danish Girl (dir. Tom Hooper, 2015), based on a novel by David Ebershoff, tells the story of Einar Wegener/ Lili Elbe, a Danish painter, who has reassignment surgery in the early 1930s.

Einar/ Lili (played by Eddie Redmayne) has thought of herself as a woman for many years; seeks help from a psychiatrist, but all he suggests is confinement to an asylum. A German surgeon, Kurt Warnekros, offers to perform the complex – and then dangerous – surgery. The first stage is completed and Lili takes a job in an elite department store. She returns to Germany to complete the surgery, but dies shortly after its completion.

The film aroused controversy partly because it was based on a novel and is inaccurate in places. That a trans actor wasn't found to play Lili was also criticised, and it was later reported that Redmayne regretted taking the



Eddie Redmayne as Lili Elbe

role. It is nevertheless an important film about a landmark in the history of the transgender struggle for acceptance and understanding.

The first male-to-female reassignment surgery, as far as we know, for Dora Richter, a German domestic worker, was completed in June 1931, a few months before Lili. □

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Production team: Martin Thomas (editor), Sara Lee, Sacha Ismail, Simon Nelson, Zack Muddle □

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CWU ballots in BT. What about Royal Mail?

By Ollie Moore

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) is balloting its membership in BT Group, including Openreach and EE, for industrial action to win an improved pay deal. The ballot commences on 15 June. Around 40,000 workers will be balloted, in the first national action ballot in BT since 1987.

A CWU statement said: "Despite initial indications that pay talks were progressing normally, negotiations came to an abrupt halt on April 7 with the unprecedented imposition of a flat rate increase of £1,500.

"With the percentage value ranging from 3.37% to 7.89% across team member grades, and this month's CPI inflation figures already standing at 9% (RPI 11.1%) – leaving Bank of England predictions that CPI will top 10% by the year's end looking distinctly optimistic – it already represents a real-term pay cut on top of an effective pay freeze last year.

"Moreover, the fact that recent uplifts to £20,000 for some of the company's lowest paid workers on unagreed grades count towards the £1,500 increase, and are deducted from it, mean that for many the 'headline' increase of

7.89% is highly deceptive." The union pulled back from balloting BT members last year, despite the long-running "Count Me In" campaign to prepare for a ballot, in which members were repeatedly told a ballot was imminent. The announcement of an actual ballot, with a firm start date, is therefore a significant step forward.

In Royal Mail, CWU's other main industrial base, the union continues to hold gate meetings at postal depots to build for a potential ballot there. The union first said a strike ballot was "looming" in late April, but has so far not announced a timetable. The union

has been in dispute with Royal Mail over pay since 2 May; Royal Mail's collective bargaining machinery stipulates a four-week process at national level for dispute resolution, and with no improved pay offer forthcoming, CWU should be moving to a formal ballot in early June.

On Saturday 4 June, CWU members in Crown Post Offices struck to demand improved pay. The Post Office has offered a 2% increase, following a pay freeze in 2021/22. Around 3,500 workers are involved in the strike. Workers voted for industrial action by 97.3% on a 70.2% turnout. □

Stations strike shuts down the Tube



A strike by station staff shut down the entire Tube network on 6 June.

The action was part of rail union RMT's dispute over pensions, agreements, and jobs. The particular 6 June strike by station staff was intended to particularly highlight and resist London Underground's (LU) plan to cut 600 jobs from stations and impose new working agreements on the Revenue and Special Requirements Team.

LU continues to stress that the 600 job cuts will be achieved by deleting vacant positions rather than compulsory redundancies, but that doesn't change the fact that

a reduction of 600 posts will mean increased workload, worse rosters, and possible displacement for remaining staff. It will also inevitably mean a worse service for passengers. As we know, LU's failure to staff stations adequately even under its current staffing model is already leading to station closures, as RMT members participate in an overtime ban.

Hounslow West and Arnos Grove saw particularly well-supported, lively pickets.

At Oxford Circus, engineers arriving at the station to perform maintenance work on the escalators refused to cross the picket line.

The action follows RMT's last strike on 1 and 3 March, an all-out, network-wide, action for 48 hours. Prior to today's strike, *Tubeworker* argued for further

all-out action, whilst acknowledging that stations-only action could be effective. Station staff have significant industrial muscle and can effectively shut down the service on their own.

Where next?

At RMT's last LU-wide reps' meeting, on 28 April, it was stressed that, although the next action might be selective (i.e., a stations-only strike), it was still very much part of the strategy to take further all-grades action. There was a consensus that the days leading up to 24 June, when TfL's current financial bailout from the government expires and the terms of the new one will be negotiated, will be a good focus for further all-grades strikes. *Tubeworker* would like to see an escalation back to 48 hours, or beyond. Our unions

can redouble efforts of political campaigning to pursue that demand.

A demonstration outside Parliament in December brought together all four LU unions around that demand, but there's been no follow-up since. Direct action, organised by coalitions of labour movement bodies, around that political demand is a necessary complement to ongoing industrial action.

The other new factor is RMT's magnificent ballot mandates on Network Rail and mainline Train Operating Companies. The National Executive has called strikes on 21, 23, and 25 June, and it's good that the union has called a strike on LU for 21 June to create a united impact.

The RMT is also re-balloting members in order to maintain

a live mandate, as the current one expires on 10 July. It's vital all members vote yes/yes for strikes and action short of strikes.

Night Tube reballot

RMT drivers on the five existing Night Tube lines have successfully reballoted in their dispute over the abolition of the Night Tube grade and the imposition of more extreme shifts. Turnout was 64% and more than 85% voted for action.

Tubeworker urges more dates be announced beyond the current Friday and Saturday strikes on the Central and Victoria and Jubilee lines. That should mean all-out action on all five lines. The last time any action like that was taken was December 2021. Now is the time to escalate! □

PCS pay ballot will start 1 September

By Sacha Ismail

Civil service union PCS held its national delegate conference in Brighton 24-26 May, preceded by sectoral group conferences. Perhaps four hundred delegates were in Brighton, with three times more attending online.

The conference voted for a national strike ballot on "cost of living" issues, including pay, pensions and redundancy compensation, to begin 1 September. Whether this should be a single national ballot or disaggregated was re-

mitted to the National Executive (NEC). The conference also voted to campaign against recently announced job cuts, including possibly through industrial action.

Following a Stop the War Coalition fringe at which General Secretary Mark Serwotka took the STW speakers to task for failing to support Ukraine, the conference [voted heavily](#) for motions expressing strong solidarity with Ukraine and its labour movement, rejecting the STW-type alternative. The next day, after a Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

fringe addressed by Serwotka, John McDonnell, and Ukrainian socialist Yuliya Yurchenko, it voted overwhelmingly for affiliation to USC.

Assistant General Secretary John Moloney, presenting the union's financial report, got a good response when he reminded delegates that he takes a [worker's wage](#) and gives back the majority of his salary to support disputes.

The old PCS right wing is largely defunct. The main opposition to the "Left Unity" leadership comes from the Independent Left (IL) which Workers' Liberty

supports and from the Socialist Party and its Broad Left Network. In general Left Unity dominated the main conference fairly easily.

The biggest group conference, for the Department of Work and Pensions, was a bit more rebellious. Pushed by London branches organised by IL, it voted to demand action against the laying off of thousands of jobcentre "work coaches" hired during the pandemic and to criticise the Group Executive's failure on that. □

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

WEEKEND OF SOCIALIST DEBATE AND DISCUSSION

The world's political life is dominated by governments pledged to keep the **wealthy comfortable** and the **working class** in its place. For many, life is often **difficult** and **miserable**. And **unnecessarily** so.

Workers' Liberty fights for a world based on solidarity and democratic working-class control over economics and politics. We organise **Ideas for Freedom** each year to **discuss, debate**, think and listen to ideas to transform the world. **Join us!**



Early Bird weekend tickets until 17 June are £38 waged, £22 low waged and HE student and £9 non-waged/school student, from bit.ly/ideas-22

Crash **accommodation**, free **creche** (register by Friday 23 June) and cheap **food** will be provided.

Thursday 30 June – Radical Clerkenwell **Walking Tour**

Friday – Film, *The Young Marx*

SATURDAY 2 JULY

11:30 – The punk rock politics of **Joe Strummer**, with Gregor Gall • The legacy of **George Orwell**, with Dorian Lynskey • A socialist history of **race and racism**, with Camila Bassi • Renewing our **unions**, with John Moloney (PCS AGS, pc) and John Leach (Organiser, RMT London Transport, pc), and more • The struggle for **reproductive rights** worldwide

2pm – Workers' solidarity with **Ukraine**, with speakers from the Ukrainian left and labour movement.

3:55 – The **Covid-19** pandemic, with Professor George Davey-Smith • The **history of Ukraine**, with Chris Ford and Marko Bojcin (Ukraine Solidarity Campaign) • **Couriers** vs gig economy bosses, with speakers from the JustEat couriers' strike • Why the **working class**? • Defending the **right to protest and strike**, with Rhian Keyse (UCU NEC), and Janine Booth (RMT Disabled MA Committee)

5:35 – Capitalism, **disability**, and socialism, with Janine Booth, author Ellen Clifford, and Richard Rieser (World of Inclusion) • The legacy of **James Connolly**, with Paul Richards • The **left in disarray on Ukraine** • What is a **revolutionary party** and why do we need one?

7:15 – Informal **social** at a nearby pub

SUNDAY 3 JULY

10am – The ideas Starmer wants to ban: Historic and current **Labour Party** leaderships' attacks on the revolutionary left. • **Class struggle in India**, with Sacha Ismail, and more. • The significance of the **Russian revolution** • Is a united **Ireland** in prospect? • **Monarchy, republicanism**, and socialism

12:40 – Should socialists back a **"progressive alliance"**? Debate with Michael Chessum • **Climate change** as class war, with author Matt Huber • The Cammell Laird **shipyard occupation** and the fight for justice, with Eddie Marnell, Cammell Laird occupier, and more • **Sheffield's** early socialists, with E.M. Johns • The history of **Hong Kong**, with HK socialist Chen Ying • Soviet composer Dimitriy **Shostakovich** and Stalinism • Class struggle in **China**, with Chinese socialist Chris • What is **imperialism**? • The climate movement in **Australia**, with Janet Burstall

4:05 – Closing plenary



Rail strikes set for 21, 23, 25 June

By Janine Booth

Industrial action will cause major disruption to the national railway for a week as forty thousand rail workers strike on 21, 23 and 25 June. London Underground workers will also strike on 21 June (see page 15).

Members of the RMT rail union in Network Rail and over a dozen Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are fighting for a decent pay rise, having not received any increase for three years. They are also demanding that the employers guarantee that they will make no compulsory redundancies, and will not make detrimental changes to working conditions.

Unite (which has members on the railway) has also balloted, and is expected to call similar action. If ASLEF and TSSA (the other rail unions) also put their words into deeds and join the action, the balance will tip heavily towards the unions. But even without this, when RMT mobilises all the grades of railway worker that it represents, it has the strength to win.

This is the first national railway strike in nearly thirty years, and will be a major confrontation between the union and the employers – and, behind the employers, the government which funds them. It comes in the wake of action in separate disputes by railway cleaners and staff in some TOCs.

The action itself will see all workers involved in the dispute taking action together. While the union might consider more selective action as the dispute progresses, it is very welcome that the action is starting with everyone going out together.

Discussions between the employers and the union so far have been about the framework for dispute negotiations – talks about talks! Members are not seeing much of the details of these talks; if there is more transparency in the talks to come, then the dispute will be stronger.

Similarly, the more that members are involved in discussing and planning further action, the more effective that action will be. □

• Workers' Liberty rail workers are very sad to learn of the sudden and untimely death of Joe Kirby, RMT National Executive Committee member representing offshore workers. Joe was an energetic trade unionist, rooted in the rank and file, an ally of equality activists, and willing to dissent and criticise when necessary.

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2-3 July • **Camden School for Girls**, London • Tickets: bit.ly/ideas-22



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For a workers' government

SIDE WITH UKRAINE! RUSSIAN TROOPS OUT!



6699 Editorial

Russia continues its terrible assault on Ukraine, gradually winning ground in Ukraine's east, at great human cost. Russia is focussing its superior artillery on smaller areas, destroying much of the towns it aims to occupy. The British military believes Russia will control the entire Donbas region within two weeks, despite Ukrainian counter-attacks.

After 100 days of war Russia now occupies about one fifth of Ukraine.

What Russia will do next is unclear. Putin could attempt to do what his forces did in Chechnya and Syria: move

ahead slowly, town by town, smashing everything in his military's path, subjugating each area in turn. There are reports that Russian forces are massing around Kursk, the Russian area facing the Sumy region in northern Ukraine. So Sumy or Kharkiv could face new sieges. Or Russia might attempt to move across southern Ukraine, attacking Odesa and aiming to cut Ukraine off from the sea and link up with Russian forces in Transnistria, an area of Moldova that Russia has effectively ruled since the early 1990s.

Alternatively, Russia might stop and force a peace deal on Ukraine. If it did so it would find support in Europe and the US. NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg rightly suggests that this war will end with a peace

agreement, but that peace agreements generally reflect the situation on the ground; right now Russia has taken a lot of Ukrainian territory.

Responding to Russian battlefield gains, a division amongst the Western powers is emerging. France, Germany and Italy call for ceasefire and a peace acceptable to Russia. The Baltic states, Poland, and the UK demand Russia's defeat. In the US administration an argument has been fought out about the supply of new weapons to Ukraine. Biden will donate some new rocket systems which Ukraine badly needs, but he seems to have come to an agreement with Ukraine that these weapons will never be used against targets inside Russia. □

• More: page 2